

The Irish Adult  
Education Policy Process  
since 1997

*Some Lessons for the Future*

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# **PhD in Adult and Community Education**

## **Student Declaration**

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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The views and conclusions expressed herein are my own.

Signed

LUKE MURTAGH

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines Irish adult education policy making since 1997 to identify lessons for future development of the sector. It is aimed at adult education stakeholders, policy makers and researchers to provide them with a deeper understanding of adult education policy making so that they can contribute effectively to its future development. I engaged in the research because of the emerging importance of adult education as part of lifelong learning and my professional and personal interest.

The research involved literature review, interviews and a documentary analysis of published and internal departmental adult education policy documents and revealed a fragmented system with a dysfunctional architecture that remained intact despite ten years of intense policy making. The study also highlighted rivalry between the Department of Education and Science (DES) and the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (DETE) for control over adult education policy as well as a lack of capacity in DES to manage the development of adult education policy. Because of the rivalry, resources have been wasted in adult education since 1997 while stakeholders are disenchanted and many adults with literacy problems cannot avail of tuition. The problems revealed by the research were exacerbated by political failure.

The failures are an outcome of a corporatist approach to policy making and are contributed to by interdepartmental rivalry which can be explained by public choice theory. Political failure was facilitated by Coalition Government which tends to encourage an incremental approach to policy making. In addition the Irish public policy system is complex, multi-layered and operates across different planning cycles and sequences.

The outstanding issues for the future include the capacity of senior management in DETE to manage adult education, nominating a lead department, devising an adequate institutional architecture for adult education and the evaluation of the National Adult Literacy Strategy.

The research provides advocacy groups with a reform agenda and will also contribute to the debate about the reform of the Irish public service.

# Table of Contents

Student Declaration .....	i
Acknowledgements .....	ii
Abstract .....	iv

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of Thesis .....	1
1.2. Personal and Professional Experience in Adult Education and Policy Making.....	2
1.2.1 <i>Personal Insights into the Policy Process</i> .....	2
1.2.2 <i>Blind Spots as a Policy Analyst</i> .....	3
1.2.3 <i>Professional Experiences Pertinent to the Research</i> .....	3
1.2.3.1 <i>Interdepartmental Steering Committee for TRBDI</i> .....	3
1.2.3.2 <i>Officer of the Irish Vocational Education Association</i> .....	4
1.3 The Reasons for Choosing Adult Education Policy Making .....	6
1.4 Reasons for Starting the Research in 1997 .....	7
1.4.1 <i>Political Reasons for Choosing 1997</i> .....	7
1.4.1.1 <i>The Election of a New Government and the Appointment of a Minister of State for Adult Education</i> .....	7
1.4.1.2 <i>Ideological Shift from Centre Left to Centre Right</i> .....	8
1.4.1.3 <i>Public Service Management Act (1997)</i> .....	9
1.4.2 <i>Publication of Adult Education Policy Documents and Initiation of the National Employment Action Plans</i> .....	9
1.4.2.1 <i>International Adult Literacy Survey Report</i> .....	9
1.4.2.2 <i>The White Paper on Human Resource Development and the National Employment Action Plan</i> .....	10
1.4.2.3 <i>Green Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity</i> .....	11
1.4.2.4 <i>The National Anti-Poverty Strategy</i> .....	11
1.5 Reasons for Ending the Research in 2007.....	12

<b>1.6</b>	<b>Defining Adult Education .....</b>	<b>12</b>
1.6.1	<b>Adult Education within the Lifelong Learning Framework.....</b>	<b>13</b>
1.6.1.1	Adult Education and Lifelong Learning .....	13
1.6.1.2	Formal, Non-formal and Informal Parts of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning.....	14
1.6.2	<b>Definition of Adult Education.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>1.7</b>	<b>Structure of Thesis .....</b>	<b>17</b>
1.7.1	<b>Mapping the Journey: Policy Theory and Practice (Chapter Two).....</b>	<b>17</b>
1.7.2	<b>Negotiating the Labyrinth (Chapter Three).....</b>	<b>19</b>
1.7.3	<b>From Euphoria to Despondency (Chapter Four).....</b>	<b>20</b>
1.7.4	<b>The Future (Chapter Five) .....</b>	<b>22</b>

## CHAPTER TWO: POLICY MAKING AND THEORY

<b>2.1</b>	<b>Policy Theory.....</b>	<b>24</b>
2.1.1	<b>Basic Definition and Attributes of Policy.....</b>	<b>25</b>
2.1.1.1	Power in Policy Making.....	25
2.1.1.2	The Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions of Policy .....	26
2.1.1.3	The Creation of Order in the Policy Process.....	27
2.1.2	<b>The Definition of Policy Used in the Thesis.....</b>	<b>27</b>
2.1.3	<b>Historical Development of Policy Theory .....</b>	<b>28</b>
2.1.3.1	The Early Period: 1513 - 1850 .....	30
2.1.3.2	The Founding Theorists: 1850 - 1970.....	32
2.1.3.3	The 1970s and 1980s .....	34
2.1.3.4	Critical Theorists - .....	37
2.1.4	<b>The Development of Policy as an Academic Discipline .....</b>	<b>38</b>
2.1.4.1	Laying the Foundations: 1900-1945 .....	40
2.1.4.2	The Pioneers of Policy Studies: 1946-1970.....	41
2.1.4.3	Post-Positivism and Policy .....	44
2.1.4.4	Postmodernism and Policy Studies .....	45
2.1.5	<b>Approaches to Policy Making .....</b>	<b>47</b>
2.1.5.1	The Political Approach .....	50
2.1.5.2	The Pluralist/Elitist Approach .....	50
2.1.5.3	The Neo-Marxist Approach .....	51
2.1.5.4	The Neo-corporatist/networking Approach .....	51
2.1.5.5	Institutionalism as an Approach .....	52
2.1.5.6	The New Public Management Approach .....	52



<b>2.2</b>	<b>The Stages' Model of the Policy Process .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>2.2.1</b>	<b>Agenda setting .....</b>	<b>55</b>
2.2.1.1	<i>Problem Recognition for the Policy Agenda .....</i>	<i>55</i>
2.2.1.2	<i>Problem Definition in Agenda Setting .....</i>	<i>56</i>
2.2.1.3	<i>Knowledge in Agenda Setting.....</i>	<i>56</i>
2.2.1.4	<i>What Kind of Knowledge is Used in Agenda Setting? .....</i>	<i>56</i>
2.2.1.5	<i>How is Knowledge Used in the Policy Process?.....</i>	<i>57</i>
2.2.1.6	<i>Who Controls the Agenda?.....</i>	<i>57</i>
2.2.1.7	<i>The Influence of Ideology on the Policy Agenda.....</i>	<i>58</i>
2.2.1.8	<i>Limitations to the Policy Agenda.....</i>	<i>61</i>
2.2.1.9	<i>The Application of Agenda Setting Theory to Practice .....</i>	<i>63</i>
<b>2.2.2</b>	<b>Decision Making in the Policy Process.....</b>	<b>65</b>
2.2.2.1	<i>Power.....</i>	<i>65</i>
2.2.2.2	<i>Rationalism .....</i>	<i>68</i>
2.2.2.3	<i>Public Choice Theory.....</i>	<i>70</i>
2.2.2.4	<i>Institutionalism .....</i>	<i>70</i>
2.2.2.5	<i>Personality, Cognition, Information Processing .....</i>	<i>71</i>
2.2.2.6	<i>Applying Decision Making Theory to Practice.....</i>	<i>73</i>
<b>2.2.3</b>	<b>Policy Implementation .....</b>	<b>74</b>
2.2.3.1	<i>Policy Action Framework Model.....</i>	<i>75</i>
2.2.3.2	<i>Management Framework Model .....</i>	<i>75</i>
2.2.3.3	<i>Implementation Strategies .....</i>	<i>76</i>
2.2.3.4	<i>Delivery Systems for Policy Implementation.....</i>	<i>77</i>
2.2.3.5	<i>Choice of Implementation Strategy and Issue Type .....</i>	<i>80</i>
2.2.3.6	<i>Applying Implementation Theory in Practice.....</i>	<i>80</i>
<b>2.2.4</b>	<b>Evaluation .....</b>	<b>81</b>
2.2.4.1	<i>Policy Evaluation as a Rational Process.....</i>	<i>81</i>
2.2.4.2	<i>Alternative Policy Evaluation Frameworks.....</i>	<i>83</i>
<b>2.3</b>	<b>The Irish Public Policy Process .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>2.3.1</b>	<b>The Oireachtas and the Government .....</b>	<b>86</b>
2.3.1.1	<i>Oireachtas.....</i>	<i>86</i>
2.3.1.2	<i>Government .....</i>	<i>86</i>
2.3.1.3	<i>Institutions of State other than the Oireachtas and Government.....</i>	<i>88</i>
2.3.1.4	<i>Government Departments.....</i>	<i>88</i>
<b>2.3.2</b>	<b>The European Union .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>2.3.3</b>	<b>Supra National Organisations.....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>2.3.4</b>	<b>The Political System .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>2.3.5</b>	<b>Regional and Local Government .....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>2.3.6</b>	<b>Social Partnership.....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>2.3.7</b>	<b>The Role of Interest Groups.....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>2.3.8</b>	<b>Role of Interest Group Policy Networks.....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>2.3.9</b>	<b>Impact of Irish Public Policy Process on Policy Making.....</b>	<b>102</b>

<b>2.4</b>	<b>Irish Education, Training and Community Education System .....</b>	<b>104</b>
2.4.1	<i>The Irish Education System – A Context for Adult Education.....</i>	104
2.4.2	<i>The Education Domain .....</i>	107
2.4.3	<i>Training Domain.....</i>	108
2.4.3.1	<i>General Training .....</i>	108
2.4.3.2	<i>Sectoral Training.....</i>	110
2.4.3.3	<i>Private Training.....</i>	110
2.4.3.4	<i>Overview of the Training Domain.....</i>	111
2.4.4	<i>Community Education Domain.....</i>	112
<b>2.5</b>	<b>Themes from the Literature.....</b>	<b>115</b>
2.5.1	<i>The Role of the State .....</i>	115
2.5.2	<i>The Impact of the Irish Public Policy Process.....</i>	117
2.5.3	<i>Ideological Clash between the State and some Domains of Adult Education .....</i>	120
2.5.4	<i>The Status of Adult Education in 1997.....</i>	120
 <b>CHAPTER THREE: NEGOTIATING THE LABYRINTH</b>		
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Methodology – High Level Research Approach .....</b>	<b>122</b>
3.1.1	<i>Using Stages and Domains.....</i>	122
3.1.2	<i>Using the Evolutionary Approach to Policy Making.....</i>	123
3.1.3	<i>Applying the High Level Research Approach .....</i>	124
3.1.3.1	<i>Accessing Data to Apply the Evolutionary Approach.....</i>	125
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Research Methods and their Rationale .....</b>	<b>127</b>
3.2.1	<i>Literature Review .....</i>	129
3.2.2	<i>Documentary Analysis .....</i>	134
3.2.2.1	<i>Approach to Documentary Analysis.....</i>	136
3.2.2.2	<i>Guidelines for Analysing Texts .....</i>	138
3.2.2.3	<i>Documents Analysed.....</i>	140
3.2.2.4	<i>Sources of Documents.....</i>	140
3.2.2.5	<i>The Des O’ Loughlin Diaries.....</i>	141
3.2.3	<i>Interviews with Adult Education Policy Elites.....</i>	144
3.2.3.1	<i>Interview Method.....</i>	146
3.2.3.2	<i>Choosing Policy Elites .....</i>	147
3.2.3.3	<i>Ministers and Ministerial Appointee .....</i>	150
3.2.3.4	<i>Senior Civil Servants.....</i>	151
3.2.3.5	<i>Advocacy Organisations .....</i>	151
3.2.3.6	<i>Epistemic Community .....</i>	151
3.2.4	<i>Drawing on Personal Experience .....</i>	152
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Reflections on Methodology .....</b>	<b>153</b>

## CHAPTER FOUR: FROM EUPHORIA TO DESPONDENCY

<b>4.1</b>	<b>Backdrop to the Research.....</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Identifying the Drivers of Adult Education Policy .....</b>	<b>157</b>
4.2.1	<i>High Level Approach Adopted.....</i>	<i>157</i>
4.2.2	<i>Themes from the Literature.....</i>	<i>157</i>
4.2.3	<i>Themes from the Interviews, Documents and Critical Reflection .....</i>	<i>159</i>
<b>4.3</b>	<b>First Driver of Adult Education Policy - The Irish Policy Process .....</b>	<b>160</b>
4.3.1	<i>Coalition Government.....</i>	<i>160</i>
4.3.2	<i>The National Development Plan.....</i>	<i>162</i>
4.3.2.1	<i>The Significance of the National Development Plans for Adult Education Policy Making.....</i>	<i>164</i>
4.3.2.2	<i>Adult Education in the Employment and Human Resource Development Operational Programme 2000-2006 .....</i>	<i>166</i>
4.3.3	<i>Social Partnership.....</i>	<i>170</i>
4.3.3.1	<i>Partnership 2000.....</i>	<i>171</i>
4.3.3.2	<i>Programme for Prosperity and Fairness .....</i>	<i>172</i>
4.3.3.3	<i>Sustaining Progress.....</i>	<i>179</i>
4.3.3.4	<i>Towards 2016 .....</i>	<i>181</i>
4.3.4	<i>Role of the Core Departments.....</i>	<i>186</i>
4.3.5	<i>Overview of the Impact of the Irish Public Policy Process on Adult Education Policy Making.....</i>	<i>190</i>
<b>4.4</b>	<b>The Second Driver of Adult Education Policy: The Impact of the Silo Approach to Adult Education Policy .....</b>	<b>193</b>
4.4.1	<i>Changes in the Lead Department Role for Adult Education Policy 1997-2007 .....</i>	<i>198</i>
4.4.2	<i>The Survival of the 1997 Institutional Architecture.....</i>	<i>204</i>
4.4.2.1	<i>Institutional Architecture of Each Domain .....</i>	<i>204</i>
4.4.2.2	<i>Why the Institutional Architecture Survived .....</i>	<i>206</i>
<b>4.5</b>	<b>Third Driver - Management of the Adult Education Policy Process by DES .....</b>	<b>210</b>
4.5.1	<i>The Cromien Report on the Staffing and Structures of DES .....</i>	<i>210</i>
4.5.2	<i>Organisation of Adult Education in DES.....</i>	<i>211</i>
4.5.3	<i>Engagement of Top Management Team in Adult Education Policy Process .....</i>	<i>213</i>
4.5.4	<i>Capacity of DES to Manage Adult Education Policy Process.....</i>	<i>214</i>
4.5.5	<i>National Fragmentation of the Institutional Architecture Leads to Local Fragmentation .....</i>	<i>218</i>
4.5.6	<i>The Implementation of Adult Education Policy by DES since 2000.....</i>	<i>220</i>

<b>4.6</b>	<b>The Fourth Driver of Adult Education Policy - The National Adult Literacy Programme .....</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>4.7</b>	<b>From Euphoria to Despondency .....</b>	<b>239</b>
4.7.1	<i>The Initial Euphoria.....</i>	240
4.7.2	<i>The Changing Mood.....</i>	240
4.7.3	<i>Despondency.....</i>	242

## **CHAPTER FIVE: THE FUTURE**

<b>5.1</b>	<b>The Lessons Learned .....</b>	<b>244</b>
5.1.1	<i>The Institutional Architecture of a Policy System is Crucial .....</i>	244
5.1.2	<i>The Capacity of a Lead Department Is Important.....</i>	245
5.1.3	<i>Stakeholders in a Policy Sector Need to Understand the Irish Policy Process .....</i>	249
5.1.4	<i>Institutional Rivalry Can Undermine Policy Making in Cross-cutting Policy Areas .....</i>	250
5.1.5	<i>Evaluation of Policies Is a Critical Dimension of Policy Making .....</i>	251
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Applying the Lessons Learned .....</b>	<b>253</b>
5.2.1	<b><i>Recommendations on Adult Education Policy.....</i></b>	<b>253</b>
5.2.1.1	<i>Decide on a Lead Department .....</i>	253
5.2.1.2	<i>Develop an Appropriate Institutional Architecture for Adult Education .....</i>	255
5.2.1.3	<i>Restructure the Organisation of Adult Education in DES.....</i>	255
5.2.1.4	<i>Establish a Common Stakeholder Platform .....</i>	255
5.2.2	<b><i>Recommendations for Further Research into the Adult Education and Public Policy Processes.....</i></b>	<b>256</b>
5.2.2.1	<i>Research into an Institutional Architecture for Adult Education .....</i>	256
5.2.2.2	<i>Further Research into the Organisation of Adult Education in DES .....</i>	257
5.2.2.3	<i>Evaluate the National Adult Literacy Programme .....</i>	257
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>260</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 1 Summary of planned expenditure by Priority – EHROP 2000 – 2006 .....</i>	<i>167</i>
<i>Table 2 The Operation of the Silo Approach to Adult Education Policy Making in Ireland between 1997 - 2007 .....</i>	<i>200</i>
<i>Table 3 Literacy Levels of Adults in the Adult Literacy Programme in 2006 .....</i>	<i>231</i>
<i>Table 4 Planning Cycle for the main components of the Irish public policy process.....</i>	<i>250</i>

## LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1 Historical Development of Policy Theory: 1558 – 2008 .....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Figure 2 Historical Development of Policy Theory: Early Period (1513 – 1850) .....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Figure 3 Historical Development of Policy Theory: Founding Thinkers (1850 – 1970) .....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Figure 4 Historical Development of Policy Theory: the Nineteen Seventies and Nineteen eighties (1970 – 1980s).....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Figure 5 Historical Development of Policy Theory: Critical Theorists .....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Figure 6 The Development of Policy as an Academic Discipline .....</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Figure 7 - Laying the Foundations: (1900 – 1945) .....</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Figure 8 The Pioneers (1946 – 1970) .....</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Figure 9 Post-Positivism (1971-1986).....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Figure 10 Postmodernism and Policy Studies .....</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Figure 11 Approaches to Policy Making.....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Figure 12 The Stages’ Model of Policy Making.....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Figure 13 Stages’ Model: Agenda Setting.....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Figure 14 Stages’ Model: Decision Making.....</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>Figure 15 Stages’ Model – Implementation.....</i>	<i>74</i>
<i>Figure 16 Stages’ Model – Evaluation .....</i>	<i>81</i>
<i>Figure 17 Five Largest Community Education Funding Departments – 1997 .....</i>	<i>113</i>
<i>Figure 18 Adult Literacy Learner Budget per Annum 1997 – 2006.....</i>	<i>226</i>
<i>Figure 19 Level of Funding per Adult Literacy Learner 1997 – 2006.....</i>	<i>227</i>
<i>Figure 20 Breakdown of Total Number of Adult Literacy Learners 1997 – 2006 .....</i>	<i>228</i>
<i>Figure 21 Total Number of IALS (Non ESOL) Adult Literacy Learners 1997 – 2006.....</i>	<i>229</i>

<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>261</b>
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## APPENDICES

Appendix A1 FOI request-DES 2006.....	298
Appendix A2: FOI Request to DES 1/12/2006 .....	304
Appendix A3 FOI DES - Jan 2008 .....	309
Appendix A4 FOI Request DETE: 2006 .....	313
Appendix A5 FOI DETE 2008.....	316
Appendix A6 FOI Dept of Taoiseach 12/02/08 .....	317
Appendix A7 Final FOI to D/Taoiseach .....	318
Appendix A8 FOI D/Finance 12/02/08 .....	319
Appendix A 9 Final Request D/ Finance 20/03/08.....	320
Appendix B (1) Biographical Note: Willie O’Dea .....	321
Appendix B (2) Aide Memoire Questions: Willie O’ Dea .....	321
Appendix C (1) Biographical Note: Síle de Valera.....	324
Appendix C (2) Aide Memoire Questions: Síle de Valera .....	324
Appendix D (1) Biographical Note: Margaret Kelly .....	326
Appendix D (2) Aide Memoire Questions: Margaret Kelly .....	326
Appendix E (1) Biographical Note: Pauline Gildea .....	329
Appendix E (2) Aide Memoire Questions: P Gildea, Des O’ Loughlin, Peter Kelly .....	329
Appendix F (1) Biographical Note: Des O’ Loughlin.....	331
Appendix F (2) Aide Memoire: Interview Des O’ Loughlin.....	331
Appendix G (1) Biographical Note: Helen Keogh.....	333
Appendix G (2) Aide Memoire: Interview Helen Keogh .....	333
Appendix H (1) Biographical Note: Noel Whelan .....	336
Appendix H (2) Aide Memoire Questions: Noel Whelan .....	336
Appendix I (1) Biographical Note: Ned Costello.....	338
Appendix I (2) Aide Memoire Interview: Ned Costello .....	338
Appendix J (1) Biographical Note: Seán Ó Foghlú .....	343
Appendix J (2) Aide Memoire Interview: Séan Ó Foghlú.....	343
Appendix K (1) Biographical Note: Berni Brady.....	348
Appendix K (2) Aide Memoire - Questions: Berni Brady .....	348
Appendix L (1) John Coolahan: Biographical Note .....	350

<b>Appendix L (2) Aide Memoire Questions: John Coolahan .....</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>Appendix M (1) Biographical Note: Tom Collins .....</b>	<b>352</b>
<b>Appendix M (2) Aide Memoire Questions: Tom Collins.....</b>	<b>352</b>
<b>Appendix N (1) Anne Ryan: Biographical Note .....</b>	<b>354</b>
<b>Appendix N (2) Aide Memoire Questions: Anne Ryan .....</b>	<b>354</b>
<b>Appendix O (1) Biographical Note: Bríd Connolly .....</b>	<b>357</b>
<b>Appendix O (2) Aide Memoire Questions: Bríd Connolly .....</b>	<b>357</b>
<b>Appendix P Chronological Order of Des O Loughlin’s Diaries.....</b>	<b>359</b>
<b>Appendix Q Documents Accessed in the DES.....</b>	<b>360</b>
<b>Appendix R Extracts from <i>Towards 2016 on Adult Education</i>.....</b>	<b>363</b>
<b>Appendix S Employment and Human Resources Development</b>	
<b>Operational Programme of the 2000-2006 .....</b>	<b>370</b>

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACCS	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
ACOT	An Comhairle Oiliúna Talamhaíochta
ADM	Area Development Management Ltd.
AHG	Dept. of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands
AEO	Adult Education Organiser
AIM	Action, Information and Motivation
ALMP	Active Labour Market Policy
ANCO	An Comhairle Oiliúna
AONTAS	National Adult Education Organisation
ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland
BIM	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
BTEAS	Back to Education Allowance Scheme
BTWAS	Back to Work Allowance Scheme
CDVEC	City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee
CEB	County Enterprise Board
CEOA	Association of Chief Executive Officers of Vocational Education Committees
CERT	Council for Education, Recruitment and Training for the Hospitality Sector
CHIU	Conference of Heads of Irish Universities
CIF	Construction Industry Confederation
CORI	Conference of Religious in Ireland
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CSF	Community Support Framework
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Science
DETE	Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment
DFSCA	Department of Family and Social Affairs
DOL	Des O' Loughlin
EEC	European Economic Community
EHRDOP	Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme
EI	Enterprise Ireland
EMPLOYMENT	EU human resources initiative



ESF	European Social Fund
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU	European Union
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
FF	Fianna Fáil
FOI	Freedom of Information (Act, process)
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey
ICA	Irish Country Women's Association
INTEGRA	EU initiative to combat social exclusion
INTERREG	EU initiative for European regions
IT	Information Technology
IUA	Irish University Association
IVEA	Irish Vocational Education Association
JMB	Joint Management Body
KESP	Knowledge Economy Skills Project
LALB	Local Adult Learning Board
LANPAG	Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group
LEADER	Liaisons Entre Actions de Developpment de l'Economie Rurale - EU Rural Development initiative
LES	Local Employment Service
MAC	Management Advisory Committee
MACE	Maynooth Adult and Community Education Centre
MNR	Department of Marine and Natural Resources
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
NALC	National Adult Learning Council
NAPS	National Anti Poverty Strategy
NCVA	National Council for Vocational Awards
NDP	National Development Plan
NEAP	National Employment Action Plan

NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NESF	National Economic and Social Forum
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NR	North Riding
NRB	National Rehabilitation Board
NTVEC	North Tipperary Vocational Education Committee
NUIM	National University of Ireland, Maynooth
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OP	Operational Programme (of NDP)
PD	Progressive Democrat
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate Course
TD	Teachta Dála - elected member of Dáil Éireann
Skillnets	An industry-led body to support enterprise-led training
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
STANCE	Strategies to Advance Networks Collective Empowerment
STTC	Senior Traveller Training Centre
TMG	Top Management Group
TUI	Teachers' Union of Ireland
UK	United Kingdom
URBAN	EU initiative to support integrated development in disadvantaged urban areas
USA	United States of America
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VTOS	Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme
WENDI	Women's Education Networks and Development Initiative
WPL	Workplace Learning
YEA	Youth Employment Agency
YOUTHSTART	EU initiative to enhance employment opportunities for young people Under 20



# Chapter One

## *Introduction*

## 1.1 Overview of Thesis

In 1997 the new coalition Government decided to publish a Green Paper and a White Paper on adult education<sup>1</sup>. The decision meant adult education was now on the national policy agenda and stakeholders had an opportunity to influence policy. Thus began the fascinating journey of a fragmented sector from the margins of Irish public policy.

Then adult education was fragmented into three domains: (i) the education domain (ii) the training domain and (iii) the community education domain. Organisation within each domain was also fragmented (DETE, 1997: 108-9; DES, 1998b: 45-65 and 87-94). The journey from the margins was complicated by the complexity of the Irish public policy process and the intense rivalry between the education and training domains. This intriguing back drop demands that the story of the adult education journey be told.

This thesis tells that story by answering the research question – what lessons can be learned for the future development of Irish adult education from the policy making process since 1997? In telling the story, the thesis will focus on the Irish public policy process and the roles of the Departments of Education and Science (DES) and Enterprise Trade and Employment (DETE), the lead Departments for most adult education policy.

The thesis also tells a parallel story of my personal journey from being an adult education and policy making actor with a narrow perspective to one with a broader understanding of the complexity and nature of the policy process and the architecture of the adult education system. I set out on the research journey as an actor operating exclusively in one adult education domain. I had a strong feeling that the publication of the Green and White Papers on Adult Education was a very positive event and that the only contentious issue during their preparation was whether the Local Adult Learning Boards were to be located inside or outside the VEC system. The research journey significantly altered my initial intuition. I hope the lessons I have learned on my personal journey can inspire adult education stakeholders to become insightful policy makers in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> The new Minister of State for Adult Education informed AONTAS at a meeting in the Department of Education and Science on 26/07/1997 that he intended to publish a Green Paper by Christmas (DOL: 3)

This introductory chapter describes my own background to explain my interest in adult education and policy making; outlines my subjectivity as a researcher and provides the lens for critical reflection on the issues being explored in the study. It goes on to explain why I selected adult education policy making and chose 1997 and 2007 as the start and end dates for the research.

## **1.2. Personal and Professional Experience in Adult Education and Policy Making**

My interest and experience in adult education and policy making was grounded in my work as adult education tutor, teacher, principal in Co. Kilkenny VEC and CEO of North Tipperary VEC. I was involved in curriculum, programme, institutional and system development at local level because of a personal commitment to improve the quality of education. These experiences led me to participate in national policy making, because I learned that it is futile to attempt policy change by operating exclusively at local level. Through these experiences I gained a number of insights into the policy process, became aware of my blind spots as a policy analyst and enjoyed a number of personal experiences which have coloured my views.

### **1.2.1. *Personal Insights into the Policy Process***

I gained many insights into the policy process through experience at local and national levels. These insights and experiences naturally inform the way I answer the research question.

The most important personal insight was that policy making at national level is complex, difficult and hotly contested because it impacts directly on the lives of learners, staff, institutions, organisations, the community and the well-being of the State. Contestation reflects the fact that stakeholders and policy makers are either trying to defend or promote interests.

I also learned that the capacity of individual actors to influence national policy is limited. To influence national policy, the individual actor needs to be part of an

effective national advocacy, representative or political organisation with negotiation, representative or consultative rights.

Finally, I believe that unresolved structural issues, such as those in the adult education policy sector in 1997, have contributed to the complexity of policy making in Irish education. Dealing with structures in education is difficult because of power imbalances between management bodies, the churches, trade unions and service users, and because of competing internal interests. Resolving structural issues is even more vexatious if more than one Government Department has a role in a policy sector as is the case in adult education.

### **1.2.2 *Blind Spots as a Policy Analyst***

While I gained valuable insights into the policy process during my career, I also became aware of my own blind spots as a policy analyst. For instance, my experience was limited to education policy within the VEC sector, and this has influenced the way I view policy making. This research has borne out the importance of understanding all three domains of adult education.

Also my experience was limited to individual policy issues. I did not have experience in dealing with macro issues until later in my career through involvement in the establishment of the Tipperary Institute. Even that experience was largely an instrumental one: my analysis of macro issues happened because I wanted to develop and promote the case for the Institute. Therefore, to undertake this study I needed to broaden my knowledge of the entire adult education system and the Irish public policy process.

### **1.2.3 *Professional Experiences Pertinent to the Research***

#### **1.2.3.1 *Interdepartmental Steering Committee for TRBDI***

One particular professional experience, which linked local and national policy making, gave me a sharp insight into an aspect of national policy systems. I was one of two project promoters of the Tipperary Rural and Business Development Institute

(TRBDI)<sup>2</sup> and acting CEO of the Institute. Objectives of the Institute included increasing the participation of mature students in third level and contributing to rural and community development through the promotion of small businesses. My role involved membership of the interdepartmental committee established to implement the Government decision taken in December 1994 to establish the Institute (DES, 1996).

I was very struck by the capacity of senior departmental officials to analyse policy proposals and solve problems. However, the most important observation was how all the spending Government Departments represented on the Steering Committee, other than DES, were determined not to commit one cent of funding to the Institute. The Departments adopting this approach included those with responsibility for promoting rural and business development. My observation led to the insight, re-enforced by the literature, that there is institutional rivalry between Government Departments, which leads to a silo approach to Irish public policy making.

#### 1.2.3.2 *Officer of the Irish Vocational Education Association*

My involvement as an officer of the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) between 2000 and 2005 also provided valuable insights into policy making. For instance, chairing the Steering Committee that commissioned a review of the organisation and structure of the Irish Vocational Education Association by PricewaterhouseCoopers, made me reflect with colleagues on the internal structures of the organisation, on how the organisation related (or failed to relate) to its stakeholders and on its inability to influence national policy because of organisational weaknesses and limited capacity. Involvement in the process also gave me a better understanding of how powerful internal interest groups can delay or undermine organisational change.

Secondly, I played a significant role in the development of IVEA adult education policy from 2000-2005. The role involved membership of the IVEA Adult Education Leadership Team and negotiating with DES on behalf of Vocational Education Committees. These meetings with DES gave me an insight into the way the Further Education Section of the Department operated and its priorities during the implementation of the White Paper on Adult Education (DES, 2000a).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Now known as the Tipperary Institute

<sup>3</sup> This is referred to as the White Paper in the rest of the thesis.

Thirdly, I represented the IVEA on the National Guidance Forum, which had been given the task of advising the Ministers for Education and Science and Enterprise, Trade and Employment on a national guidance policy. I was commissioned by the Forum to prepare a proposal for a set of integrated national and local guidance structures. Membership of the Forum provided me with the opportunity to participate in a national policy making process with a wide range of stakeholders including DETE and FÁS. Preparing the document on national and local structures for guidance gave me an insight into the exercise of power by interest groups, negotiation with these groups and the need for compromise to move a policy process forward.

A fourth policy role with the IVEA during 2000-2005 was chairing a working party to consider implementing the proposal to establish Local Adult Learning Boards in the White Paper (DES, 2000a). Inevitably, this role involved a close analysis of the structures proposed in the White Paper at local and national levels. The analysis, which was debated in the working party and the wider organisation, concluded that the structures proposed for adult education at local and national levels were flawed.

My final involvement with the IVEA was developing policy for Vocational Education Committees (VECs) on educational provision for refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers. I was chair of the Working Party which prepared a series of five policy documents from 2000 to 2006 and was advisor for a sixth policy document, published in 2008. This work is relevant because provision for the target group is at the margins of adult education policy just as adult education itself is at the margins of Irish education and public policy in 1997. Working on policy for the 'new Irish' area provided me with an insight into the challenges faced by adult education policy makers in DES operating at the margins of the education system.



### 1.3 The Reasons for Choosing Adult Education Policy Making

Apart from a personal and professional interest in both adult education and policy making for over 40 years, as discussed in the previous section, the main reason for choosing adult education policy making for this study is its emerging importance as a distinct component of lifelong learning and a key building block of the knowledge society.

The Irish Government recognised the emerging importance of adult education in the White Paper in Education (Department of Education, 1995: 77) when it argued:

Adult education and training will be an integral part of the framework for the future development of education. The objective will be to maximise access to suitable programmes for adults who wish or need to update their occupational skills and to continue their personal development, irrespective of their educational and training attainments.

Jarvis (1995: 15) argues that “the provision of education for adults is necessary because of the nature of contemporary society and the nature of humanity.” The OECD (1996: 72) recognises the emerging importance of adult education when it claims that:

In pursuing a necessary policy of development and expansion in adult and continuing vocational training, countries will have to come to grips with a number of thorny issues, ranging from financial and legal problems and questions about the proper division of responsibilities, to the institutional frameworks and the supporting arrangements that will need to be put in place.

CORI (2005:145) posits that “there is widespread acknowledgement of the fact that both early childhood and adult education are critically important for Ireland’s future. They require substantial creative development and additional resources in the years ahead”. Fullick (2004: 3), writing about the UK, concludes that “the importance of adult learning and adult learners has never loomed so large in public policy as in the years since the election of the Labour Government in 1997”.

Coupled with the emerging importance of adult education is the fact that the Irish adult education policy making process in its entirety has not been the subject of research, even though aspects of the system have been studied. Many of these studies have been confined to one domain and have paid little attention to the other domains.

Another reason for choosing adult education policy making was a conviction that the research will identify the lessons to be learned from the process since 1997. The research into the overall adult education policy making process and the nature of its dependency on the Irish public policy system could contribute to improved adult education policy making in the future. Insights gleaned from the research into the process and its links with Irish public policy can empower stakeholders and thus contribute to better policy making. Finally, the research fills an obvious gap in the newly emerging field of academic research into adult education policy making and contributes to the development of adult education as an academic discipline (Taylor, 2007: 58-66).

## **1.4 Reasons for Starting the Research in 1997**

There were a number of political and administrative events in 1997 which provide a rationale for starting the research in that year. They include important policy initiatives in the three domains of adult education and the publication of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) results that embarrassed the State. These are discussed in turn.

### **1.4.1 Political Reasons for Choosing 1997**

#### *1.4.1.1 The Election of a New Government and the Appointment of a Minister of State for Adult Education*

The primary reason I chose 1997 as the starting point for the research was that a new Government came to power in June of that year<sup>4</sup> and decided to publish both Green and White Papers on adult education. The change of Government led to new policies which impacted on adult education, including the appointment of the first

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<sup>4</sup> A general election took place in June 1997 (Downing, 2004). The election led to the appointment of a Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrat Coalition, which abandoned plans of the outgoing Government to establish regional education bodies and reorganised Government Departments (Walsh, 1999). A significant change in the reorganisation of Departments, from the point of view of this research, was moving sport from the Department of Education (Uí Mhaoldúin, 2007: 28-9). This meant that the Minister of State's main responsibility was now adult education at the Department of Education and Science. Other changes in the departmental alignment involved moving trade to the new Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment as well as certain science and technology functions from Enterprise, Trade and Employment to Education, which was renamed the Department of Education and Science. This is discussed again later in the chapter.

Minister for State for Adult Education with a remit was for the education domain. That appointment led to the establishment of the Further Education (FE) Section of DES and the appointment of a Principal Officer for adult education (Ministerio de Educacion<sup>5</sup>, 2000). Consequently, the domain now had both a political and a bureaucratic champion. Without these appointments the education domain would not have the capacity necessary for a major policy initiative such as the publication of a White Paper.

The importance of the election of the 1997 Government to the research is illustrated by the fact that it strongly influenced the first steps on the journey of adult education from the margins to the mainstream. While the incoming Government decided to publish Green and White Papers on adult education led by the Minister of State at DES, the *White Paper on Human Resource Development* (1997) published by the outgoing Minister for Enterprise and Employment focused on the training domain.

The new Government also decided to abandon the proposed Regional Education Authorities and retain the Vocational Education Committees (Clancy, 1999: 88). These Authorities were to have responsibility for adult education (Department of Education, 1995: 82).

#### 1.4.1.2 *Ideological Shift from Centre Left to Centre Right*

I also chose 1997 because the election of the new Government led to a shift from the centre-left philosophy of the outgoing Fine Gael/Labour Coalition to the centre-right philosophy of the Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrat Coalition. The new Government adopted a neo-liberal philosophy, underpinned by the Strategic Management Initiative, driven by the Progressive Democrats and the new Minister for Finance (Collins, 2006: 181-192).

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<sup>5</sup> NETA is an EU adult education project involving Spain, Ireland and Denmark, funded through Grundtvig, under the 2000 'Call for Proposals' of the SOCRATES 11 Programme. The Report is published by Ministerio de Educacion, Madrid. The Irish partner in the project was DES and the Report on the Project provided data on the adult education system in each participating country.

#### 1.4.1.3 *Public Service Management Act (1997)*

My final political reason for choosing 1997 was the passing of the Public Service Management Act, which set the legislative framework for the operation of Government Departments. According to Dooney and O' Toole:

The Public Service Management Act provides a framework for formally assigning responsibility and accountability to heads of departments and in turn to other officers. The Act signalled, as such, a clear change in the operation of the system of government.

(Dooney and O' Toole, 1998: 296)

Under the Act each department has to produce a strategy statement, which sets out "key objectives and the outputs to be achieved and the resources to be used". Each secretary general has responsibility for "managing, implementing and monitoring government policies and delivering outputs as determined with the Minister" (Dooney and O'Toole, 1998: 296).

#### 1.4.2 ***Publication of Adult Education Policy Documents and Initiation of the National Employment Action Plans***

Having discussed the impact of the political changes brought about by the 1997 election this section examines some of the policy documents and reports published in 1997, as well as initiatives undertaken, which marked it out as an important year for adult education.

A number of other important adult education documents were either published or initiated in 1997, in addition to the decision to publish a Green Paper. They included the IALS Report (DES, 1997), the *White Paper on Human Resource Development*, the *National Anti Poverty Strategy*, the *Green Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity* as well as the initiation of the National Employment Action Plan process. The influence of each is briefly discussed, starting with the IALS Report.

##### 1.4.2.1. *International Adult Literacy Survey Report*

One of the most influential documents published in 1997 was the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). The survey was conducted by the OECD in 1995.

The survey found that about 25 percent of the Irish population were found to score at the lowest level (level 1), performing at best tasks which required the reader to locate a simple piece of information in a text. This percentage is the highest of any country surveyed except Poland (DES, 1998b: 31).

The publication of these results propelled adult literacy to the forefront of Government policy. The NESC Report, *Opportunities, Challenges and Capacities for Choice* (1999: 278-9) recommended “that appropriate measures be taken as soon as possible to translate the recommendations [on developing a National Adult Literacy Programme] of the upcoming White Paper into policy actions”.

Subsequently, the National Development Plan 2000-2006 (Government of Ireland 1999b: 92) identified literacy as an important policy objective by “providing opportunities so that every individual can attain an adequate level of literacy and numeracy skills”.

#### 1.4.2.2 *The White Paper on Human Resource Development and the National Employment Action Plan*

The publication by the Government of the *White Paper on Human Resource Development* (Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1997) in May 1997 influenced adult education policy for two reasons. The first is that the White Paper provided an important context for policy making in adult education. Gunnigle *et al.* (2006) argue that:

This White Paper represented a significant departure from the traditional programme-led interventions that typified previous governmental responses, and which had resulted in ad hoc interventions that lacked overall strategic coherence. Instead, the emphasis was on clear objective driven solutions and called for significant change in the approach to training and human resource development by business, individuals and the providers of training services.

(Gunnigle, P., Heraty, N., Morley, M. J. 2006: 221-2)

The second reason the White Paper was significant is that it was published by the outgoing Government and by the then Department of Enterprise and Employment. Publication by the outgoing Government meant there was a risk that aspects of the policies could be reversed as happened to the White Paper on Education (1995) or that its policies might not be implemented. Its focus was on the training domain of adult education because it was published by the department of Enterprise and Employment.

Also on 15 December 1997, the European Council decided to invite member states to prepare annual National Employment Action Plans (O' Connor, 1998). The EU asked that the plans be prepared "within the four pillar framework of the 1998 EU Guidelines". These pillars were (i) improving employability, (ii) developing entrepreneurship, (iii) encouraging adaptability in business and their employees and (iv) strengthening the policies for equal opportunities (DETE, 1998). The National Employment Action Plans were to become an important part of State adult education policy. DETE was the lead Department for these plans. Though their focus was on the training domain, National Employment Action Plans catered for the education and community domains.

#### 1.4.2.3 *Green Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity*

The publication of the *Green Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity* (Department of Social Welfare, 1997), coupled with the influence of EU initiatives on community education<sup>6</sup> and the inclusion of the community and voluntary pillar in social partnership, kick-started policy development by the State in the community and voluntary sector. The publication of the Green Paper was another reason to choose 1997 as the starting point for the research because education is the key to community development (Connolly, 2007: 115-16, 124-5).

#### 1.4.2.4 *The National Anti-Poverty Strategy*

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy influenced all areas of public policy and served as a constraint on the neo-liberal agenda.

The strategy is a major cross departmental policy initiative by the Government designed to place the needs of the poor and the socially excluded among the issues at the top of the national agenda in terms of government policy and action.

(Government of Ireland, 1997d: 2)

The strategy significantly influenced the adult education policy process, through actions on social inclusion and equality (DES, 2000a: 49; DETE, 1997: 14).

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<sup>6</sup> The EU initiatives, that influenced community education, included EMPLOYMENT, INTERREG, LEADER, URBAN and the Local Urban and Rural Development Programme (DES, 1998b: 90).

## **1.5 Reasons for Ending the Research in 2007**

The main reason for choosing 2007 as the termination point for this research is that policy making is a process which extends over time and generally requires a period of approximately ten years to establish a pattern of policy making, implementation and evaluation (Heck, 2004; Colebatch, 2002).

2007 also has a political significance. The decade up to then, covers the lifetime of the two Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrats' Coalition Governments elected in 1997 and 2002. A significant change in political direction began in 2007. The Celtic Tiger economy started to wane and the general election led to a new Government with the Green Party as the junior coalition partner and a weakened Progressive Democrat party joining Fianna Fáil in a Coalition Government. The third reason is practical – Annual Departmental Reports and data on policy outcomes for 2007 were available, while those for 2008 are not. Finally, the publication of the Fifth Report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs heralded the start of a new era in adult education and the triumph of the neo-liberal agenda (Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2007).

## **1.6 Defining Adult Education**

I decided to define adult education in this Chapter to provide the reader with a clear understanding of what the term means.

Any definition of adult education has to take on board a number of competing themes such as the purpose of adult education, its boundaries and place in the lifelong learning continuum. As adult education moves to the mainstream, the debate about its definition will intensify because interest groups will compete to define it to suit their purposes. Part of the debate will be around how the transformative role of adult education, promoted by some commentators within the education domain, challenges the neo-liberal agenda of the training domain in the Irish state (Connolly, 2007). It is necessary to examine the place of adult education within lifelong learning to understand the context of this debate.

## **1.6.1 Adult Education within the Lifelong Learning Framework**

### *1.6.1.1 Adult Education and Lifelong Learning*

Lifelong learning has re-emerged as an important concept in education since the publication of *Lifelong Learning for All* (OECD, 1996) and the *Strategy for Lifelong Learning* (EU, 1996). Adult education is clearly part of lifelong learning which “includes all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective” , (DETE 2002b: 6). *The EU Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (2000: 2) also sees learning as a seamless continuum “from the cradle to the grave extending from the early years through adult life”.

However, there is confusion among stakeholders and practitioners about the relationship between adult education and lifelong learning. The confusion is so profound that the terms adult education and lifelong learning are often used interchangeably. The confusion is compounded by the way the terms are used in the titles of adult education public policy documents by DES and DETE.

The DES policy documents which use both terms are: *Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning: Green Paper on Adult Education* (DES, 1998b) and *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education* (DES, 2000a), while the DETE policy document is the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE: 2002b).

The DES approach to locating adult education within a lifelong learning framework recognises adult education “as a component of an overall lifelong education system with a fundamental objective of promoting the well-being of all citizens” (DES, 1998 b: 6). Meanwhile, the DETE approach is reflected in the title of its policy document, even though a “scoping decision made by the Taskforce was to focus primarily on adult learners” (DETE, 2002b: 7) and “has a vision of lifelong learning and adult education that sustains the economy and values learning that supports economic development” (Fleming, 2004: 15).



### 1.6.1.2 *Formal, Non-formal and Informal Parts of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning*

Lifelong learning and learning in adult education can be formal, informal and non-formal, each of which is discussed in turn.

Formal learning can be achieved when a learner decides to follow a programme in an educational institution, adult training centre or in the workplace. Formal learning is generally recognised in a qualification or certificate.

(OECD, 2007: 25)

The formal elements of lifelong learning, in either state-funded or private education and training institutions are:

- Pre-school education;
- Primary education;
- Post-primary education;
- Adult and further education;
- Training; and
- Higher education.

(OECD, 2006: 121-157; DES, 2004; Gunnigle *et al.*, 2006: 209-262)

Non-formal learning includes learning “embedded in planned activities that are not explicitly designated as learning, but contain an important learning element” (OECD, 2007: 25). The OECD, however, largely confines its definition to educational and training institutions. The EU (2002: 58) takes the opposite view and concludes that non-formal learning is:

Learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective.

(European Union, 2002: 58)

#### Informal learning

...results from daily work-related, family or leisure activities. It is not organised or structured (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner’s perspective. It usually does not lead to certification.

(OECD, 2007: 26)

These distinctions between formal, non formal and informal learning in adult education are significant for the research. I have decided to exclude informal learning because it difficult to get data on it in Ireland because it is not subject to

public policy, though the UK is currently examining the issue (NIACE: 2008). The *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning*, (DETE, 2002b: 7) argues “it is difficult to measure and for the state to directly influence”.

### **1.6.2 Definition of Adult Education**

Having placed adult education within a lifelong learning framework and distinguished between formal, informal and non-formal learning it is now possible to define adult education. The definition I have chosen is taken from the White Paper (DES, 2000a: 27) and states that adult education is “systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training”. Interestingly, the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b) does not define adult education.

The White Paper (2000a) definition is broader and more concise than that used in the *Report of the Commission on Adult Education: Lifelong Learning* (1983: 9) and endorsed by the Green Paper. The definition used there is:

Adult Education includes all systematic learning by adults which contributes to their development as individuals and as members of the community and of society, apart from full-time instruction received by persons as part of their uninterrupted initial education and training. It may be formal education which takes place in institutions e.g. training centres, schools, colleges, institutes and universities, or non-formal education which is any other systematic form of learning including self-directed learning.

(DES, 1998b: 16)

To be explicit, adult education has the following characteristics. It:

- is part of a continuum of learning from the cradle to the grave; and
- takes place in formal, non formal and informal settings.

In Ireland the practice of adult education involves:

- re-entry by adults to further education (education domain);
- re-entry by adults to higher education (education domain);
- continuing education and training (education and training domains);
- community education (community education domain); and
- other systematic and deliberate learning in a variety of settings (community, education and training domains).

(DES, 2000a: 27-8)

While the definition of adult education is broad, in practice education and training operate separately and community education is marginalised from both. For that reason and for the sake of clarity, adult education is divided into three domains in this thesis. The domains are:

- (i) the *education domain*, which is adult education led by DES;
- (ii) the *training domain* encompassing all training led by DETE. It includes training by FÁS and the County Enterprise Boards, private sector training as well as sectoral training led by other Government Departments. Examples of sectoral training include training by Teagasc, led by the Department of Agriculture and Food (1998b: 59-62); and
- (iii) the *community education domain* encompassing adult education in communities delivered by the communities themselves. Funding for community education comes from several Government Departments, but no one Government Department has a lead role.

The use of the term training domain should not be construed as implying that there is no education dimension in training, because the definition of adult education includes all three domains. The three domains reflect how the organisation of adult education is spread over several Government Departments and provide convenient labels for the reader and the researcher. The domains reflect three different starting points, route maps, mode of transport and pace of travel of adult education on its journey from the margins.

## 1.7 Structure of Thesis

This thesis tells the story of the journey of adult education towards the mainstream and the lessons learned during that journey. The challenge, in terms of the structure of this thesis was to manage the breadth, complexity and multi-layered nature of policy making. The structure of the thesis had to cater for this complexity while retaining an overview of the policy process. That was achieved by breaking the analysis of policy into stages as a heuristic device. The stages were: (i) creating the policy agenda, (ii) decision making, (iii) implementation and (iv) evaluation.

As discussed already I also organised adult education into three domains: (i) education, (ii) community education and (iii) training which encompasses general and sectoral training. To maintain an overview I identified major themes and used these as a way of ensuring a focus on the 'big picture' in the minutiae of the adult education policy making process.

The biggest challenge in maintaining the balance between breaking adult education policy making down into its components and reassembling it to retain an overview was in structuring the literature review. My initial thinking was to have three separate chapters with one each for general policy, the Irish policy process and adult education policy. However, I ultimately decided to put these three facets of adult education policy into a single chapter with three parts to show their distinct nature while at the same time demonstrating how they were interlinked and thus contribute to maintaining an overview of the policy process.

### 1.7.1 *Mapping the Journey: Policy Theory and Practice (Chapter Two)*

The first step on the journey was to examine the literature on policy theory, the Irish public policy process and the state of adult education in 1997. Policy theory is reviewed in the first part of Chapter Two. The review places Irish adult education policy making within a theoretical framework. I analysed the policy theory literature by focussing on the way policy developed as an academic discipline. The analysis of the literature examined the evolution of ideas from Machiavelli to Habermas that influenced policy making. These ideas in turn influenced the development of policy as an academic discipline in the US from the early 1950's. The evolution of policy as

an academic discipline has mirrored the way governments, research institutes, interest groups, researchers and the media think about policy over the past sixty years.

A number of themes emerged from the policy theory literature that provided focus to the research. Each theme is discussed because together they provide the theoretical framework for examining the Irish public policy literature and the adult education literature. The themes are:

- the role of the state and the market in public policy;
- the roles of the political and bureaucratic systems;
- the exercise of power by the state through a continuum from pluralism to elitism;
- the choice of rational/non-rational or multiple methods of policy making;
- the choice of top down, bottom up or combined approaches in policy implementation;
- the use of incremental or radical approaches in policy making; and
- the emergence of 'New Public Management' theory which influences both policy theory and practice (Kettl, 2000).

Part Two of Chapter 2 then goes on to examine the Irish public policy process in the light of these themes. The literature led me to identify, analyse and describe the nature of the Irish public policy process, the components of the process, the interaction of these components and the dynamics of the process with a view to locating adult education policy making within it.

Part Three reviews the adult education literature in each domain of adult education. Though adult education, as defined by the State and in this thesis, includes all three domains, each domain operates as a separate entity in the Irish adult education system. Therefore, I needed to organise the fragmented adult education system into three domains to manage the research process and provide signposts for the reader.

The fragmented nature of adult education inevitably led me to pay attention to the structures of the system. I use the term 'institutional architecture' in this study, to describe these structures because the phrase implies the deliberate design of a system, which should be the case. However, the system was not purposely designed by the State but evolved separately in an ad hoc way, within each domain.

The device of organising Irish adult education into domains and using the concept of institutional architecture to describe the structure (or lack thereof) of the Irish adult education system, helped me manage the research and led me to a clearer understanding of the literature. This was achieved by examining the literature and interview data through the lens of each domain. I ensured that each domain received appropriate attention in the Irish public policy and adult education literature and also in the interviews. Because DES and DETE are responsible for most adult education, I interviewed policy elites in these Departments, visited the Departments and sought data from them by means of the Freedom of Information process.

I was in a stronger position to analyse the journey of Irish adult education from the margins towards the mainstream by understanding policy theory, the nature of the Irish policy process and the reality of the Irish adult education system in 1997 revealed in the literature. The analysis and deeper understanding of Irish adult education enabled me to identify lessons that can be applied to the future development of the system. Having reviewed policy theory, the Irish policy process and the situation of adult education in 1997, I then turned to the challenge of data collection to answer the research question.

### **1.7.2 *Negotiating the Labyrinth (Chapter Three)***

Chapter Three identifies the methods chosen to unravel the complexity of policy making in Irish adult education. The OECD (2005: 110) claims that:

Adult learning systems are complex, not least because the players involved – federal and state ministries, the private sector, NGOs and the educational providers – may have many different objectives.

The methods include interviews with policy elites involved directly in the adult education policy process and analysis of published policy documents as well as internal departmental documents used during policy making. The main criteria for choosing the research methods were that they would reveal the journey of adult education since 1997 and inform my understanding and that of stakeholders of how policy was made. This Chapter also provides a rationale for the methods chosen and describes the research process.

The challenges in identifying the research methods and analysing the data were twofold. The complexity of the Irish public policy process and the three-domain configuration of adult education was the first challenge. Managing complexity involved breaking it down to reassemble it in a way that is understandable. The second challenge was the time and cost involved in breaking down the complexity by getting access to the data in a number of Government Departments and subsequently analysing the data obtained.

I was fortunate, given limited time and resources, to get physical access to relevant data in both DES and DETE including a record in diary form of all meetings attended by an Assistant Principal Officer of the Further Education Section of DES from 1995 to 2006.

However, managing the Freedom of Information process, which I had to use, was both time consuming and expensive. For example, I was quoted €5,677.45 for data on the impact of the Social Partnership on adult education policy making by the Department of the Taoiseach [Appendix A (6)]. Obviously, paying such a fee was not possible and I had to significantly modify the request [Appendix A (7)]. In addition, since the amendment of the Freedom of Information Act in 2003, Cabinet records are now exempt for ten years and measures have been introduced to protect communication between Ministers (Collins, Cradden and Butler, 2007: 62-3).

### **1.7.3 *From Euphoria to Despondency (Chapter Four)***

The data that emerged from the research is described and evaluated in Chapter Four in the light of the theoretical framework and the research question. The evaluation was carried out by identifying important themes to emerge from both the literature and the field work and by critically reflecting on them and the data in the light of my experience as an adult education practitioner and policy maker. The themes form the basis for answering the research question through identifying the lessons learned about adult education policy making since 1997.

Having examined the literature and decided on the appropriate research methods, the analysis of the data in Chapter Four is built around three main themes: (i) the impact of the Irish policy system on adult education policy making, (ii) the

management of the policy process by DES and (iii) the outcome of the process as reflected in the views of stakeholders.

The impact of the Irish policy system is analysed by first considering the role of Coalition Government in adult education policy making since 1997. The two major policy making mechanisms used by the Irish State, National Development Plans and Social Partnership Agreements, are subsequently examined.

In examining the National Development Plan 2000-2006 (Department of Finance: 1999), particular attention is paid to the Employment and Human Resources Development 2000-2006 Operational Programme (DETE, 2000a). This operational programme “addresses the labour market and human capital needs of the Irish economy for the period 2000-2006” (DETE, 2000a: 1) and indicates the measures to achieve that objective as well as the budget for each measure. The operational programme, therefore, provides a comprehensive record of State/EU funded adult education programmes at a critical time for this study.

The second policy making mechanism employed by the Irish State, Social Partnership is also analysed by examining how adult education is dealt with in the four Social Partnership Agreements negotiated since 1996.

The role of Government Departments in the Irish policy process and in adult education is also examined including the role of the two core Departments – Finance and the Taoiseach. Then the rivalry between DES and DETE for control of adult education policy is reviewed and the fact that the 1997 adult education institutional architecture remained intact after a decade of policy making is reflected upon.

Chapter Four also considers how DES managed adult education policy making since 1997. This is done by drawing on the Cromien Report on the operation of DES, (DES, 2000b), considering the organisation of adult education in the Department; examining the level of engagement by the ‘Top Management Group (TMG) and reviewing the implementation of the White Paper (DES, 2000a) including the National Adult Literacy Programme.

The final section of Chapter Four traces the reaction of education and community domain stakeholders to the unfolding adult education policy making process from initial euphoria from 1997 to 2002 when the National Adult Learning Council (NALC)



was established to despondency following the suspension of NALC in 2003 leading to its disbanding in 2008.

#### **1.7.4 *The Future (Chapter Five)***

The lessons learned from the adult education policy experience since 1997 are set out in Chapter Five to provide a roadmap for the future of Irish adult education. The lessons are based on the analysis of the data and critical reflection, discussed in Chapter Four. These lessons are categorised according to the themes identified in Chapter Two and applied to the Irish situation in Chapter Four. They include the importance of: (i) understanding the Irish policy process, (ii) having a sound institutional architecture for a policy sector, (iii) the capacity of the lead department in a sector, (iv) the downside of institutional rivalry in dealing with 'cross-cutting' policies and (v) the crucial role played by evaluation in the policy process.

Finally, Chapter Five draws some conclusions and makes recommendations for the future development of adult education policy including identifying areas for research. The recommendations and the research involve the overall structure of the Irish public policy process, the institutional architecture for adult education, the identification of a lead department, the organisation of adult education in DES, the establishment of a national adult education platform, and an evaluation of the National Adult Literacy Programme.



# Chapter Two

*Mapping the  
Journey:*

*Policy Theory  
and Practice*

The dynamics of policy making is explored in this Chapter through an analysis of the policy literature. The first part explores policy making theory. The second deals with the Irish policy making process and the final part explores the three domains of adult education policy, namely (i) education, (ii) training and (iii) community education.

# Chapter Two

*Part One:*

*Policy Making  
Theory*

The theory literature provides insights into the policy process and helps locate Irish policy making in a theoretical framework. Attributes of policy, including the use of power and the creation of order in the policy process, are examined first. A definition of policy follows and an evolutionary approach to policy making is identified.

The ideas of great thinkers like Machiavelli, Bacon, Marx, Popper and Habermas and others are then explored. There follows a sharper focus on the policy process through an exploration of the development of policy as an academic discipline since the 1950s. The development of the academic discipline builds on the work of the great thinkers and in particular the ideas of Weber and Keynes. It leads us to the theory which underpins postmodern ideas about the policy process that operate in the world of today. Before each stage of policy making is analysed a number of approaches to policy making are explored. These include political, pluralist/elitist, neo-Marxist, neo-corporatist, institutional and New Public Management approaches.

The stages' model, which is used to organise the rest of the literature review and the data revealed by the research in Chapter Four, is introduced. The model divides policy making into (i) agenda setting, (ii) decision making, (iii) policy implementation and (iv) policy evaluation and is derived from Parsons (1995: 82-3). I have modified this model by making evaluation a separate stage because evaluation has become a normal part of EU grant aided programmes and is part of Irish National Development Plans (Department of Finance, 2007: 34; Colebatch 2002: 27-88).

## **2.1 Policy Theory**

“The concept of policy is central to our understanding of the way we are governed” (Colebatch, 2002: 7). Policy is linked to politics because it depends on how we choose to be governed. John (1998: 1-2) argues that “public policy seeks to explain the operation of the political system as a whole”. Lasswell (1936) establishes the link between both in the title of his seminal book *Politics: Who Gets What, When and How?* That title also captures the essence of policy making - the exercise of power through the political system. Consequently, research into Irish adult education policy making must concern itself with the exercise of power through the political system.

### **2.1.1 Basic Definition and Attributes of Policy**

Adult education was defined in Chapter One. The definition of policy appropriate to this study evolves from identifying basic definitions and attributes of policy making. Chubb (1992: 153-4) following Jenkins (1978), saw policy as:

a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means to achieve them within a specified situation where these decisions should in principle be within the power of those actors to achieve.

A more basic definition sees policy as “a course of action which the government has taken a deliberate decision to adopt” (James, 1997: 2). Both definitions recognise the exercise of power through politics. Though on the surface they are simple definitions they conceal a multitude. For this reason there is a need to unpack these definitions and explore some of the implied attributes of policy.

Heck (2004: 8-9) identifies the attributes of policy making to take into consideration when defining policy. Policy is:

- public, consequential, complex, dominated by uncertainty and affected by disagreement about goals;
- diverse in scope, dynamic and often disorderly in process;
- a process spanning a decade or more; and
- often surrounded by policy conflicts involving deeply held values and interests, large amounts of money, and sometimes authoritative coercion.

#### **2.1.1.1 Power in Policy Making**

As discussed earlier, the exercise of power is another attribute of policy making that is important for this research. Like Laswell (1936), Lindblom (1968: 151) sees policy making as the exercise of power:

Power is always held by a number of persons rather than one: hence policy is made through the complex process by which these persons exercise power or influence over each other.

Public policy making is a process, not an event. That attribute has to be taken into account when evaluating James’s definition (1997: 2) of policy making as “a course of action which the government has taken a deliberate decision to adopt”. As Colebatch (2002: 111) and Heck (2004) argue,

Typically, it goes on over a long period of time, and involves a great deal of interaction among the participants. In this perspective doing policy is not

primarily about promulgating formal statements but about negotiating with a range of significant participants so that when (or if) formal statements are made, they accurately reflect what the participants agree to do, and have a significant impact on what they do.

### 2.1.1.2 *The Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions of Policy*

Colebatch (2002: 23) argues that policy making has both a vertical and a horizontal dimension. “The vertical dimension sees policy as rule: it is concerned with the transmission downwards of authorised decisions”. The vertical dimension is what Governments do when they decide on a particular course of action as suggested by James (1997: 2). The horizontal dimension, on the other hand:

...sees policy in terms of the structuring of action. It is concerned with relationships among policy participants in different organizations - that is, outside the line of hierarchical authority. It recognises that policy work takes place across organisational boundaries as well as the hierarchical transmission of authorised decisions within any one organisation. It is concerned with the nature of these linkages across organisations, with how they are formed and sustained with the interpretative frameworks with which participants understand policy questions, and the institutional formations within which they are mobilised.

(Colebatch, 2002: 23)

The vertical dimension runs parallel to and intersects with the horizontal dimension. It operates at national and sub-national levels within a policy sector. For example, the horizontal dimension of education policy making involves DES negotiating with other Government Departments on the content, ideology, territorial dimensions and financing of an educational policy proposal. In particular, the vertical dimension of adult education policy proposals involves getting the agreement of the Departments of Finance and Enterprise Trade and Employment and the support of the Department of the Taoiseach. DES also has to engage with the main adult education providers and advocacy organisations operating in the sector. Therefore, this research examines the role of other Government Departments through evaluating their interaction with DES during the policy process. The methods to do this, discussed in Chapter Three, are: (i) reviewing internal departmental documents and (ii) interviewing policy elites.

I have quoted from Colebatch (2002) to provide context and meaning to James (1997: 2), and because of his penetrating analysis of policy making. Recognising and understanding the vertical and horizontal dimensions of policy making is important to researching the policy process in adult education.

### 2.1.1.3 *The Creation of Order in the Policy Process*

Colebatch (2002:116-7) sees the creation of order as an attribute of policy making.

Public policy involves the creation of order - that is shared understandings about how the various participants will act in particular circumstances. It also involves questions of organisation. This means that a great deal of policy activity consists of building up and sustaining working relationships among different organisations (or distinct units within organisations).

Colebatch (2002: 118) also claims that the policy process tends to draw organised interests into a stable relationship. Governments like to draw representative organisations and providers into the process. This phenomenon is well illustrated in the Irish Social Partnership process. Social Partnership facilitates the building of knowledge and expertise and makes it easier for the Government to operate successfully in public policy making. A common discourse (shared understandings) is thereby established and expertise develops.

Policy makers also have to deal with stability and change. Policy work, Colebatch (2002: 119) argues, is aimed at not only stabilising practice, but also at changing it as I indicated when discussing my interest in policy making. Participants usually get involved in policy because they want to change practice. There usually is a group of authority figures who want “to enunciate existing policy”. This group is often matched by a group with expert knowledge seeking change.

### 2.1.2 *The Definition of Policy Used in the Thesis*

The following definition of policy is appropriate:

Public policy is made through the exercise of power by the state acting alone or in partnership with supra-national bodies, through a complex web of decisions over time, within a specified field or combination of fields. The decisions, which may impact on other policy fields, involve the selection of goals and the means to achieve them.

(Adapted from Jenkins, 1978: 15)

However, policy making is a process, not an event. So it is desirable to identify the approach to policy making to inform this study. The evolutionary approach draws on the definition of policy, accommodates the attributes of policy making and describes the policy process (John, 1998: 195):

The evolutionary approach understands that the elements to policy systems continually interact over time. Combinations of ideas and interests constantly try to dominate decision making and to interact with institutions, patterns of



interest groups and socio-economic processes which are slowly changing and evolving over time. The notion is that some ideas are successful in this context, but that change defines the nature of modern public policy.

The evolutionary approach was developed by John (1998:182-202). It recognises that policy making is an interactive process that takes place over time. The process involves the exercise of power as ideas and interests compete through institutions in the context of society and the economy. The processes normally happen in a slowly evolving situation, though change is occurring all the time. The thinking behind the evolutionary approach is considered in more detail when approaches to policy making are discussed.

The definition of policy and the evolutionary approach will be explored further by analysing the historical development of the ideas that inform policy theory, examining its evolution as an academic discipline and reviewing approaches to public policy making.

### **2.1.3 *Historical Development of Policy Theory***

The development of policy theory, outlined in Figure 1 on the following page, is broken into four periods: (i) early, (ii) the founding thinkers, (iii) post-positivism, and (iv) postmodernism. The analysis involves the development of ideas about the role of the state, the market, interest groups, the community and the way these interact with each other in the policy process. The debate about the role of the state and the market is fundamental to appreciating public policy making (Dunleavy and O' Leary: 1987; Parsons, 1995, Colebatch, 2002, Hill, 2005, Coakley and Gallagher, 2005, Heywood: 2007; Adshead, Kirby, Millar: 2008).

Dividing the development of the ideas underpinning policy theory into four eras helps the reader get a sense of how policy theory evolved, how particular ideas dominated eras and the origins of ideas that influence theory today. They are discussed further in the following sections.

Era	Theorist	Theories
Early Period (1513 – 1850)	<b>Machiavelli</b>	<i>Relating theories of Government from firsthand experience</i>
	<b>Bacon</b>	<i>Introduced scientific method of knowledge (Positivism)</i>
	<b>Bentham</b>	<i>Utilitarianism</i>
	<b>Mill</b>	<i>Individual Freedom</i>
	<b>Marx</b>	<i>Marxism</i>
Founding Thinkers (1850 – 1970)	<b>James</b>	<i>Pragmatism as a theory of truth</i>
	<b>Dewey</b>	<i>Pragmatism as a method of social experiment</i>
The Nineteen Seventies and Eighties (1970's – 1980s)	<b>Popper</b>	<i>Knowledge is not final in science or politics</i>
	<b>Hayek</b>	<i>Policy makers cannot solve problems effectively except through markets</i>
	<b>Nozick</b>	<i>Entitlement rather than fairness</i>
	<b>Rawls</b>	<i>Theory of Justice</i>
Critical Theorists	<b>Foucault</b>	<i>Knowledge, Language, Discourse, Power</i>
	<b>Habermas</b>	<i>Communicative rationality</i>

Figure 1 Historical Development of Policy Theory: 1558 – 2008

2.1.3.1 The Early Period: 1513 - 1850

I have gone back to 1513 because *The Prince* was published in that year and the ideas of Machiavelli and Bacon are major influences on both politics and policy. Both understood policy making to be a rational, scientific process.

Era	Theorist	Theories
Early Period (1513 – 1850)	<b>Machiavelli</b> (1469 - 1527)	<i>Relating theories of Government from firsthand experience</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How power works</li> <li>- Need good quality information</li> <li>- Idea of state craft</li> <li>- Ends and means</li> </ul>
	<b>Bacon</b> (1561 - 1626)	<i>Introduced scientific method of knowledge (Positivism)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy an expression of political rationality</li> <li>- Reasons and argument lead to an understanding of the problem</li> <li>- Solution to the problem</li> <li>- Pursuit of middle course</li> </ul>
	<b>Bentham</b> (1748 - 1832)	<i>Utilitarianism</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The greatest happiness of the greatest number</li> <li>- Rightness/wrongness of action decided in terms of consequence</li> </ul>
	<b>Mill</b> (1806 – 1873)	<i>Individual Freedom</i>
	<b>Marx</b> (1818 – 1883)	<i>Marxism</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capitalism</li> <li>- Proletariat</li> <li>- Revolution</li> </ul>

Figure 2 Historical Development of Policy Theory: Early Period (1513 – 1850)

Machiavelli (1999) developed theories of government, based on his own experience. He argued that government is a craft and its study could be approximated to that of science. Those in power need to understand how power works in order to practice statecraft (Parsons 1995: 41-2). Interestingly Patten (2008: 14-15) also chose Machiavelli as his starting point to trace the development of the modern state though

he chose a different core text - the *Art of War*. To Bacon, policy was a rational course of action drawing on knowledge and science. Magee (1998: 75) argues that "Bacon was one of the first to see that scientific knowledge could give men power over nature". Bacon's view of policy was the use of knowledge for the purposes of governance (Parsons, 1995: 43).

Bacon and Machiavelli still influence policy making. The view that policy is a scientific process influenced the adoption of the rational approach to policy making and was the dominant policy paradigm until the middle of the twentieth century. Today, there is still a debate about the relative value of rational and non-rational models of policy (Parsons, 1995; Colebatch, 2002; Hill: 2005). Rational models are popular again through rational choice theory and 'New Public Management' (Heywood, 2004: 246-7).

Individual freedom, pragmatism and utilitarianism are also concepts introduced during this period. They influence the policies of liberal, neo-liberal and conservative political parties (Heywood, 2004: 130-1). Utilitarianism developed by Bentham (1748-1832), claims "that the morally right act or policy is that which produces the greatest happiness for members of society" (Kymlicka, 1990: 9). The rightness or wrongness of an action is adjudicated on in terms of its consequences: does it produce the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people? Mill (1978) stressed the importance of the individual as well as individual freedom. He believed that the individual should be free to do whatever s/he liked as long as that does not bring significant harm to anyone else (Magee, 1998: 185). The thinking of Mill influences the current public policy debates about the role of the state. This happens through his influence on liberal thinkers such as Keynes, von Hayek, Nozick and Rawls (Axford, Browning, Huggins, Rosamond and Turner, 1997: 231-4).

No discussion on policy can ignore Karl Marx. His analysis of the role of the state defines the way theorists sympathetic to his view broadly categorise political ideologies as a continuum between capitalism and Marxism/socialism. Marxist analysis leads communist and socialist political parties to adopt a radical critique of western capitalism through its analysis of the class system. Marxism argues that capitalism exploits workers and keeps control of the means of production, distribution and exchange. States are organised in the interests of capitalism and have to be overthrown (Heywood, 2004: 82-4; John, 1998: 92-106). Marxist thinking has been developed by Neo-Marxists such as Gramsci and Marcuse to include "a radical

critique of advanced industrial society stressing the need for decentralisation, participation and personal liberation” (Heywood, 2004: 127). Neo-Marxism is discussed later in the chapter.

By 1850, a number of factors that influence public policy making today had already emerged including the role of the state, the market, and the individual in policy. The approach to policy making is also a factor. Machiavelli and Bacon see policy making as a scientific and, therefore, rational process. Bentham and the Utilitarians stress the importance of freedom, pragmatism and utilitarianism in the policy process.

### 2.1.3.2 The Founding Theorists: 1850 - 1970

By the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the role of government had expanded and theorists began to widen the scope of their analysis.

Era	Theorist	Theories
Founding Thinkers (1850 – 1970)	<b>James</b> <b>(1842 – 1912)</b>	<i>Pragmatism as a theory of truth</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- True statement theories fit the known facts</li> <li>- Accord with the scientific laws of experience</li> <li>- Withstand criticism</li> <li>- Provide insight and accurate prediction</li> <li>- Ideas become true or are made true by events</li> <li>- Radical empiricism</li> <li>- Subject/object relation not fundamental</li> <li>- Experience important</li> </ul>
	<b>Dewey</b> <b>(1852 – 1952)</b>	<i>Pragmatism as a method of social experiment</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning by experimenting</li> <li>- Problem solving</li> <li>- Clear definition of problem</li> <li>- Think about possible solutions</li> <li>- Test solutions/experiment</li> <li>- Retest if necessary</li> <li>- Solution</li> <li>- Democracy and education</li> </ul>

Figure 3 Historical Development of Policy Theory: Founding Thinkers (1850 – 1970)

James and Dewey examined pragmatism and its influence on policy. The central contention is that “knowledge is an activity”. As a result, true statements and theories should fit all the known facts, accord with the scientific laws of experience, be capable of withstanding criticism and provide insight and accurate prediction. Ideas, therefore, become true or are made true by events. James (1842-1912) believed in “high-minded philosophers who were alive to empirical knowledge” and that experience was very important (Parsons, 1995: 46; Magee, 1998: 188-9; Russell, 1946: 66-73; Heywood, 2004: 30, 243-4).

Dewey (1852-1952), influenced both general and education policy. Pragmatism, Dewey claims, was a form of trial and error learning which involved a number of stages in solving a problem. Dewey’s thinking was a forerunner of the stages’ model used in this study. The focus of Dewey and James was on problem solving, and this was a core belief of the policy discipline in the post war period in the US and elsewhere (Parsons, 1995: 47). They influenced the pragmatic approach to policy adopted by political parties at the centre of the political spectrum (Heywood, 2007: 3).

2.1.3.3 The 1970s and 1980s

Era	Theorist	Theories
The Nineteen Seventies and Nineteen Eighties (1970's – 1980's)	<b>Popper</b> 1902 - 1994	<i>Knowledge is not final in science or politics</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Knowledge progresses</li> <li>- Tentative theories</li> <li>- Test of falsifiability</li> <li>- New problems</li> <li>- Policy/social engineering</li> <li>- Criticism</li> </ul>
	<b>Hayek</b> 1899 - 1992	<i>Policy makers, government cannot solve problems effectively except through markets</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal freedom important</li> <li>- Public policy promotes conditions in which the economy/society operates with least possible interference from the state</li> </ul>
	<b>Nozick</b> 1938 - 2002	<i>Theory of Justice</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fairness in opportunity/outcomes</li> <li>- Social contract</li> </ul>
	<b>Rawls</b> 1921- 2002	<i>Entitlement rather than fairness</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Markets and individuals important</li> </ul>

Figure 4 Historical Development of Policy Theory: the Nineteen Seventies and Nineteen eighties (1970 – 1980s)

Machiavelli and Bacon influenced the rational approach to public policy as did Bentham, Mill, Marx, James and Dewey. During the post-positivist era, the hegemony of rationalism was challenged. The critique of rationalism is that policy making is not simply a rational, scientific process, because knowledge is not final and policy involves people. The concept of justice, represented as the desire for equality or social inclusion, is now a dimension of Irish adult education and general policy making (DES, 2000a: 30, 35; Dept. of Finance, 1999: 8). While there is acceptance that the State has a role, there is conflict between ideologies and political parties on the nature of the role of the state and the market in distributing resources in society (Dunleavy and O' Leary, 1987; Heywood, 2004: 344; Coakley and Gallagher, 2005).

Popper, Hayek, Rawls and Nozick were the key theorists in this era. Popper (1966) examined the question of knowledge and challenged Bacon and the positivists by arguing that knowledge is never final. All theories are tentative and knowledge is conjectural. He applied his ideas to society and politics. Popper believed that an open society is one where rational argument and adjustment provided the method of government. Rational argument and adjustment was a better way of government than grand utopian schemes. His model became known as piecemeal engineering. Popper argued that a critical, experimental spirit is important for maintaining an open society (Parsons, 1995: 48-9). His thinking paved the way for an incremental approach to policy and influenced the evolutionary approach adopted in this thesis.

Hayek's ideas influenced the neo-conservatives and neo-liberals (Heywood, 2004: 338), including George W. Bush and Ronald Reagan (Fukuyama, 2006: 8; Heywood, 2007: 52, 95). Hayek argued that human knowledge is limited and fragmented, and depending on the State to aggregate and co-ordinate the vast amount of knowledge was wrong and dangerous. Policy makers cannot solve problems or improve on what the markets do spontaneously. Therefore, the role of policy is to promote the conditions in which the spontaneous order (created by the markets) can function to the advantage of the individual. The State should not monopolise provision, but instead stimulate competition and allow market forces to operate (Parsons, 1995: 50-1; Heywood, 2004: 338). Hayek contributed to the development of public choice theory, which is an important feature of modern public policy making (Parsons, 1995: 50-1).

The work of Rawls and Nozick is examined next. In *A Theory of Justice* (1971) Rawls proposed that citizens not only should have equal opportunity, but that there should also be fairness of outcomes. As a result any policy should ultimately be judged on how effective it is in maximising the benefits to the least advantaged. Principles of justice are superior to the prevailing ideology of equality of opportunity, because they are the outcome of a hypothetical social contract. If society were to choose from a kind of pre-social state, it would choose this principle, because it would have a rational interest in accepting it (Heywood, 2007: 57-8; Parsons, 1995: 47). Critics of Rawls say that his ideas favour significant state intervention (Kymlicka, 1998: 55).

The extent of state intervention in public policy is a recurring theme in the literature and a feature of public and adult education policy in Ireland. The concept of justice,



introduced by Rawls, represented as the desire for equality or social inclusion, is now a dimension of Irish adult education and general policy making (DES, 2000a: 30, 35; Department of Finance, 1999: 8). While there is acceptance that the State has a role in public policy, there is conflict between ideologies and political parties on the role of the State and the market in distributing resources in society (Dunleavy and O' Leary, 1987, Heywood, 2004: 344; Coakley and Gallagher, 2005).

Nozick's philosophy is used as justification by the new right or the neo-conservatives. He believed that justice has to do with what people are entitled to rather than what is fair. Individuals and markets are the main vehicles in a free world to achieve justice. Nozick suggested rules for the equitable distribution of wealth. Wealth has to be justly acquired and transferred from one responsible person to another. If it has been acquired or transferred unjustly, the injustice has to be redressed. He rejected the social justice principle in the distribution of wealth (Heywood, 2004: 299-300; Parsons, 1995: 47).

Rawls, Nozick, Hayek and Marx were among those who established the parameters of the current discourse on the role of the state and the market in public policy (Parsons, 1995: 47-51). An aspect of the discourse is whether justice in public policy is served by achieving an 'equality of opportunity' as Nozick argues or 'equality of outcome' as Rawls claims. This debate continues to influence education policy (Lynch, 1999: 289-293).

#### 2.1.3.4 Critical Theorists -

This section takes us from the nineteen seventies and eighties era to the 'Critical Theorists', amongst whom Foucault and Habermas are significant (Parsons, 1995: 53; Heywood, 2004: 7, 279-80).

Era	Theorist	Theories
Critical Theorists	<b>Foucault</b> 1926 - 1984	<i>Knowledge, Language, Discourse, Power</i>
	<b>Habermas</b> 1929 -	<i>Communicative rationality</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reasoning integrated</li> <li>- Reaching, understanding social contract</li> <li>- Language, discourse, argument</li> <li>- Language shapes policy</li> <li>- Theory or argumentation</li> <li>- Work, symbolic interaction important</li> <li>- Social institutions, interests</li> <li>- Work, language, power, communication</li> </ul>

Figure 5 Historical Development of Policy Theory: Critical Theorists

Foucault challenged the way we view power, knowledge, discourse and truth as tools to analyse the world and his ideas have implications for politics and policy. According to O' Sullivan (2005: 23), "Foucault is particularly productive as a source for the study of meaning and power because of the prominence he accords to the power/knowledge relationship".

Foucault does not believe that capitalism and class struggle are the means by which power is structured. Rather power is dispersed and is in a dynamic relationship with knowledge. It is not exercised without the extraction, appropriation, distribution or retention of knowledge (Ryan, 2001; Horrocks and Jevtic, 1997).

Habermas has a special relevance to the development of critical policy analysis (Parsons, 1995: 53). His key concept of communicative rationality does not deny that reason and the use of reason is important, but insists that we should move from individualised reason to recognition that knowledge is an inter-subjective process. Because reason is about reaching understanding in a social context, the use of

language and discourse is important in policy. Language, according to Habermas, shapes the world and the best way to arrive at the truth is through discourse and argument. One way of doing this, Chambers (1995: 233) claims, is through what he calls the “ideal speech” or conversation situation.

To believe something is right is to believe that we have good reasons to hold this position. To believe that we have good reasons entails the idea that given enough love, given interlocutors of good will and given a constant free environment everyone would come to the same conclusion as we do.

#### **2.1.4 *The Development of Policy as an Academic Discipline***

Having reviewed ideas that influenced public policy theory, the purpose of this section is to explore the development of policy as an academic discipline because the academy provides practitioners and researchers with a theoretical framework and tools to participate in, manage and research the policy process. The relevance of the academy to the public policy process is underlined by the fact that policy experts from academia are regularly invited to participate in radio and TV current affairs programmes and to write articles in the print media on current policy issues.

As illustrated in Figure 6 on the following page, the development of policy as a discipline falls neatly into four periods, accounted for by the fact that policy did not become an academic discipline until the early 1950s, had an establishment phase and then flowed naturally into the post-positivist and post-modern eras. The first period precedes the 1950s, but is chosen because of the influential nature of the work of Weber and Keynes. The second period, up to 1970, examines the work of the theorists who established the policy discipline. The two final eras, post-positivist and post-modernist, parallel the hegemony of these two thought systems that affected academic disciplines.

Era	Theorist	Theory
Laying the Foundations (1900 – 1946)	<b>Weber</b> 1864 -1920	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of bureaucracy</li> <li>- Politics v administration</li> </ul>
	<b>Keynes</b> 1883-1946	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need for informed, theoretical approach to government</li> <li>- Economics shapes decision making</li> <li>- The state should intervene in the market to ensure full employment.</li> </ul>
The Pioneers (1946 – 1970)	<b>Lasswell</b> 1902 - 1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy as a science</li> </ul>
	<b>Lindblom</b> 1917-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incrementalism: <i>elections, parties, politicians and interest groups</i></li> <li>- Deeper forces</li> </ul>
	<b>Simon</b> 1916-2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bounded rationality</li> <li>- People make policies and decisions</li> <li>- Do not always act rationally because of limits to their knowledge</li> <li>- Implementation.</li> </ul>
	<b>Easton</b> 1917-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Black box model (<i>inputs -&gt; political process - &gt; outputs</i>)</li> </ul>
Post-Positivism 1971-1986	<b>Pressman &amp; Wildavsky</b> 1930-1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation</li> </ul>
	<b>Kingdon</b> 1940-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy streams (<i>Problems, Policies, Politics</i>)</li> <li>- Agenda setting</li> <li>- ‘Garbage can’ metaphor</li> <li>- Window of opportunity</li> <li>- Feedback from existing policies inform the agenda</li> </ul>
Postmodernism 1987-2009	<b>Sabatier</b> (1916-2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy Advocacy Coalition</li> <li>- Policy is an on-going process; no beginning or end.</li> </ul>
	<b>Baumgartner &amp; Jones</b> 1958- 1944 -	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Punctuated Equilibrium (<i>change and stability as part of policy process</i>);</li> <li>- Stability followed by periods of <i>public interest, media scrutiny</i> leading to <i>public action</i>.</li> </ul>

Figure 6 The Development of Policy as an Academic Discipline

#### 2.1.4.1 Laying the Foundations: 1900-1945

This section examines the development of the seeds of the academic discipline in the period from 1900 until 1945.

Era	Theorist	Theory
Laying the Foundations (1900 – 1946)	Weber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of bureaucracy</li> <li>- Politics v administration</li> </ul>
	Keynes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need for informed, theoretical approach to government</li> <li>- Economics shapes decision making</li> <li>- The state should intervene in the market to ensure full employment.</li> </ul>

Figure 7 - Laying the Foundations: (1900 – 1945)

Weber and Keynes are the two influential public policy thinkers in this era and greatly influenced the evolution of policy as an academic discipline. Weber (1991: 196-252) demonstrated the need for a more rational form of organisation for the state and identified bureaucracy as its defining feature. “Weber...contended that bureaucracy had become the main system of rule of the modern state” and believed that policy making as a political function should be separated from administration as a bureaucratic function (Axford *et al.*, 1997: 320.) Dunleavy and O’ Leary (1987: 170) point out that Weber believed that “politicians make decisions, bureaucrats administer them”, a situation that pertained in Irish public policy until the enactment of the Public Services Management Act (Government of Ireland, 1997a).

This concept of separation of politics and administration is important in public policy. However, the divide has been critiqued because policy implementation is recognised as part of policy making as Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) indicate and the lines of demarcation between politics and administration are becoming blurred (Hill, 2005: 165).

Keynes influenced public policy globally (Olssen, Codd, O’ Neill 2004: 122-9) and is currently in fashion because of the collapse of the banking system in many countries. Gillespie (2009; 11) argues:

The wheel has now turned decisively back to John Maynard Keynes, the British economist and policymaker who theorised the way out of the 1930s depression and whose ideas proved immensely influential in planning the post-war recovery.

Keynes argued “that aiming for a balanced budget was simply an inappropriate goal and potentially harmful to the economy (and hence for the level of unemployment)”. To save the market the state had to become involved in managing the market to ensure full employment. In times of an economic downturn the state should stimulate the economy by using its huge purchasing power.

Axford *et al.* (1997: 234) claim that “Keynes and Beveridge were liberal architects of the welfare state in Britain. They were the ideologists of indicative economic planning and the provision of comprehensive welfare measures...” Keynes and Weber influenced policy theory although it did not become an academic discipline until the 1950s (Parsons, 1995: 169, 272-3; Heywood, 2004: 86-7, 5-6, 133-6).

#### 2.1.4.2 The Pioneers of Policy Studies: 1946-1970

Era	Theorist	Theory
The Pioneers (1946 – 1970)	<i>Lasswell</i>	- Policy as a science
	<i>Lindblom</i>	- Incrementalism: <i>elections, parties, politicians and interest groups</i> - Deeper forces
	<i>Simon</i>	- Bounded rationality - People make policies and decisions - Do not always act rationally because of limits to their knowledge - Implementation.
	<i>Easton</i>	- Black box model ( <i>inputs -&gt; political process - &gt; outputs</i> )

Figure 8 The Pioneers (1946 – 1970)

The pioneers developed policy as an academic discipline and an art. The founder of the discipline is Lasswell, who “perhaps stands out as the pre-eminent moving spirit behind the growth of a policy approach” (Parsons, 1995: 21).

In 1951, Lasswell argued that the policy sciences included “(i) the methods by which the policy process is investigated, (ii) the results of the study of policy and (iii) the findings of the disciplines making the most important contribution to the intelligence needs of our time” (cited by Parsons, 1995: 18). Chubb is recognised as the founder of political science as an academic discipline in Ireland (Garvin, 2004: xvii). He was Professor of Political Science at Trinity College, Dublin from 1960 to 1991 and published the first definitive text on Irish public policy - *The Government and Politics in Ireland* in 1970 (Chubb, 1992).

Lindblom described policy as the science of “muddling through” and identified disjointed incrementalism as the way “policy proceeds through a series of approximations” (cited in Ó Buachalla, 1988: 313). Hill (2005: 149) described disjointed incrementalism as a method of policy making which “involves examining policies which differ from each other incrementally, and which differ incrementally from the status quo”.

Lindblom is concerned with the process of policy making and rejected the rationalist approach. In addition to taking account of elections, bureaucracies, parties and politicians, policy makers should take into account what he calls deeper forces: business, inequality, and the limited capacity of analysis (Parsons, 1995: 22). He shifted his position from pluralism to a more elitist approach and accepted that the partial mutual adjustment in policy making is active only in ordinary questions of policy. Grand issues such as property rights, the right to private enterprise and the distribution of income and wealth are not resolved through partial mutual adjustment. Because there is broad agreement on such fundamental issues they are not included on the policy agenda. He argues that there is a unifying set of beliefs on these grand issues communicated through the church, media, education etc. These ideas or beliefs emanate to some extent from dominant social groups (Hill, 2005: 150).

Colebatch (2002: 73-75) claims that Lindblom initiated the debate on the rational versus the incremental approach to policy and introduced two significant shifts in policy analysis: (i) a shift from the desired outcome of policy to the process by which it is made and (ii) a shift from the logic of the system as a whole to the logic of the participants.

Simon’s contribution is “without doubt more far-reaching than any other single theorist” (Parsons, 1995: 21-2). He introduced the concept of bounded rationality,

derived from his belief that rationality has been central in the theory and practice of decision making in the post-war era. However, it is flawed (Parsons, 1995: 274). Although Simon argued for a rational approach to policy, he recognised its limitations because individuals and organisations don't always act rationally. People make decisions and policies in organisations and human rationality is limited or bounded by factors such as incomplete knowledge, limit of attention, memory, personal prejudice and habits (Parsons, 1995: 237). Because of 'bounded rationality' the decision maker chooses an alternative that is intended "not to maximise his or her values but to be satisfactory or good enough". "The decision maker cannot possibly examine all the alternatives and adopts rules of thumb to make the task manageable" (Hill, 2005: 147).

Easton developed a model of the political system which influenced public policy in the 1960s. His model views the policy process as one where inputs are received from the environment and mediated through input channels such as political parties, the media and interest groups. These inputs are translated into demands within the political system and in turn are converted to policies and outcomes. Easton's 'black box' model emphasises policy as an interactive process and identifies stages in the policy process. Policy is seen as a cycle or staged process involving an input/output process nurtured by feedback loops (Axford *et al.*, 1997: 414-15).

These policy theorists introduced ideas that influence policy making today and facilitate an exploration of the definition of policy and the evolutionary policy-making approach. They argue that policy making is a process where inputs are received from the environment, mediated through input channels, translated into demands by the political system and converted into policies (Easton, 1953, 1965). Human rationality is limited (Simon, 1957, 1960, 1983) and policy making is imprecise and is captured in Lindblom's phrase "the science of muddling through" (cited in Parsons, 1995: 286). Lindblom also argues that policy making is not a rational process and has to take account of deeper forces like business, political inequality and policy makers own limited capacity of analysis (Parsons, 1995: 284-94; John, 1998: 68-9; Hill, 2005:147-50).



### 2.1.4.3 Post-Positivism and Policy

Era	Theorist	Theory
Post-Positivism (1971 – 1986)	Pressman & Wildavsky	- Implementation
	Kingdon	- Policy streams ( <i>Problems, Policies, Politics</i> ) - Agenda setting - ‘Garbage can’ metaphor - Window of opportunity - Feedback from existing policies inform the agenda

Figure 9 Post-Positivism (1971-1986)

Parsons (1995: 71) identifies the following features of post-positivism:

- Reality exists, but cannot be fully understood or explained. There is a multiplicity of causes and effects;
- Objectivity is an ideal, but requires a critical community; and
- It is critical of experimentalism, and stresses qualitative approaches, theory and discovery.

Policy making in the 1960s involved a combination of the stages’ approach and the black-box model which Easton (1965) proposed. On the other hand, Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) focused on policy implementation. Their research showed that “although often discussed, the problems of implementation were rarely analysed” (Parsons, 1995: 464). Implementation problems could be solved by adopting a top-down approach through control, resources and communication. However, front line lower level bureaucrats and delivery staff in sub-systems have the requisite autonomy and desire to affect policies formulated at a higher level (John, 1998: 27-8).

While Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) examined implementation in the policy process, Kingdon focused on agenda setting. According to Hill (2005: 153-4), Kingdon (1984) identified the limitations of rational policy making and incrementalism because they did not explain sudden policy change. Cohen, March, Olsen (1972: 2), used the ‘garbage can’ metaphor to challenge the notion that policy making is a rational process. The metaphor stresses the chaotic nature of organisations as

“loose collections of ideas” as opposed to “coherent structures”. The outcomes (policy agenda creation) are a mix of problems, participants and resources. Policy making takes place in a ‘primeval soup’ with three process streams: (i) problems, (ii) policy and (iii) political streams as the ingredients.

For a problem to exist, “people must become convinced that something should be done to change it”. A policy stream is something on which government policy makers fix their attention as opposed to that which they decide to ignore (Kingdon, 1984: 119). However, the political stream evolves separately. The national mood, organised political forces, and consensus building, all affect it. These three streams come together at critical times and reach the top of the decision making agenda. Policy entrepreneurs bring the streams to the policy agenda.

Kingdon introduced other ideas like the concept of ‘windows of opportunity’ and ‘spill-over effect’. Policies that reach the national agenda are there for a short period of opportunity. Feedback from existing policies also influences the agenda-setting process and one policy change impacts on other policies.

#### 2.1.4.4 Postmodernism and Policy Studies

Era	Theorist	Theory
Postmodernism 1987-2009	<i>Sabatier</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy Advocacy Coalition</li> <li>- Policy is an on-going process; no beginning or end.</li> </ul>
	<i>Baumgartner &amp; Jones</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Punctuated Equilibrium (<i>change and stability as part of policy process</i>);</li> <li>- Stability followed by periods of <i>public interest, media scrutiny</i> leading to <i>public action</i>.</li> </ul>

Figure 10 Postmodernism and Policy Studies

According to Heywood (2004: 62):

Postmodernists argue that there is no such thing as certainty; the idea of absolute and universal truth must be discarded as an arrogant pretence. Emphasis is placed instead on discourse, debate and democracy.

Policy theory has been influenced by postmodernism through the concepts of punctuated equilibrium and policy advocacy coalitions. Baumgartner and Jones

(1993) developed the concept of policy streams introduced by Kingdon (1984). In any policy system there is both stability and change. Equilibrium is punctuated by periods of intense policy activity. During the period of public interest there is access to the policy agenda. Debate and action move from a policy subsystem (adult education, for example), to the main political/policy arena. New institutions are established and equilibrium is restored with policy activity confined again to the policy subsystem (John, 1998: 176-82, 201-2).

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) stressed the importance of policy analysis which rejects rational human behaviour and values expert knowledge and ideas (cited in John, 1998: 155). Policy is influenced by policy advocacy coalitions which form in policy sub-systems. A policy advocacy coalition is an alliance of bodies having the same ideas and interests for the purpose of arguing against other coalitions within the same policy system. Coalitions can include journalists, analysts and researchers as well as bureaucrats, politicians and interest group representatives and are “underpinned by shared ideological beliefs and the need for policy outcomes to share these core beliefs” (Axford *et al.*, 1997: 430). The importance of sub-systems in policy formulation and implementation is acknowledged.

Public choice theory (also called rational choice theory) has emerged to influence governments worldwide, through “the global public management revolution”<sup>7</sup> (Kettl, 2000). The Irish version of public choice theory is the Strategic Management Initiative, discussed later on in the section on Irish public policy in Part Two of this chapter. Colebatch (2002: 88-9) argues that:

Public choice theory...has become the major challenge to the dominant liberalism in political science....It offers a map of social action populated by calculative and self regarding individuals, who always act to maximise their own benefit.

Public choice theory views other players in the policy process in this self interested light (Colebatch, 2002: 88).

Government is not an independent force serving collective interests, but a prize for self-interested redistribution....Politicians are entrepreneurs offering promises of reward in exchange for votes....Bureaucrats are driven neither by policy or expertise, but the desire to maximise the size of their agency; voters sell their votes to the politician offering the best (and most credible) promise of reward.

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<sup>7</sup> It is sometimes called ‘New Public Management’.

Public choice theory influenced the development of new public management. It is responsible for introducing the discipline of economics and business methods to government by curbing the impact of self-serving governments, civil servants, and voters. This is achieved by giving the individual as much power as possible in using public services and influencing public policy. Kettl (2000: 2-3) identifies the following characteristics of new public management:

- *Productivity*: the government should produce more services with less tax money;
- *Marketisation* using the market to lessen the influence of self-seeking civil servants;
- *Service orientation*: using market strategies to give consumers of state services choice;
- *Decentralisation*: shifting power in the system from the centre to frontline delivery staff so that government is more responsive to the needs of customers;
- *Policy*: improving capacity of governments to devise and track policy; and
- *Accountability for results*: making governments accountable for delivering on promises.

### **2.1.5 Approaches to Policy Making**

This section considers approaches to modern public policy. The aim is to link policy theory and the evolution of policy as an academic discipline to the approaches to policy making available to policy makers. The approaches, shown in Figure 11, discussed in the following pages, are: (i) the political approach, (ii) the pluralist/elitist approach (iii) the neo-Marxist-approach (iv) neo-corporatist/networking, (v) institutional and (vi) new public management approaches. Each approach emphasises a particular dimension of policy theory as a dominant paradigm. The political approach to policy making is discussed first.

The aim is to link policy theory and the evolution of policy as an academic discipline to the approaches to policy making available to policy makers.

Approach	The Key Idea	Elaboration of Key Idea
<b>(i) Political</b>	<i>Political system is the critical factor in policy making</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Political process shapes agenda choices</li> <li>- Economic conditions set boundaries</li> <li>- Competing political parties in and out of government shape voters choices</li> <li>- The political system yields a Government.</li> </ul>
<b>(ii) Pluralist/Elitist</b>	<i>The exercise of power by an elite or a plurality</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Choice of pluralism/elitism impacts on policymaking</li> <li>- Agenda setting is the outcome process of competition between different groups</li> <li>- In the pluralist approach power is dispersed</li> <li>- In the elitist approach power is concentrated within government, the bureaucracy and interest groups</li> <li>- Items for the policy agenda pass through a policy funnel which favours some policies over others</li> <li>- Various factors filter and mediate policy that gets through the funnel onto the agenda</li> <li>- Institutions, elites try to have final say</li> </ul>
<b>(iii) Neo -Marxist</b>	<i>Marxist theory is applied to policy making in capitalist society</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capitalism sets the policy agenda</li> <li>- Capitalism is deeply ingrained</li> <li>- Capitalism aims to achieve hegemony and to reproduce the dominant ideology</li> <li>- Critical theory offers a radical approach to changing the capitalist system.</li> </ul>

Approach	The Key Idea	Elaboration of Key Idea
<b>(iv) Neo-corporatist/ Networking</b>	<i>Incorporation of networks by the state into the policy process;</i> <i>Advocacy bodies form networks to promote their policy agendas</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incorporation of groups in policy process (<i>Government, business, trade unions</i>)</li> <li>- Organises in the interests of capital to replace conflict</li> <li>- Policy Advocacy Coalitions</li> <li>- Policy streams (<i>Problems, Policies, Politics</i>)</li> <li>- Punctuated Equilibrium (<i>Networks come together to bring about change by punctuating the existing policy equilibrium</i>), Government bargaining, negotiating with interests.</li> </ul>
<b>(v) Institutionalism</b>	<i>Institutions are key in the policy process</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Political Institutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Bureaucracy</li> <li>o Government</li> <li>o Legislature</li> <li>o The Courts</li> <li>o Sub-national Government</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Social institutions</li> <li>- Economic institutions</li> </ul>
<b>(vi) New Public Management</b>	<i>The public service should be seen as a market and operate according to market principles</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Key ideas underpinning New Public Management derived from the market: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Productivity</li> <li>o Marketisation</li> <li>o Service orientation</li> <li>o Decentralisation</li> <li>o Accountability</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Figure 11 Approaches to Policy Making

### 2.1.5.1 *The Political Approach*

This section considers the impact of politics on decision making. Moran argues that “politics matters in policy making” (2005: 1-20). Political change, through democratic elections, shapes the policies put forward by political parties to attract electoral support. From the menu of policies the electorate chooses political parties and thereby the Government. The Government then makes decisions on behalf of the people. In a Coalition Government the political parties involved have to negotiate a Programme for Government. Politicians, political parties and Governments recognise that economic conditions determine the boundaries of what is possible.

Competing political parties in and out of government shape voters’ choices. Parties in government have the approval of the state to promote and develop their policies. Parties out of government also shape voters choices and their attractive policies will be co-opted by other parties (Mair and Weeks, 2005: Chapter 5; Marsh, 2005: Chapter 6; Gallagher and Marsh: 2008). As we noted in Chapter One, the 1997 general election led to a change in policy that impacted on adult education.

### 2.1.5.2 *The Pluralist/Elitist Approach*

The second approach to policy making describes how the state through its elected government, goes about decision making by adopting a very democratic pluralist approach or a more autocratic elitist approach.

Power and its distribution is a critical dimension of policy making. Power is widely dispersed in a pluralist model and is concentrated in an elitist model. From a pluralist perspective, policy making derives from a process of connection between groups, while in an elitist perspective a limited number of people or groups influence policy (Hill, 2005: Chapter 2).

The elitist approach is too narrow and ignores the impact of ideas, institutions and the economy on policy making (Parsons, 1995: 248-52; Dunleavy and O’Leary, 1987: 136-97). Pluralism, on the other hand, is an ideal approach to public policy decision making which is difficult to achieve. A pluralist /elitist analysis reveals conflicting perspectives on policy making and identifies power brokers in the policy process (Parsons, 1995).

Whichever model of policy making is chosen by the State, a sort of 'policy funnel' process is used to select policies from a range of competing ideas and interests. The final selection depends on whether the State is organised to facilitate elites or the general population to dominate the policy process. Finally, elites attempt to dominate the institutions of state where decisions are made or the institutions through which decisions are implemented.

#### 2.1.5.3 *The Neo-Marxist Approach*

Neo-Marxism is an approach to public policy which aims to negate the influence of the capitalist elite on policy making. Neo-Marxism applies Marxist theory to policy making in capitalist societies where capitalism is deeply ingrained. To critique capitalism, Gramsci and Marcuse draw on concepts such as hegemony. Hegemony is less concerned about events and the observable than about non-events, the ordinary and unseen power of capital (Parsons, 1995: 147). Because of the deep influence of capitalism, the State system operates in the interests of capitalism. Marxism does not "provide a coherent account of how public policy is formed and implemented" (John, 1998: 100). Critical theorists, including Habermas, advocate a radical shift towards a more open decision making process rather than improving the way that decision makers use information and knowledge (Fleming, 2000). Critical theory, which derives from Marxism, according to Heywood (2004: 279):

is characterised by the attempt to extend the notion of critique to all social practices by linking substantive social research to philosophy. In so doing, it not merely looks beyond the classical principles and methodology of Marxism but also cuts across a range of traditionally discrete disciplines.

#### 2.1.5.4 *The Neo-corporatist/networking Approach*

Neo-Corporatism is a sort of halfway house between pluralism and elitism. It tries to put a structure on the policy making process by broadening, while, at the same time, limiting the number of interests involved in decision making.

Corporatism is the incorporation by government of interest groups into policy making. From the Government's point of view corporatism is a useful policy making strategy. Once groups enter into an agreement with Government on policy, they support its implementation. Corporatism contributes to the management of Government business and facilitates good industrial relations. It moderates adversarial class struggle and institutional approaches to decision making. However, it can be critiqued as being organised in the interests of capital. As discussed later in this



chapter, neo-corporatism is a key policy strategy adopted by the Irish Government since 1987 (Murphy, 2005: 354-6).

Networks are essential if corporatism is to work. Networks, both within a corporatist system and outside such a system, have a role in the public policy process. They involve individuals and interest groups with common objectives, as well as politicians and bureaucrats, coming together to form advocacy coalitions. Sometimes such advocacy coalitions propose new policy and at other times combine to oppose policies. Advocacy coalitions change over time as issues change. While networks are important, they offer “an incomplete and partial explanation of policy change and variation” (John, 1998: 91).

In the punctuated equilibrium approach to policy, Baumgartner and Jones (1993) argue that networks come together to bring about change by upsetting or punctuating the existing policy equilibrium. As we shall see in Part Two of this Chapter, networks are formally brought into the public policy process through Social Partnership.

#### *2.1.5.5 Institutionalism as an Approach*

Each of the approaches previously discussed depends on the institutions of the state. Some theorists have argued that institutions are the main determining factor in public policy.

State institutions include the parliament, the government, the defence forces, the police force and the courts. Institutions are a factor in policy making (John, 1998: 38-65). There are three categories of state institutions: (i) sociological, (ii) economic and (iii) political. Political institutions operate at national, regional and local government levels. This research examines the impact of the architecture of state and adult education institutions on the policy process. As John (1998: 65) concludes, “in a policy sector, like education, it is likely that the institutional framework has a major impact on how policy is made and implemented”.

#### *2.1.5.6 The New Public Management Approach*

The new public management approach to public policy and its Irish manifestation, the Strategic Management Initiative, argues that the public policy system should use market techniques.

New public management combined with corporatism, networking and institutionalism provide an insight into the actual process of policy making as mediated through the political system. However, the policy making process is never neutral. It is about exercising power. The choice of a policy process by a state depends on the ideology of that state at any particular time. For example, the choice of new public management as an approach to policy making is driven by a capitalist ideology.

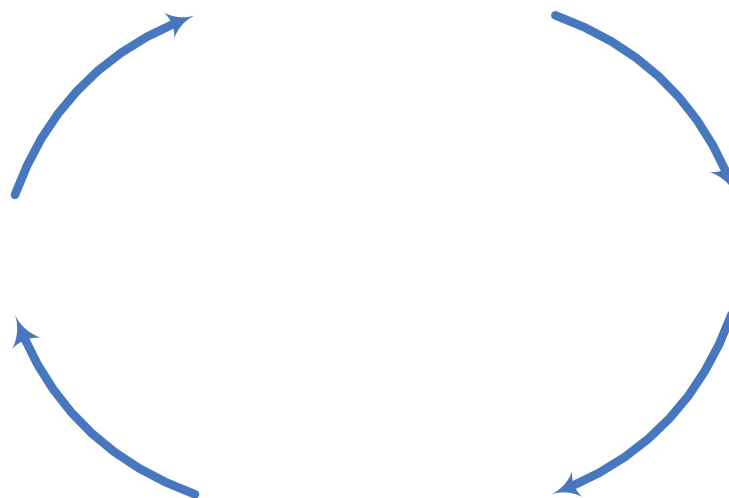
## 2.2 The Stages' Model of the Policy Process

A stages' model is a useful device for policy makers and researchers, because it can be applied to the approaches to policy making described in Section 2.1.5. It views the policy process as having clearly defined stages. In the first stage an issue emerges on the policy agenda. It is then considered by policy makers and decisions are made. The final stages involve implementing decisions and evaluating the outcome. A refinement of the model sees the stages as cyclical rather than a series of linear steps.

Commentators, including Parsons (1995: 79-80), have issued warnings about the limitations of the stage's model. John (1998: 36) claims that:

the stages idea confuses more than it illuminates. Policy is continuous. There are no neat divisions between different types of activities. There is too much change and messiness in public decision making for the simplification to capture enough of reality.

Notwithstanding that criticism, John (1998: 36) argues that "the stages model can still be used as a heuristic or learning device. Researchers can apply it because it imposes some order on the research process". Hill (2005: 20) asserts "the advantage of a stages' model is that it offers a way of chopping up, if only for the purposes of analysis, a complex and elaborate process". The stages' model is used in this research to manage the complexity of policy making and is based on the work of Parsons (1995). As illustrated in Figure 12 below, the stages are: (i) agenda setting, (ii) decision making, (iii) implementation, and (iv) evaluation.



*Figure 12 The Stages' Model of Policy Making*

## 2.2.1 Agenda setting

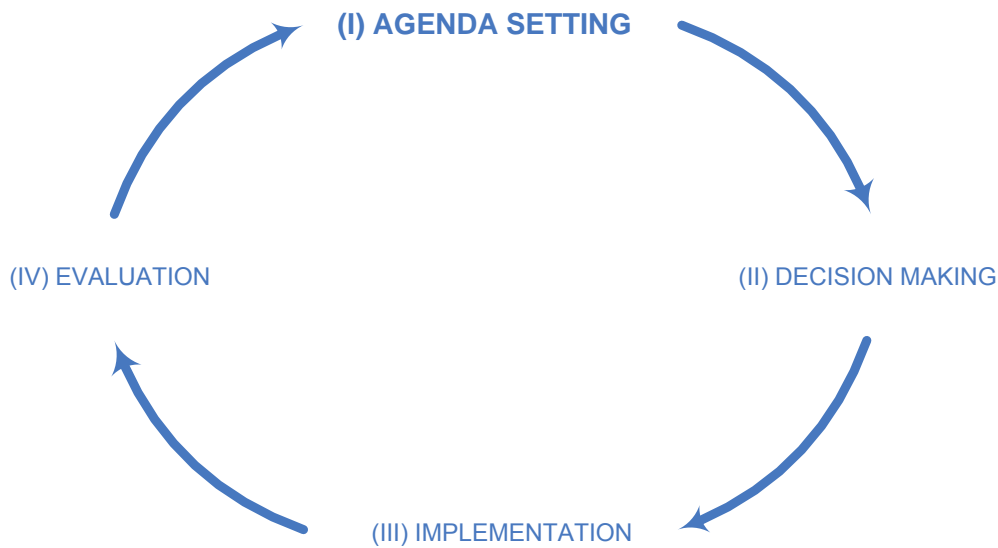


Figure 13 Stages' Model: Agenda Setting

Agenda setting is the first part of the policy process where a policy problem is identified, defined and reaches the policy agenda. As Parsons (1995: 87) asserts “the genesis of a policy is the recognition of a problem”. This section reviews agenda setting by considering the question of how the policy agenda is set and who controls the agenda. Getting on the state’s policy agenda and staying there is essential for a policy sector such as adult education.

Commentators see agenda setting as an important part of policy making (Hill, 2005: Chapter 8; John, 1998: 146-149). The following aspects of the agenda setting process are identified and discussed:

- problem recognition;
- problem definition;
- the use of knowledge, including the kind of knowledge used and the way knowledge is used; and
- who controls/influences the policy agenda?

### 2.2.1.1 Problem Recognition for the Policy Agenda

Parsons (1995: 87) believes that “the genesis of a policy involves the recognition of a problem”. Jones (1971, cited by Parsons, 1995: 87), argues that “whosoever initially identifies a social problem shapes the initial terms in which it will be debated”. Problems come to be recognised through interest groups, the media, the world of

ideas and the political process (John, 1998, 146-9). Interest groups, advocacy coalitions and the media have a role in recognising and defining a problem (Moran, 2005: 357; Parsons, 1995: 106-7). The problem needs to be defined so that policy makers and stakeholders recognise its exact nature.

#### *2.2.1.2 Problem Definition in Agenda Setting*

Problem definition influences the resolution of policy problems. Parsons (1995: 88) argues that “a problem has to be defined, structured, located within certain boundaries and be given a name”. The theories, concepts and values espoused by those defining the problem influence the way the problem is debated. Environmentalists, for example, defined the debate on the environment (Lovelock, 2007: Chapter 1). The language chosen reflects the ideology, theory or values of those defining the problem.

#### *2.2.1.3 Knowledge in Agenda Setting*

Knowledge is the key to both problem recognition and problem definition. Analysing knowledge in agenda setting requires answers to some questions. The basic question is whether knowledge is absolute and scientifically verifiable as the positivists believe. Or, on the other hand, is it something less certain, which develops, as Popper (1966) argues, by a process involving tentative theories subjected to tests of justifiability and out of which new problems emerge? A more radical view of knowledge, by Foucault and Habermas, argues that it is socially constructed and tends to reflect the world view of the powerful and the elite (Parsons, 1995: 39, 53-4). The policy maker’s view of knowledge influences whether s/he adopts a rational or non rational approach to the policy process.

The nature of knowledge leads to the next question – whose knowledge? It is necessary to evaluate knowledge to know who produced it. An evaluation of knowledge used in decision making has to establish whether it was produced by a political party, the Government, an interest group, an academic, a member of an elite in society, or a policy expert.

#### *2.2.1.4 What Kind of Knowledge is Used in Agenda Setting?*

The kind of knowledge used in policy making has to be evaluated by posing the following questions: (i) is the knowledge used in the policy process presented as scientific or as the views of a certain group of people? (ii) Is the knowledge presented

as qualitative or quantitative data? And (iii) what kind of values and beliefs underpin the knowledge? For example, the knowledge in the *White Paper on Human Resource Development* (DETE, 1997) was produced by the Department of Enterprise and Employment (now DETE) and that in the *White Paper on Adult Education* (DES, 2000a) was produced by DES. These White Papers represent the values and belief systems of two Government Departments with different agendas and different philosophies.

#### *2.2.1.5 How is Knowledge Used in the Policy Process?*

Parsons (1995: 56-87) claims that it is necessary to know how the knowledge is produced and organised in policy networks and in Government before deciding how to use it. An aspect of how the knowledge is used is to find out who commissioned it and how the knowledge influences the policy process. An example from adult education illustrates the point. The Irish Government agreed to take part in an international adult literacy survey carried out by the OECD in the early 1990s. The results of the survey were published in 1997 (DES, 1997). Because the report of the survey was prepared by a reputable, independent, international organisation, its findings were accepted by all stakeholders and influenced state policy (Department of Finance, 2000-2006, 1999: 191; DES, 2000a: 34).

#### *2.2.1.6 Who Controls the Agenda?*

Recognition of the interests or ideologies that control or influence the policy agenda is essential for policy makers and policy analysts. The policy agenda is influenced by politics, ideology, national and supra-national institutions, business, interest groups, advocacy coalitions and the media. It is created through the choices made from these influences or policy streams discussed earlier. Competition between ideas, interests and political parties for a place on the policy agenda is resolved by the exercise of power. The power to control or influence the agenda is significant. For that reason, each of the influences that try to exert power in setting the agenda is briefly examined next, starting with politics.

Politics influences the policy agenda. Political parties, as noted earlier, provide the electorate with policy choices. Those successful in elections influence the public agenda (Gallagher and Marsh, 2008: 3-5; 28-31), through the role of the State and the nature of the Government system. Government has a number of models for setting the policy agenda discussed in the section on the approaches to policy

making. The models range from pluralism at one extreme to elitism at the other (Heywood, 2007: 16-21). The corporatist model is a 'half-way house' and influences Irish public policy through Social Partnership.

Parson's (1995: 125) argues that "from a pluralist perspective the definition of problems and the setting of policy agendas is essentially the outcome of a process of competition between different groups". Many people, organisations (including political parties), and institutions have a role in agenda setting. The opposite is an elitist model of agenda setting where "power and influence over the policy process are controlled by a small elite", including the Prime Minister and Government Ministers (Axford *et al.*, 1997).

Corporatism is another model of agenda control. Under corporatism the Government involves selected interest groups in policy making. Ireland has moved from an elite model (Ó Buachalla, 1998) to one where Social Partnership (the Irish version of corporatism) and the EU are significant players in controlling the policy agenda. The Government and the bureaucracy use Social Partnership and EU-driven National Development Planning processes to set the policy agenda. However, there are other influences at work outside of these formal processes. These influences include the construction sector. Hughes, Clancy, Harris and Beetham (2007: 399) claim that "the sector [construction sector] has become not only economically dominant but also simultaneously dominant within the political sphere".

#### *2.2.1.7 The Influence of Ideology on the Policy Agenda*

Ideology influences and shapes political life and political systems (Heywood, 2007:

3). Heywood (2007: 11) defines ideology in its political context as:

...a more or less coherent set of ideas that provides the basis for organised political action whether this is intended to preserve, modify, or overthrow the existing system of power.

He points out that all ideologies:

- " offer an account of the existing order, usually in the form of a 'world view';
- ...advance a model of a desired future, a vision of the 'good society'; and
- ...explain how political change can and should be brought about - how to get from (a) to (b)".

Heywood (2007) identifies at least eight different political ideologies: (i) liberalism, (ii) conservatism, (iii) socialism, (iv) nationalism, (v) anarchism, (vi) fascism, (vii) feminism, and (viii) ecologism. I have added postmodernism. Ideology influences

the nature and role of the State as well as the policies of political parties. It also influences what items get on the policy agenda, the nature of the decisions and how they are implemented.

Liberalism is examined first.

Liberal thought is characterised by a commitment to individualism, a belief in the supreme importance of the human individual, implying strong support for individual freedom. Modern liberalism, however, exhibits a more sympathetic attitude towards the state. This shift was born out of the recognition that industrial capitalism had merely generated new forms of injustice and left the mass of the population subject to the vagaries of the market.

(Heywood, 2004: 29)

Western countries are considered liberal capitalist democracies. Liberalism favours the State having a 'hands-off' role in public policy with as much choice as possible left to individuals through the market (Heywood, 2007: 40-1). Neo-liberalism, which aims to reverse the trend towards 'big government' and state intervention, is the modern version of liberalism (Heywood, 2007: 52). However, its hegemony is under threat in the current financial crisis and global economic recession.

Conservatism, on the other hand, distrusts developed theories and abstract principles which characterise other political traditions. It prefers instead to trust in tradition, history and experience. Morality, supported by shared values and beliefs, is an important theme (Heywood, 2004: 138-40). Modern conservatism, often termed the New Right or Neo-Conservatism, emphasises economic liberalism and social conservatism. Conservatism is embodied in the philosophy of Edmund Burke and Michael Oakeshott and the political policies of Ronald Regan, Margaret Thatcher and George W. Bush (Heywood, 2004:139; Heywood, 2007: 88-97, 161-2).

Socialism is the third ideology examined in this section. "The aim of socialism, from the early days of the nineteenth century, was to refashion industrial society so as to organise industry more rationally and distribute wealth more fairly" (Axford *et al.*, 1997: 238). Socialism has evolved in two distinct paths. The first is Marxist theory, based on class struggle between workers and capitalism as well as social democracy embodied in the welfare state. The second is socialism which has abandoned the Marxist goal of abolishing capitalism and aims to humanise it. A characteristic of socialism is concern for the underdog, the weak and the vulnerable. However, the lack of a strong underpinning theory is a weakness of socialism, although like conservatism and Marxism it has evolved since 1970 (Heywood, 2007: Chapter 4).



A modern version of socialism is Blair's 'New Labour' (Heywood, 2004: 308-9). Newman (2001: 170) believes that the 'Third Way', adopted by Tony Blair, "is an attempt to blend the legacies of neo-liberalism with a focus on social cohesion" (Newman, 2001: 40).

Axford *et al.* (1997: 242-6) claim that fascism is an "essentially reactionary ideology, reacting against what are usually termed progressive currents of thought". It opposes enlightenment ideas such as reason, rights, freedoms and democracy.

Nationalism is important in the modern world but is difficult to define. Heywood (2007: 143) posits that:

Nationalism can broadly be defined as the belief that the nation is the central principle of political organisation. As such it is based on two core assumptions. First, humankind is naturally divided into distinct nations and, second, the nation is the most appropriate, and perhaps only legitimate, unit of political rule.

This definition is so broad that it can encompass many ideologies.

Feminist political thought has focussed on two issues, among a range of others - an analysis of institutions, processes and practices through which women have been subordinated to men as well as identifying ways to challenge that subordination. Patriarchy and gender, as political constructs, are important concepts in feminist theory. While feminism derived from liberalism, it has been influenced by socialism, ecology and postmodernism. Contributions of feminism include its effectiveness in deconstructing concepts such as power, domination and equality. It also demonstrates how to effectively challenge domination in all its manifestations (Heywood, 2004: 62-4).

Ecologism, like feminism and postmodernism, is a relatively recent ideology. It regards nature as an interconnected whole, embracing humans, non-humans and the inanimate world. It is concerned with damage to the environment, depletion of natural resources, global warming and sustainability (Heywood, 2007: 255-79).

Communitarianism emerged as a political philosophy in the 1980s and 1990s as a critique of liberalism. It asserts that the self is embedded in the community and is impacted on and shaped by the community. It attempts to restore to society its moral voice (Heywood, 2004: 35-6; Connolly, 2007: 111).

Finally, postmodernism is considered. The basis of postmodernism is “a perceived social shift - from modernity to post modernity - and a related cultural and intellectual shift from modernism to postmodernism”. The central thesis is, as discussed earlier, that “there is no such thing as certainty; the idea of absolute and universal truth must be discarded as arrogant pretence” (Heywood, 2004: 7-9). Postmodernism challenges the enlightenment and positivist positions as well as the concept of a foundational philosophy. Language and discourse are important to post-modernist thinking. Reflecting on language and discourse, Sackney and Mitchell, (cited in Heck, 2004: 162) argue:

Language is not seen as a reflection of the real but, rather, instead it gains its signification and meaning through social discourse in as much as every experience results in some form of text and meaning that is both written and read through the interplay of various social actors.

Power relations are important in postmodernism (Heywood, 2004: 7) and, as noted in the introduction, are reflected in the title of Lasswell’s (1936) seminal book *Politics: Who Gets What, When and How?* Weber (1968: Vol. 1 p. 53; cited in Dunleavy *et al.* (1987: 148), defined power as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance regardless of the basis upon which this probability exists”. Whimster (2007: 226) argues that “Weber recognises the centrality of economic power” and that the operation of power and control in both economic enterprise and politics resemble one another.

Class and status are features of social power. Like politics, economic power also interacts with social power. Mann (1986) and Poggi (2001), cited by Whimster (2007: 230-31), argue that the whole point of the analysis of power is to explain the allocation of resources in society: “Resources can be allocated by custom, by exchange and by command”. Economic and political power controls these resources. An issue is whether power is concentrated in the hands of a few (elitism) or is diffused (pluralism).

#### 2.2.1.8 *Limitations to the Policy Agenda*

Having just examined the agenda setting process it should be noted that the agenda is not created in a vacuum. There are limits to what can get on the policy agenda and boundaries to what can be achieved once an issue makes the agenda. These boundaries are set by voters, political parties and the political process, the nature of policy issues and the resources available (Parsons, 1995: 220-23). The factors that determine the boundaries are discussed in turn in this section starting with voters.

In a democracy, voters set boundaries at elections. Political parties put forward election manifestoes to sell to the electorate. Age profile, gender, residence, status and outlook of voters are significant when considering policies to attract electoral support. Voters also consider the type of Government they want to see in power (Gallagher and Marsh, 2008: xi, 29), which leads us to consider the role of the political system in setting boundaries to the public policy agenda.

Political parties are a vehicle in the political system for setting the policy agenda, for policy development and implementation. Laver and Marsh (1999:152-153) claim that:

The relationship between parties and elections is at the heart of parliamentary democracy in Ireland and elsewhere. By offering a relatively small number of alternatives at election time, they structure the options faced by voters. They provide choices between opposing teams of politicians as different parties nominate competing teams of candidates for the legislature and senior party politicians hold themselves out as possible government ministers. Parties may also present voters with clear cut policy options, allowing people to select policies as well as the personnel of governments.

The ideological position of political parties noted in the last section, impacts on policies. The fact that political parties provide a structured pattern of competition, which constrains voters by limiting alternatives, but also makes choices manageable, is important in setting and defining the boundaries of the policy agenda (Laver and Marsh: 1999). However politicians and the electorate also have to have regard to the nature of the policy issues for inclusion on the policy agenda and the extent of the resources available to fund policy choices.

Issue type is also a limitation on the policy agenda. Issues of principle, underpinned by ideology, are those where the level of State involvement or moral values are important. For example, Irish Governments are wary of policy agendas on abortion, contraception, marriage and divorce, and the nature of the family because of the bitter political campaigns fought over them from 1970 on (Ferriter, 2004 : 714-21; Coakley, 2005: 26-7).

Resource allocation has a major influence on policy. When resources are being increased or reduced, the extent of the increase or reduction and the decisions on winners or losers reflects power in the State (Parsons, 1995: 133-4).

The availability of resources impacts on the policy agenda. The obvious resource limitation is economic. When the Celtic Tiger was alive and well the State was in a position to develop both services and infrastructure. Quin *et al.* (1999a: 1) conclude that:

the current climate of remarkable economic growth provides a unique opportunity for the creation and development of social policies, which contribute to the quality of life of all citizens and ensure that each sector of society benefits.

However, by 2008 when the Celtic tiger was in trouble, tax receipts were down significantly and the government was forced to reduce public spending (Irish Times: October 21, 2008).

Knowledge has emerged as a critical resource in a global knowledge economy (Scholte, 2000: 20). The development of knowledge through a better educated workforce is a function of the economy and choices made by the State and individuals (Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2007).

People also limit the policy agenda. The importance of people as a resource is reflected in the attention given to human resource management and the development of human capital in OECD countries. Human resource management is an important dimension of the Strategic Management Initiative (Boyle, 1995: 2003). Human resource factors identified by NESF (2002: 17) include productivity, research and development capability, economic and social cohesion, reduced poverty, an educated workforce and the valuing of social justice. A knowledge economy is dependent on the availability, education, capacity, creativity, work ethic and team playing of individuals and communities. These qualities form the cultural capital of a state.

#### *2.2.1.9 The Application of Agenda Setting Theory to Practice*

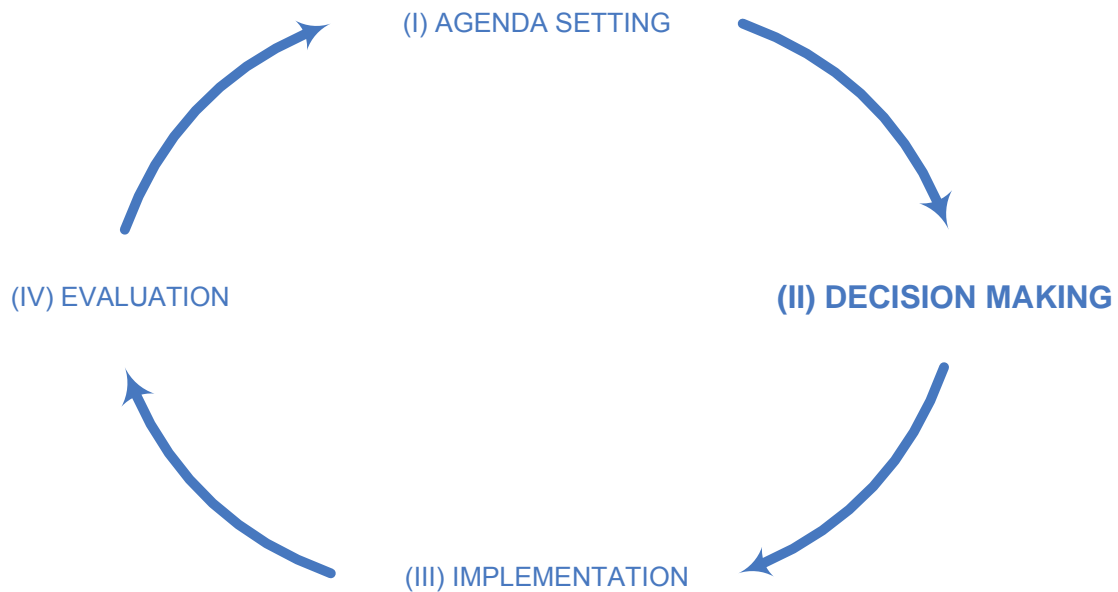
How does the theory of agenda setting operate in practice? An outline example helps to sketch the link between the agenda policy theory and practice (adult education policy making) without going into the realms of analysis.

In 1997 adult education was identified as an issue for the public policy agenda by an advocacy coalition of AONTAS and NALA during the general election campaign (Brady: interview; Harvey, 2002: 67). Following the election of a new Government, adult education achieved its place on the agenda through the appointment of the first

Minister for State for Adult Education (O' Dea: interview). A favourable economic climate made it easier for a marginal public policy issue to get on the agenda. Its place there was re-enforced when the results of the IALS survey were published showing that Ireland had a serious literacy problem (DES, 1997).

Once adult education was firmly established on the agenda the knowledge, and expertise of AONTAS, NALA and the National; University Maynooth developed and shaped that agenda further (Keogh, Brady, Collins, Ryan, Coolahan, Kelly: Interviews). However, there were boundaries to the agenda. These included the resources available to pursue it within DES (internal DES files) and from the State, and the role of DETE as the lead department for training (internal DETE files).

## 2.2.2 Decision Making in the Policy Process



*Figure 14 Stages' Model: Decision Making*

Decision making in public policy is about how policy choices are made or the preferred option selected (Parsons, 1995: 245). It is a complex, multi-layered process and, as Parsons (1995: 247) argues, “there can be no one explanation of decision-making.” Therefore, the aim of a policy analyst is to “arrive at an evaluation of what approach or approaches offer the most plausible account of or for a particular decision”.

According to Parsons (1995: 247-8), there are five major approaches to analysing the decision making process:

- (i) Power;
- (ii) Rationality;
- (iii) Public choice;
- (iv) Institutional; and
- (v) Informational and psychological.

### 2.2.2.1 Power

The structures of power determine how decisions are made. The exercise of power can be through an: (i) elitist, (ii) pluralist, (iii) Marxist, (iv) corporatist, (v) professional, or (vi) technocratic model (Parsons, 1995: 258) of decision making. Each approach to using power in decision making is discussed in turn.

The elitist approach claims that the power to make and influence decisions is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals and groups. Elitism challenges democracy. Early thinking on elitism by Pareto and Mosca has been modified to recognise that elites now operate within a democratic system, but are still able to make all the important decisions. C. Wright Mills (1956) argued that all the important decisions in the USA were made by what he termed a powerful military-industrial complex (Parsons, 1995: 248-50). However, as Hill (2005: 38) claims, “there is a problem with sustaining a simple elite theory position in as much as there are difficulties in specifying the mechanisms by which power is seized and the techniques used to hold it”.

Pluralism offers a contrasting perspective on the exercise of power. While elitism threatens democracy, the pluralist approach strengthens the democratic process in that it views power as being widely distributed in society. The essence of pluralism is that the political stage is open to all. However, commentators such as Dahl and Lindblom (1976) accept that while the political process is open to all, “pluralist politics is not played on a level playing field. Parsons (1995: 253) argues that “business interests have a predominant influence on the decision-making processes of liberal democracy”. To counteract the power of elites in decision making, the idea of policy networks and policy communities, has developed (Parsons, 1995: 254).

Marxism, the next approach to decision making discussed, provides a critique of the capitalist elitism. Marxism is based on the premise that the state is organised in the interest of capital. Like elitism and pluralism, the Marxist analysis has developed from its original formulation in response to critiques and changing circumstances. Gramsci (1970) developed the concept of hegemony to explain how the capitalist class was not overthrown in advanced capitalist societies. Hegemony describes “the non-coercive aspects of domination, the diffusion throughout society of the value and knowledge systems of a ruling group” (Rosamond, 1997: 86). The hegemonic view of the policy process is articulated by Westgard and Resler (cited in Parsons, 1995: 146) as follows:

The proof of that [hegemonic] power is not to be found only, or even chiefly, in the fact that capitalists make decisions. It is to be found in the fact that the decisions which both they and others – including government – make, and the sheer routine conduct of affairs even without definite decision-making, in the main have a common denominator: an everyday acceptance of private property and market mechanisms...Power is to be found more in uneventful routine than in conscious and active exercise of will.

The corporatist approach to decision making tries to bridge the gap between elitist and pluralist approaches. Schmitter (1974: 93-4, cited in Hill (2005: 63) ), defines the ideal type of corporatism as:

a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organised into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports.

Following Middlemas (1979), Hill (2005: 65) argues that incorporation means “the inclusion of major interest groups into the governing process and not their subordination”.

Corporatism developed as an alternative theory to pluralism in Austria and the Scandinavian countries since the Second World War and is now part of public policy making in Ireland. O’ Donnell (2008: 76-7), claims that “since 1987, Irish economic and social policy has been conducted as a form of negotiated governance”.

Professionalism, a variant of elitism, recognises the power of professional elites in decision making, by virtue of status, knowledge and expertise. The status of professionals in public policy has been contested in recent years. Hill (2005: 249) argues that public choice theory sees “professionals as the most likely of all to distort the organisation in their own interests”. The operation of the Irish health system demonstrates the power of consultants in the policy making process with the ability to constrain the Government’s capacity to make and implement health policy (Wren, 2003: 269-280). However, the power of professionals has been challenged in recent times from both the left and the right (Parsons, 1995: 264). While professionalism focuses on the power and influence of one group in the decision making process, it does not provide a broad enough explanatory framework of decision making in general.

Technocracy views decision making in a positivist vein and underpins theories of scientific management (Parsons, 1995: 265). The dominant players are scientists, engineers and IT experts, who believe that there is one logical solution to a problem. Technocratic thinking can be traced to Fredrick W. Taylor, Saint-Simon and Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defence under Kennedy (Parsons, 1995: 265-71).



Some approaches to the use of power such as elitism, pluralism and Marxism are very broad in scope and are ideal types. However, they provide tools and frameworks for analysing its use in decision making. On the other hand both professionalism and technocracy are rather limited approaches to policy making, though they highlight dimensions of the exercise of power in decision making. Corporatism offers the most realistic model of State management of power in many western liberal democracies outside of the US and the UK. Known as Social Partnership, the Irish version of corporatism is an adequate though not complete, explanatory framework for the exercise of power in decision making in modern Ireland.

#### 2.2.2.2 *Rationalism*

Rationalism is another lens through which to view decision making. Parsons (1995: 271) argues that there are two sources of ideas for the rational approach to decision making. The first is economic theory and the second is bureaucracy.

Rationalists, as we have already seen, believe that decision making is a purely rational process. This view has been challenged by post-positive and post-modern thinkers. Economic rationality is developed around the idea of the rational, self-interested, economic individual, who carefully researches options and makes a choice reflecting these interests. In that scenario, the market is the vehicle through which the rational individual can make choices.

Bureaucratic rationality is derived from the work of Weber. Weber argues that capitalism is best served by a bureaucratic organisation. It asserts the benefits to policy making of an efficient, well organised, resourced and trained bureaucracy. The bureaucracy is underpinned by a hierarchical organisational structure. The structure is based on specialisation within defined areas of work such as Government Departments (Parsons, 1995: 271-3).

As indicated in the last paragraph, commentators have critiqued rationalism. Simon (1957, cited by Parsons, 1995: 277), developed the concept of bounded rationality, which asserts that there are limits to human rationality. Because of these same limits, Lindblom saw decision making as “the science of muddling through”. Consequently he proposed an incremental approach and recognised that “the need for political agreement and consensus in decision making”. Parsons (1995: 286-7)

argues that incrementalism or 'muddling through' has some the following characteristics:

- it involves mutual adjustment and negotiation;
- it excludes by accident, rather than by systematic or deliberate exclusion;
- it proceeds through a succession of incremental changes;
- it is not theoretically driven;
- it is superior to a 'futile attempt at superhuman comprehensiveness';
- it involves "trial and error"; and
- policy is not made once and for all.

Later, Lindblom revised his approach and developed the idea of 'disjointed incrementalism', which helps decision makers by simplifying and focussing on problems (Parsons, 1995: 291). According to Parsons (1995: 287), this is a form of decision making where:

comparison takes place between policies which are only marginally different from one another and in which there is no great goal or vision to be attained, so much as an amelioration of problems and policies.

Disjointed incrementalism employs the following strategies of analysis for decision making:

- the limitation of analysis to a few familiar alternatives;
- intertwining values and policy goals with empirical analysis of problems;
- focussing on ills to be remedied rather than goals to be sought;
- trial and error learning;
- analysing a limited number of options and their consequences; and
- fragmenting of analytical work to many partisan participants in policy making.

Dror (1964, cited by Parsons, 1995: 294), argued that Lindblom's incremental model "is profoundly conservative" and only appropriate in a relatively stable policy environment. As we shall see later, policy theory also needs to provide an explanatory framework to deal with decision making in circumstances where there is sudden or radical change. Essentially, Dror's model of decision making "envisages decision makers using rational analysis, but also thinking creatively, using intuition, hunches, feelings and impressions" (Parsons, 1995: 295).

### 2.2.2.3 *Public Choice Theory*

Previous sections of the literature review discussed the use of power and rationalism as approaches to decision making in public policy. This section takes us into the post-modern era by considering public choice theory. Public choice theory argues that politicians and bureaucrats pursue their self-interest to maximise budget and staff. Public choice theorists seek to counteract that tendency by introducing aspects of the market through competition, privatisation, contracting out and other alternatives to public service monopoly (Boyle, 1995: 5-7).

The major premise of public choice theory is that in the absence of the market mechanism, public representatives and bureaucrats pursue their own interests (budget and staff maximisation for instance) rather than 'the public interest'. There is a need, therefore, in the public service for mechanisms to promote the consumer interest.

Colebatch (2002: 88) claims that public choice theory "has become the major challenge to the dominant liberalism in political science". Public choice theory will be examined further when the Strategic Management Initiative is considered in Part Two of this Chapter.

### 2.2.2.4 *Institutionalism*

It is logical to examine institutionalism as an approach to decision making next because public choice theory critiques the way the institutions of the State operate and proposes the market as the operational model. The institutional approach discussed earlier argued that decision making is shaped by the institutions of the State. These institutions are neutral, rational instruments in the policy process. They are shaped by policy and use their resources in support of policy. The institutions shape and in turn are shaped during the decision making process. The relationship between the State and society is mediated through them and is affected by the particular set of State institutional arrangements because they do not exist in isolation (Parsons, 1995: 323-33).

The institutional approach can be examined from a transaction costs perspective. If you accept that the institution is operating in a market composed of buyers and sellers with little trust, uncertainty and opportunism, contracts are needed to impose order and control. Agency theory focuses on the relationship between principals (buyers), contracts and agents (sellers) (Parsons, 1995: 329). John (1998: 65) claims that "In truth there is no institutional approach, institutions are just one factor constraining public policy choices".

#### 2.2.2.5 *Personality, Cognition, Information Processing*

Up to now we have considered a number of approaches to decision making, but have ignored the impact of the people involved on the decision making process.

Parsons (1995: 336) argues that “the study of decision-making owes much to the contribution of psychology”.

The notion of decision in the policy sciences has, by and large, rested on notions of rationality and self-interest which, when examined from the psychological point of view, are as the human relations school showed, grossly simplistic concepts of human motivation.

This section examines two approaches to examining human decision making (Parsons, 1995: 337):

- (i) Those which focus on factors such as emotions, personality, motivations, the group behaviour of the actors and interpersonal relations; and
- (ii) Those which are concerned with issues such as how human beings recognise problems, how they use information, how they make choices between various options, how they perceive ‘reality’ or ‘problems, how information is processed and how information is communicated in organisations.

The impact of emotions, motivations on decision making is now examined. Lasswell, one of the foundational theorists of policy science, has written extensively on the impact the psychological make up of political actors has on the policy process (Parsons, 1995: 336-42). As a consequence he argues that:

Decision analysis involves both the macro level of society, culture and institutions, and also the ‘micro level’ of how human beings bring their personal feelings, emotions, motives and fears, and so on, to bear upon the problems they confront.

(Parsons, 1995: 341)

Group psychology is a factor when considering decision making because decisions usually involve groups. A number of thinkers including Janis (1982) have written on the dynamics of decision making within groups. One of the problems in group decision making is the phenomenon known as ‘groupthink’ whereby “...because of the way in which members of a group may be loyal to a group’s viewpoint or interpretation of information, consensus blinds decision makers to the realities” (Parsons, 1995: 345).

The way people go about solving problems also impacts on decision making. Simon looked at decision making as a problem solving activity, which is bounded by human rationality. He identifies two types of problems in decision making: (i) well structured problems and (ii) ill-defined problems. Ill-defined problems are usually the kind that decision makers have to solve and are “messy and intractable.... Here the problem is that we do not know what the problem is” (Simon, 1983, cited Parsons, 1995: 354-5). The reader will have noted in Chapter One that managing adult education policy in 1997 falls into the category of ill-defined problems.

Simon (1985) argues that “problem solving involves the substitution of complex reality with a more simplified model which decision makers can use to solve the problems of attaining their goals” (Parsons, 1995: 355). He has identified a number of ways to support more effective policy making including:

- (i) having well organised and stored information;
- (ii) having a long-term commitment to a problem;
- (iii) having a high level of motivation to solve a problem;
- (iv) having originality in abandoning earlier constructions of the problem;
- (v) using long-term memory to incubate the problem; and
- (vi) using computer technology.

Carroll and Johnson (1990, cited in Parsons, 1995: 357-8), have devised a framework which draws on the work of theorists who have stressed the importance of the human dimension in decision making. Inevitably, aspects of the framework link into and overlap the other stages of the policy making model being used in this study. The elements of decision making identified by Carroll and Johnson are (Parsons, 1995: 454-5):

- problem recognition;
- problem formulation – how is the problem defined and who defines it?
- the generation of alternative solutions to the problem;
- information search – gathering data on the problem;
- judgement or choice – the making of the decision;
- action – implementing the decision; and
- feedback – evaluating the implementation and using the data on an ongoing basis in the decision making process.

#### 2.2.2.6 *Applying Decision Making Theory to Practice*

We have examined five approaches to analysing decision making in public policy from which a number of key themes emerge that help in the analysis of adult education policy making since 1997. The most important theme is that decision making is a complex process, which operates at the macro level of the State (the economy and society) and the micro level of the people who are directly involved in making the decisions and implementing them. It becomes very complex when policy problems are ill defined. As a result there is no one approach that can completely explain decision making in a particular case or that can be applied to all cases.

A second theme is the dominance of positivist/rational paradigm of policy making and policy analysis (Parsons, 1995: 433). Criticism of rationalism includes recognition that human beings have limits to their rationality and bring their psychological make up (including their cognitive skills) to the decision making process. The rational paradigm is also critiqued because it does not take account of the fact that policy decisions are usually made by groups or teams of people and not by individuals in a liberal western democracy. There is some evidence to suggest that the norms of the group and the need to conform to those norms prevents a proper analysis of alternatives in decision making and gives rise to a failure to challenge group solutions in the interest of group cohesiveness.

The rational approach to decision making has been modified to take account of these critiques. This has led to the emergence of a new public management paradigm which, as noted earlier, argues that decision making on public policy issues should use a business approach. As Parsons (1995: 454) argues, new public management, or managerialism, as he terms it, shares with rationalism “a belief that ‘politics’ is not an effective mode of decision-making” and “...the analysis of public policy in terms of ‘management’ has come to dominate the way in which public policy is now discussed”.

### 2.2.3 Policy Implementation

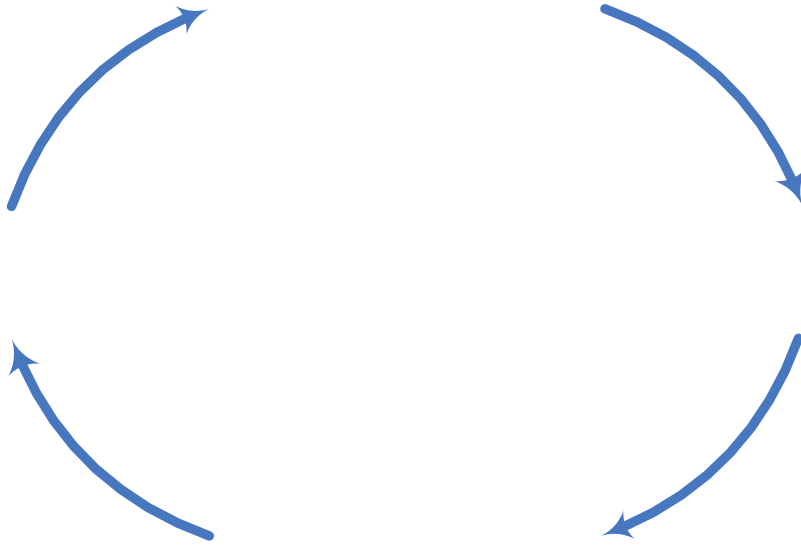


Figure 15 Stages' Model – Implementation

Hague and Harrop (2004: 312) argue that implementation is part of policy making:

After a policy has been set out, it must be put into effect. An obvious point of course except that much political science stopped at the point where the government reached a decision ignoring the myriad difficulties which arise in policy execution. Probably the main achievement of policy analysis has been to direct attention to the problems of implementation.

Once policy makers have decided on policy the next step is to implement the decisions. Policy implementation represents the third element of the stages' model used in this research. In this section two broad implementation frameworks are considered: (i) the policy action framework and (ii) the management framework model. Review of these frameworks is followed by consideration of implementation strategies open to the state which include:

- top-down strategies;
- bottom-up strategies; and
- hybrid strategies.

These strategies apply to each aspect of the model and not just to implementation.

Finally, the link between issue type and choice of implementation strategy is discussed.

(IV) EVALUATION

### 2.2.3.1 *Policy Action Framework Model*

The policy action framework model was developed by Lewis and Flynn (1978, 1979) and Barrett and Fudge (1981). It is a behavioural model and views implementation as action by individuals limited by the world outside and the institutional context in which they act. Barrett and Fudge (1981: 25, cited by Parsons, 1995: 472), argue that implementation can best be understood as a 'policy-action' continuum "in which an interactive and negotiative process is taking place over time, between those seeking to put policy into effect and those upon whom action depends".

The focus is on factors affecting the scope for action of individuals and agencies. The model shows that policy is not something that just happens during policy making stages. It evolves or unfolds – "implementation will always be evolutionary; it will inevitably reformulate as well as carry out policy" (Majone and Wildavasky, 1984: 116; cited by Parsons, 1995: 473).

### 2.2.3.2 *Management Framework Model*

The management framework model of implementation views the public sector as a business and uses private sector methods including operational management, corporate management and personnel management. It is the application of public choice theory to policy implementation through new public management. It is no surprise to see standard business techniques underpinning this model because new public management espouses the application of the business model to the public service.

Operational management techniques in policy implementation include four types of control of the implementation process:

- (i) co-ordination over time;
- (ii) co-ordination at particular times;
- (iii) detailed logistics and scheduling; and
- (iv) defending and maintaining structural boundaries.

(Carter *et al.*, 1984: 96, cited in Parsons, 1995: 475)

Corporate techniques (or strategic management as it is likely to be called today) emphasise strategic management through a process of defining objectives, planning, organising, directing and controlling. An important consideration in corporate



management is the relationship of the strategy adapted to the structure of the organisation (Parsons, 1995: 475-6).

Personnel management has been replaced by human resource management which emphasises human capital development. At a basic level it is concerned with “the management of an organisation’s workforce” (Gunnigle et al, 2006: 1). Currently human resource management refers to:

the development of a strategic corporate approach to workforce management, whereby HRM [human resource management] considerations become integral to strategic decision making as organisations seek to establish a corporate HR [human resource] philosophy and strategy that complements their business strategy.

(Gunnigle *et al.*, 2006: 40)

With the emphasis on accountability in new public management, the capacity of public servants to implement government policies is measured through a focus on customer service, customer feedback, performance management, performance appraisal, performance related pay, training, flexibility and participation in partnership and ongoing modernisation (Cradden, 2007: Chapter 8).

### 2.2.3.3 *Implementation Strategies*

A top-down implementation strategy uses a powerful bureaucracy to control implementation (Parsons, 1995: 464):

Goals have to be clearly defined and understood, resources made available, the chain of command be capable of assembling and controlling resources, and the system able to communicate effectively and control those individuals and organisations involved in the performance of tasks.

Policy is determined at central government level in the top-down model and implemented through detailed prescriptions by the bureaucracy on behalf of the executive, which makes the policy.

Critiques of the top-down approach have focused on policy implementation and on recognising that people and organisations responsible for implementation are important to the process. Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) argue that the top-down, rational model ignores how real people operate and how service delivery organisations need to be active partners in policy implementation. The bottom-up strategy, outlined in the following section, recognises the importance of those directly involved in the implementation.

Discretion is given by central Government to local/ street level implementers in the bottom-up implementation strategy. The strategy recognises that effective implementation can be achieved through interaction with front line staff. The strategy also draws on their knowledge and experience. This is particularly true when front line staff is made up of professionals such as adult education tutors, doctors and nurses etc. (Parsons, 1995: 267-70).

No single implementation strategy works on its own, a reality that is recognised in the hybrid approach to policy making. A mix of bottom-up and top-down implementation strategies is related to the nature of the policy sector and prevailing Government ideology. A hybrid approach should identify appropriate delivery systems, the extent of discretion at each level within the system, the nature of reporting relationships and the capacity of actors at street level to influence policy. It also allows for far greater discussion at street level as capacity increases and the system matures (Parsons, 1995: 486-8).

As we shall see later, the Irish public policy system is centralised and there is a strong preference for the top-down implementation strategy. That approach has been modified in recent years through the Strategic Management Initiative where the State is trying to outsource policy implementation to free itself up for policy development.

#### *2.2.3.4 Delivery Systems for Policy Implementation*

Having decided on the type of strategy it will use, the State needs to identify a delivery system for policy implementation. Policy delivery systems include a governmental mix, a sectoral mix, an enforcement mix, a value mix and a control/consensus mix. Many stakeholders are involved in policy delivery leading to possible conflict and 'dysfunctionalities' (Kaufman, 1991). Consequently, policy makers use combinations of delivery mixes including governmental, sectoral, enforcement and value mixes. These draw on a range of hierarchical, bureaucratic, market and community resource distribution systems. The chosen system may change over time Parsons (1995: 491-542).

The governmental mix refers to the choice of levels of Government involved in delivery. A choice for Government in implementing a policy is territorial - what part or level of government is responsible for delivery? Delivery can be at national,

regional/state, local or neighbourhood/street levels (Parsons, 1995: 494). Burns, Hambelton and Hogett (1994: 88, cited by Parsons, 1995: 495), suggest a four-pronged approach to local delivery networks as part of a governmental delivery mix:

**(i) localisation:** the physical relocation of services from a centralized to community level; **(ii) flexibility:** the promotion of more flexible forms of management and work organization through multi-disciplinary team-working, multi-skilling, local, general and corporate management; **(iii) devolved management:** the devolution of decision making powers to service delivery managers and staff; and **(iv) organisational culture and change:** the reorientation of management and staff values to promote quality of service and local empowerment.

Policy implementation can involve the State, private enterprise and voluntary/community organisations or combinations of these. These organisations can implement policy individually or in partnership. The most common delivery mixes are public-private or public-voluntary partnerships. For example, in Ireland public private partnerships are used for major infrastructural projects (Government of Ireland, 2006: 23) and make use of voluntary organisations to deliver some services to people.

According to Etzioni (1961), there are three reasons why organisations comply with rules, disciplines, orders or policies: (i) love (agreement with the policy), (ii) money or (iii) fear. Policy delivery can involve all three and the identification of the mix of love, fear or money needed. Etzioni (1961, cited by Parsons 1995: 517) believes that:

effective organisations...are those which attain a balanced mix between low levels of 'fear' (coercion and alienation) and high levels of 'money' (remuneration and calculation) and 'love' (normative and moral) involvements.

Ideology impacts on the choice of delivery strategy. Some policy makers, such as the neo-conservatives and advocates of new public management, believe in the market. Here individuals and organisations comply through self-interested behaviour with an emphasis in implementation on contracts, remuneration and exchange. The bureaucratic approach depends on command, coercion, threat and authority underpinned by rules, systems and sanctions. Finally, the networking and community philosophy of Etzioni (1993) depends on custom and practice, moral behaviour, values and a commitment to supporting and belonging to the community and the State.

The impact of values on delivery is considered in this section. The delivery mix is underpinned by the values (ideologies) of policy makers including:

- (i) utilitarian values, which ask the question whether a given implementation mix is efficient;
- (ii) social justice values, which ask if the policy mix is used in a fair and equitable way and whether the outcome is fair; and
- (iii) neo-conservative values ask whether the policy mix used extended individual rights or reduced these rights.

(Parsons, 1995: 519-521)

The priorities and organisational mix used are reflected in the way policies are delivered. Colebatch and Larmour (1993: 108, cited in Parsons, 1995: 520) argue that “with regard to organisational mixes we have to understand the choices between market, bureaucracy and community as an interactive process involving institutions, values and meanings”.

Values vary between high level policy makers, local implementers and within both groups. Delivery analysis can identify how power is exercised and whose values predominate. The State/private, enterprise/community mixes and the enforcement and value mixes in the implementation of adult education policy in Ireland will be evaluated during the data analysis.

There are two ways the State can manage implementation. The first is control which involves specifying the desired state of affairs and using enforcement to ensure that it happens. Consensus, the second way, involves consulting with service users or their representatives and taking their views into account (Parsons, 1995: 533-542). This is in contrast to the consensus approach of communitarians and indeed Social Partnership in Ireland.

The market driven approach of new public management could be tempered by extending and developing other aspects of the mix such as building a social, civic and political consensus and developing education in democracy for individuals and communities as envisaged by Dewey (1916) and Freire (1996). New public management could promote the idea of developing a societal consciousness and communicative rationality as well as promoting effectiveness, efficiency and economy.

### 2.2.3.5 *Choice of Implementation Strategy and Issue Type*

The choice of implementation strategy and the delivery mix will depend as much on the nature of the policy as on ideology. There is a link between implementation strategy and policy type. Implementing infrastructural policies is different to implementing human service programmes. Chase (1979, cited by Parsons, 1995: 481-2), identified difficulties in implementing human service programmes such as adult education:

- difficulties arising from operational demands such as who are the people to be served, what is the nature of the service to be delivered, what are the possibilities for distortion and irregularities and can the programme be measured and controlled;
- difficulties arising from the nature and availability of resources required to run the programme including personnel, money, space and equipment; and
- difficulties arising from the willingness of the programme managers to share authority or retain the support of other bureaucratic and political actors. These include supervising agencies, line agencies, politicians, private sector providers, special interest groups and the media.

Implementation strategy varies according to whether the policy involves core principles, resource distribution, resource reduction or resource reallocation. The approach to core principles is often ideologically based.

### 2.2.3.6 *Applying Implementation Theory in Practice*

This research addresses the implementation of adult education policy outlined in the following documents because implementation is part of policy making: *The White Paper on Human Resource Development* (DETE:1997); *National Employment Action Plans* (DETE, 1998-2004), *The National Reform Programme: 2005-2008* (Department of the Taoiseach); *The White Paper on Adult Education* (DES, 2000a), *The Taskforce Report on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b), National Development Plan 2000-2006 (Department of Finance, 1999) *The Employment and Human Resource Development Operational Programme 2000-2006* (DETE, 2000a) and the four Partnership Agreements negotiated since 1997.

## 2.2.4 Evaluation

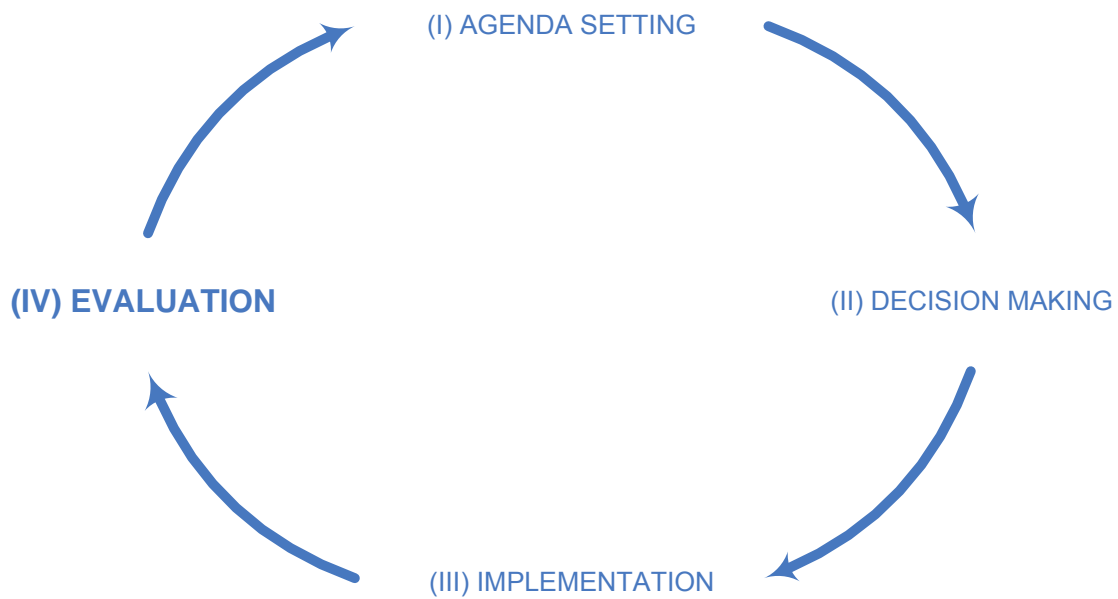


Figure 16 Stages' Model – Evaluation

Evaluation is a crucial part of policy making.

At various times, policymakers, funding organisations, planners, program managers, taxpayers or program clientele need to distinguish worthwhile programs from ineffective ones and launch new programs or revise existing ones so as to achieve certain desirable results.

(Rossi, P. H., Freeman, H. E., Lipsey, M. W. 1999: 4)

It is now seen as an essential part of new policy initiatives. Evaluation should answer the following questions – does the policy/programme achieve what it set out to achieve and what was the actual impact of the policy (Parsons, 1995: 545)?

This study recognises the importance of evaluation by treating it as a separate stage in the policy process. Evaluation methods, like agenda setting, decision making and implementation methods can be categorised as rational (positivist) or alternative (post-positivist). It includes the evaluation of policy, its constituent programmes and the people who work in the organisations responsible for implementation.

### 2.2.4.1 Policy Evaluation as a Rational Process

Parsons (1995: 545) argues that rational analysis involves techniques which measure the relation of costs to benefits as well as utility. It also involves techniques which measure performance by using experiments to evaluate policies and programmes. Parsons draws on the work of Palumbo (1987) and links analysis

techniques to policy stages including agenda setting. Evaluation involves defining the use and distribution of the problem and defining target groups and access.

Rational methods of evaluating the policy design phase involve the researcher examining the efficacy of measures to calculate the relationship of costs to benefits and the effectiveness of policies and programmes. Political evaluation establishes whether a particular policy has achieved legitimacy and is supported by techniques such as cost benefit analysis and opinion polls. The effectiveness of implementation can be measured through formative evaluation during the course of programmes to implement policies. Findings are used to improve the programme or its delivery. Techniques used in formative evaluation include Management Information Systems and Performance Indicators.

Summative evaluation is used to measure policy impact. It is, defined as “evaluative activities undertaken to render a summary judgement on certain critical aspects of the program’s performance, for instance, to determine if specific goals and objectives were met” (Rossi, H., Freeman, H. E., Lipsey, M. W. 1999: 36).

The objective of the rational evaluation approach is to arrive at an estimate of the gross and net effects of a policy or programme. Methods used involve comparisons before and after the introduction of the policy, between different parts of the country or through using an experiment where one group of people benefit from the policy or programme while others do not (this raises ethical issues).

Those who plan and implement programmes should also be evaluated. Human Resource Management strategies, noted earlier, form part of Organisational Development. There has been a tendency to import techniques from business to the public service in new public management, which forms part of the Strategic Management Initiative introduced in the mid 1990s (Boyle,1995). These rational evaluation systems have limitations because profit is not the bottom line in the public service. This is particularly true of performance-related pay schemes.

Commentators, including Parsons (1995: 561), believe that human resource management, which is focused on people rather than policies and programmes, is about exercising control over bureaucrats and professionals to ensure that individually and collectively, the objectives, defined by policy makers, are implemented effectively and efficiently.

#### 2.2.4.2 *Alternative Policy Evaluation Frameworks*

So if rational evaluation methods have limitations what are the alternatives? This section considers alternative (post-positivist) approaches suggested by Parsons (1995: 563) and continues the positivist/post-positivist debate about how public policy should be developed and the nature of knowledge. Doubts have been expressed about the effectiveness of post-positivist methods (Palumbo and Nachimas, 1983: 1). Evaluation is essentially a value-laden political process rather than some kind of search for an 'objective' truth. As a result there has been a search for radical alternatives to positivist methods including:

- (i) the multiplist approach (Cook, 1985);
- (ii) the design approach (Miller, 1984; Bobrow and Dryzek, 1987); and
- (iii) the naturalistic approach (Guba and Lincoln, 1987; Lincoln, 1990).

Cook (1985) argues that as reality is multi-faceted, the methods of analysis used to evaluate the 'real world' should involve multiple approaches. He strongly asserts that there is no absolute truth. Evaluation involves testing arguments and claims to knowledge (Parsons, 1995:564).

As there is no way of proving what is correct, the evaluation process, and the policy process in general, should be predicated on the importance of securing a pluralistic, multi-disciplinary and open exchange of knowledge: let a thousand flowers bloom, and cross pollinate.

The design approach recognises the complexity of policy making, which is not a value free activity. Miller (1984) argues that we should not pretend that policy making or policy evaluation can be scientific and objective.

Therefore, the values underpinning a particular policy should be clearly stated. Parsons (1995: 564-6) notes some of the features of the design approach.

The design approach begins with this notion that policy-making is an activity which is about the pursuit of values or goals... Policy-making is about values and how they may be clarified and achieved.

Bobrow and Dryzek (1987: 200-211) propose a schema for design analysis which measures how values are addressed, context captured and appropriate approaches selected and applied during the decision making process.

The main supporters of the naturalistic approach to evaluation are Guba and Lincoln (1987). Their work focuses on the evaluation stage of the policy cycle and maintains that all the stakeholders in a policy area should be involved in the evaluation process



and in the construction of knowledge around that area. Evaluation, they assert, is essentially a political process in which knowledge is negotiated.

The naturalistic approach offers a critique of liberal democracy. While it does not offer a realistic method of evaluation, it can inform a multiplist approach. The approach is closely linked to action research and case study methods.



# Chapter Two

## *Part Two: The Irish Policy Process*

Part One of this Chapter examined policy through the lens of policy theory and policy as an academic discipline. It also used the heuristic device of the stages' model of the policy process to manage the process. The focus now narrows to Irish public policy. Knowledge of the Irish policy process is essential to understanding adult education policy making since 1997.

## 2.3 The Irish Public Policy Process

Irish public policy making is reviewed by considering the main influences on the process. These influences are:

- the Oireachtas and the institutions of the state;
- the EU;
- supra-national bodies other than the EU;
- the political system;
- public administration at national level;
- regional and local government;
- social partnership; and
- interest groups.

1958 marked the beginning of a more active engagement by the State in policy, with the publication of the *Programme for Economic Expansion* (Collins, 2007: 113) and is therefore our starting point. However, our primary focus is on the era since 1987 when the first Social Partnership agreement was negotiated.

As Collins and Cradden (2001: 51) argue “public policies are the products of government”. The Irish Government, having regard to its obligations under EU treaties, is the vehicle that brings the elements of policy making discussed in Part One into the policy process. The Oireachtas, the other institutions of the State and the EU provide the legal framework and the mechanisms through which Government develops and implements policy. The people, through the political process, elect TDs to Dáil Éireann. The Dáil selects the Government, which is formally appointed by the President.

## **2.3.1 The Oireachtas and the Government**

### *2.3.1.1 Oireachtas*

The Constitution states that the Oireachtas consists of the President and the two houses - Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann. The Dáil is more influential in public policy, while the Seanad has very few real powers (Chubb, 1992: 153). The President's powers are limited, with no direct role in the policy process (Dooney and O' Toole, 1998: 109). The Dáil meets following an election and first decides on a Ceann Comhairle. The Dáil then elects the Taoiseach, who appoints the Government.

Dooney and O' Toole (1998: 58-66) point out that the work of the Dáil includes legislation, the adoption of the budget, debating motions, asking parliamentary questions to the Taoiseach and members of the Government and the presentation of documents such as Statutory Instruments and the annual reports and accounts of state sponsored bodies. The Dáil's most important function is the election of the Taoiseach and the Government and the passing of legislation to give effect to Government decisions.

In recent years a number of Committees have been established to manage the work of the Oireachtas, including some that are directly relevant to this thesis. These Oireachtas Committees include the Joint Committee on Education and Science, the Joint Committee on Enterprise and Small Business and the Joint Committee on Social and Family Affairs (Gallagher, 2005: 230-2).

### *2.3.1.2 Government*

Dooney and O Toole (1998: 1) argue that "the executive power of the state is exercised by or on the authority of the government and that the government is responsible to the Dáil". The Government meets in Cabinet with the Taoiseach as chair. According to Connolly (2005: 333):

in practice the cabinet determines the overall policy programme and aims of the government, it takes all major policy decisions, and it approves the government's budget and all other legislation to be approved by the Dáil.

The Government is made up of Ministers with responsibility for Government Departments. A Government may be a single party or a Coalition Government as has been the case since 1989. A Coalition Government is formed following

negotiations between political parties willing to go into Government (and with a combined majority in the Dáil). Agreement is reached on policy priorities and described in a 'Programme for Government', setting out public policy (Harvey, 2008: 15).

The powers of the Government are prescribed in the Constitution and its procedures in the Cabinet Handbook (1998). One procedure which is relevant to this study is the preparation of a *Memorandum for Government* for items requiring a Government decision. According to the *Cabinet Handbook* (Department of the Taoiseach, 1998) a Memorandum for Government should:

- prominently indicate the decision sought in clear and meaningful terms;
- ensure that all relevant considerations are brought to the attention of the Government in making a decision, that information provided is complete and accurate and that any qualifications are clearly stated...;and
- deal adequately with observations of Ministers consulted on the draft.

A draft of a document such as the *White Paper on Adult Education* (DES, 2000a) and the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b), submitted to Cabinet, must first be circulated to two categories of Government Departments (p 31-32). These are Ministers/Departments directly concerned and the core Departments, which are the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Finance. The draft may be circulated to a third category of Department - other Departments.

In the case of consultation with Ministers directly concerned a Minister

... with a functional interest in a proposal being submitted to Government must be given an opportunity to express views on it. Where they are not accepted by the promoting Minister, they should be referenced and addressed in the memorandum by the promoting Minister.

In respect of any proposal for the Government of a policy nature, the Departments of the Taoiseach and of Finance should be consulted when the memorandum is being drafted. The offices of all Party Leaders in a Partnership Government should also be consulted....

(Department of the Taoiseach, 1998: 21)

The fact that party leaders in a 'Partnership Government' (Coalition Government) are Consulted on all policy documents coming before Cabinet is significant in this study. Consequently, Mary Harney, the then leader of the Progressive Democrats and

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment had to be consulted by DES on adult education policy.

Where there are differences between Ministers on a policy proposal (Cabinet Handbook, 1998: 22):

...Departments should evaluate arguments as comprehensively as possible and the maximum degree of agreement between Ministers and between Departments should be established prior to submission of memoranda.

(emphasis in original)

The requirement for Departments to resolve differences is important in the context of adult education policy. This is because of institutional rivalry between DES and DETE on national and local structures discussed in Chapter Four. Memoranda for Government also have to indicate the impact the proposal will have on “persons experiencing or at risk of poverty or social exclusion”, on people with disabilities, on gender equality, rural communities and costs to the exchequer. This provision arises from the Government’s anti-poverty strategy as discussed in Chapter One.

#### *2.3.1.3 Institutions of State other than the Oireachtas and Government*

The court system, headed by the Supreme Court, which interprets laws passed by the Oireachtas and adjudicates on challenges to the Constitution, has an important role in public policy. Supreme Court interpretations and adjudications can trigger policy changes. For example, cases taken by citizens on the education of children with severe disabilities have led to major change in the State’s education policy (Quin and Redmond, 1999: 166).

In recent years regulatory bodies have been established to increase transparency and regulate markets. Executive agencies have also been set up to implement Government policy (Collins, Cradden & Butler, 2007: 36, 61-3, 122-23). Following the Belfast and St. Andrew’s Agreements, North-South Institutions implementation bodies have also been provided for (Institute of Public Administration, 2007: 101).

#### *2.3.1.4 Government Departments*

Government Departments, discussed next, are more directly relevant to the research. Irish Government Departments are organised on functional lines and staffed by civil servants. The senior management is comprised of the Secretary General, Assistant General Secretaries and Principal Officers. According to Collins and Cradden (2001: 55), these senior managers are “the most powerful civil servants in the government

bureaucracy. Their idea of what is desirable, possible and to a degree politically advantageous for the Government, are most influential in what is done". Government Departments hold regular meetings of the Top Management Group. Policy documents are approved by this group before being presented to Cabinet. The appointment of a Principal Officer with sole responsibility for adult education in DES was an important step in the development of that sector. In addition, the Top Management Group (Secretary General, Assistant Secretary Generals and Chief Inspector in the case of DES) also had a role in the adult education policy process.

Departments take the lead role for policy initiatives within their area of responsibility. This arrangement can cause difficulties if the policy area concerned involves a number of Departments. When a Minister gets approval from Government to prepare a Green Paper, White Paper or Report, the Department takes the lead role in preparing the policy document by managing the process, consulting other Departments and interest groups and presenting policy proposals to the Minister. The Minister submits the policy document to Cabinet by means of a Memorandum for Government, as noted earlier.

The lead Department is responsible for implementing the approved policy (Cabinet Handbook, 1998). The role of the lead Department is important in this study. It can be evaluated by analysing the lead Department's Strategy Statements, Annual Reports, White and Green Papers, other policy documents and the Estimates to measure how adult education, for example, fares as a priority, resources and relationship with other Departments.

The Strategic Management Initiative influences the way civil servants do their work by applying a market model to the public service (Collins, 2007: 35-56). As part of the Strategic Management Initiative, each Government Department has to publish a Strategy Statement soon after a new Minister has been appointed.

The role of the Secretary General is defined in the Public Services Management Act (Government of Ireland, 1997b). Departments are divided into divisions, sections and units, though the words section and unit are used interchangeably (Harvey, 2008: 28). For example, DETE is divided into seven divisions, each headed by an Assistant Secretary. The Labour Force Development Division, with responsibility for adult education policy, has five sections headed by Principal Officers. The sections with direct responsibility for adult education are the Employment and Training

Strategy Unit, the European Social Fund Policy and Operations Section and the Labour Market Policy Section (Institute of Public Administration, 2008: 46-8).

The work of the Employment and Strategy Unit is “policy development in the operation of employment programmes administered by FÁS”. The European Social Fund Unit (ESF) “oversees all matters relating to the European Social Fund in Ireland...to represent Ireland’s position at European Level in relation to the ESF”.

The ESF Unit has three distinct and independent subunits:

- (i) Employment and Human Resources Development Management Authority;
- (ii) the ESF Paying Authority; and
- (iii) the EQUAL Managing Authority.

The Labour Market Policy section’s role is to:

provide labour market data which will inform the development of labour market policies and initiatives; contribute to and report on the European Employment Strategy [and] monitor the effectiveness of FÁS’ expenditure and activities in pursuit of the Department’s strategic training and labour market objectives.

(DETE, 2008)

The Department of Finance is the custodian of the state’s finances and approves each department’s annual budget. It has sectoral policy divisions, including divisions for education and training, to “deal with sectoral policy advice and formulation in conjunction with the responsible departments; public expenditure management issues including the annual estimates and the multi-annual investment programme” (Institute of Public Administration, 2007: 60).

The Department of Finance “participates in sectoral planning work and in the development of sectoral development policies” to assist line departments (Department of Finance, 2007). Finance also has responsibility for public service staffing, pay and conditions. “The vote section has responsibility to monitor and control the numbers and grading of posts and overall staffing levels in the non-industrial civil service”. During the Green and White Papers’ processes and the preparation of the *Taskforce Report on Lifelong Learning*, the two lead Departments worked closely with a designated official in the Sectoral Policy Division of the Department of Finance.



When a Memorandum for Government was being prepared for the Green Paper (1998b), the White Paper (2000a) and the Taskforce Report (2002b), Finance made written observations. These observations were circulated to the Cabinet with the Memorandum. The Memorandum on the Green Paper on Adult Education contains observations on costings, the diminishing scale of the adult education problem, questioning the need for a new agency for adult guidance and counselling and a view that the proposed Local Adult Learning Boards “would be taken on board by the VECs” (DES, 1998 c).

When the White Paper (2000a) proposals were being implemented, approval for expenditure and staffing had to be obtained from Finance through the estimates process and the relevant sectoral policy officer. Specific approval had also to be obtained for staffing numbers, grades and salary. To illustrate this point, there were ongoing negotiations between Finance and DES (the lead Department) on the grade and salary of the CEO of the National Adult Learning Council (Minutes of NALC meetings March 28 2002-June 17 2003: Appendix Q).

The Department of the Taoiseach is important in Irish public policy because of the constitutional role of the Taoiseach. The introduction of Social Partnership, managed by the Department of the Taoiseach, and the emergence of Coalition Governments as the norm, have strengthened the role of that Department (OECD, 2008: 66; Hastings, Sheahan, Yeates, 2007: 19; Mair and Weeks, 2005: 154-6). As we shall see in Chapter Four, the Taoiseach’s Department had a crucial role in mediating the institutional rivalry between DES and DETE on adult education policy.

### **2.3.2 *The European Union***

The European Union is the most important external influence on Irish public policy (Laffan and Tonra, 2005: 430-31). Membership of the EU means that we have ceded authority and decision making powers to Europe in many areas of our public policy. In the words of former Commissioner David Byrne (2004: x) we have moved from “independence to interdependence. Ireland’s membership of the European Union (EU) means that EU directives and policies have had a far-reaching impact effect on public administration,” according to Collins, Cradden and Butler (2007: 9). Laffan and Tonra (2005: 449) argue that:

the development of the EU is not just an issue of 'high politics' during a referendum campaign; it has a continuing impact on a host of domestic policy issues. This impact is felt through the Union's spending policies, its agricultural and regional funds, through the demands of the single currency and through European regulation. The dynamic of economic and political integration is felt in the nooks and crannies of public policy and its implementation.

The important EU institutions for adult education are the European Commission, the European Council, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice.

The European Commission proposes legislation, oversees its implementation and ensures EU laws are respected. The Commissioners with responsibility for adult education are: (i) Education and Training, (ii) Culture and Multilingualism and (iii) Employment and Social Affairs and Equality.

The "Council [of Ministers] is the main decision-making body of the European Union. The Ministers of the member states meet within the Council of the European Union" (Institute of Public Administration, 2007: 150-8). According to Laffan and Tonra (2005: 443-4):

...the Council is legally just one body; in practice the appropriate national ministers (such as foreign affairs, agriculture, environment or transport) meet to negotiate on Commission proposals that come within the ambit of their responsibilities, at national level.

The Council of Ministers "is the principal meeting place of the national governments" (Nugent, 2003: 150). Several policy areas are grouped together for efficiency as a result of the Seville Summit in 2002. The groupings that affect adult education are: (i) Employment, (ii) Social Policy, (iii) Health and Consumer Affairs and (iv) Education, Youth and Culture (Nugent, 2003:154).

The European Parliament "is the Union's representative institution" (Laffan and Tonra, 2005: 443) and its Employment and Social Affairs Committee, directly impacts on adult education policy (Nugent, 2003: 228). The EU also has a number of advisory bodies and decentralised agencies including the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Centre for Development of Vocational Training, which also have an impact on adult education policy.

“The European Court of Justice and the Court of First instance apply European Community law uniformly in all member states” (Institute of Public Administration, 2008:166).

EU initiatives and policy documents that have impacted on adult education policy include: (i) *the White Paper on Education, Training, Teaching and Learning – Towards the Learning Society* (1995), (ii) the designation of 1996 as the Year of Lifelong Learning, (iii) the issuing of the European Employment Guidelines (1997 - activated in 1998), (iv) the *Lisbon Agenda* (2000), (v) the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (2000), (vi) *A European Area of Lifelong Learning* (2002) and (vi) the *National Reform Programme Strategic Guidelines for the 2005-2008*. These policy documents are evaluated in Chapter Four.

Managing the relationship with the EU is a complex process for the Irish Government. Two Joint Oireachtas Committees have been established to examine EU matters. They are the *Joint Oireachtas Committee on European Affairs* and the *Joint Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs* (Institute for Public Administration, 2008: 15-17). In 1997 a Minister of State for European Affairs was appointed at the Departments of the Taoiseach and Foreign Affairs. In addition the Government has to have regard to decisions made by the European Court of Justice (Connaughton, 2005: 46).

The administrative arrangements for EU affairs include a Permanent Representative to the EU and a Ministers and Secretaries Group chaired by the Taoiseach. The implementation of the European Support Framework and the National Development Plan is the responsibility of the Department of Finance, while DETE is the Management Authority for the Human Resources Development Operational Programme of the National Development Plan. DETE is also responsible for managing the European Social Fund in Ireland. Both the Operational Programme for Employment and Human Resources Development and the European Social Fund make provision for adult education (Dooney and O’Toole,; 1998; Institute of Public Administration, 2008).

The lead role of DETE in EU affairs and the National Development Plan is significant for adult education policy.

Although all departments in Ireland have some European business, the extent of interaction with Brussels is found in their respective policy domains. For

many departments, notably Health and Family, Education and Social Affairs, the national remains the primary arena, whereas for others such as Agriculture and Rural Development, Finance, Enterprise Trade and Employment, EU policies are central to what they do.

(Laffan, 2005: 174)

### **2.3.3 *Supra National Organisations***

Apart from the European Union, the other external influences on Irish public policy are three supra-national bodies: the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation and the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). The OECD is the most important supra-national organisation for adult education policy. Its report on Adult Literacy in 1997 has a significant impact on the policy process (DES, 2000a: 86). OECD publications during the lifetime of his research, listed in the Bibliography also influence adult education policy.

### **2.3.4 *The Political System***

The Irish political and administrative systems are reviewed in this section. The political system is dominated by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. The Labour party, which has not succeeded in getting more than 30 seats in the Dáil or in forming a Government on its own, is the third largest party (Mair and Weeks, 2005: 135-57). These two main political parties are located at the centre of the ideological and political spectrum. Mair and Weeks (2005: 136) characterise the Irish political system as follows:

...unlike the European examples the Irish party system is not structured on an unequivocal left-right social cleavage. The two main parties Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael tend to converge around the centre of the ideological spectrum, often crossing sides between centre-left and centre-right, or occupying both simultaneously.

Recent political developments include the emergence and demise of the Progressive Democrats<sup>8</sup> and the growth of Sinn Fein and the Green Party. The Progressive Democrats was a right wing, market-oriented party. Sinn Fein re-emerged as a nationalist, socialist party, when it abandoned the armed struggle and took its seats in the Dáil. The Green Party evolved from the environmental movement in the 1980's and joined the 2007 Coalition with Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats.

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<sup>8</sup> The Progressive Democrats were founded in 1985 and dissolved in 2008.

Fianna Fáil has been the dominant political party in Ireland since 1932. Mair and Weeks (2005: 146) conclude that:

Fianna Fáil has been one of the most successful parties in western Europe, winning on average 47.9% of the seats and 44.7% of the popular vote since 1948 of which the latter is approximately a quarter more than that polled by the largest party in the average European system.

As we saw earlier, political parties provide the electorate with choice at election time through their manifestoes which outline party policies. The major influence on party policy is the Cabinet in the case of parties in Government and the shadow cabinet for parties in opposition. Other political influences include the party conferences, the National Executive, the Parliamentary Party that manage the election of TDs to the Dáil and the appointment of a Government (Mair and Weeks, 2005: 135-59; Marsh, 2005: 160-82).

### **2.3.5 *Regional and Local Government***

Regional and local government operates at the sub-national level. Eight Regional Authorities were established in January 1994 to “promote the co-ordination of the provision of public services at regional level....The authorities also have functions in relation to review of EU assistance at regional level” (Institute of Public Administration, 2007: 108). They are not important in public policy terms.

Local authorities have been part of the State infrastructure since independence. According to Collins and Cradden (2007: 9), “the functions of local government in Ireland are highly circumscribed by international standards. Moreover, the financial independence is very limited.” The Strategic Management Initiative has led to changes in local government. Management has been restructured, with a greater emphasis on customer service, human resource development, transparency, accountability and a broadening of the role.

City and County Development Boards were established in 2000 to prepare and oversee the implementation of a city/county development strategy for economic, social and cultural development. A plethora of other local development bodies have been set up, including City and County Enterprise Boards, to support and develop micro enterprises, Partnership Companies, Childcare Committees and City and County Sports Partnerships (Institute of Public Administration, 1997: 107-10; Collins

and Quinlivan, 2005: 401). The establishment of these bodies has led to overlap and duplication in local service delivery, for example, in training where each provides its own training programme.

### **2.3.6 Social Partnership**

Earlier in this Chapter we noted that Governments had options when deciding on how to exercise power. The Irish Government, with all-party support, chose Social Partnership as its primary approach to public policy.

Social Partnership was designed to respond to the financial crises in 1987 and grew out of an earlier system of agreements between the Government, employers and trades unions on pay and conditions (Cradden, 2004: 79-93). It involves the Government and employer-organisations, the trade union movement, farming organisations and the voluntary and community sector<sup>9</sup> (which participated for the first time in 1996). There have been seven agreements since 1987:

each of the seven Social Partnership Agreements – which are focussed principally on incomes, fiscal, social, economic and competitiveness policies – have been negotiated between the Government and the social partners....

(Department of the Taoiseach, 2007)

Implementation of Partnership Agreements is monitored by a National Committee and supported by the National Centre for Partnership and Performance. However, the role of partnership extends way beyond the negotiation of agreements. All branches of Government at national and sub-national levels are required to involve the Social Partners in policy making. The Social Partners are consulted on the National Development Plan and represented on the Plan's Monitoring Council. At sub-national level the Social Partners are represented on the County Development Boards and their Social Inclusion Committees. Partnership is also actively encouraged by the State in the workplace.

Social Partnership is a neo-corporatist policy making strategy where Government incorporates employer, union and voluntary sector interests into the policy process in exchange for a commitment to deliver support for the agreed policies. Cradden (2004: 83-7) describes the Irish version of corporatism as "competitive corporatism".

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<sup>9</sup> Referred to as the four pillars

The Social Partnership model is pervasive in public policy making in Ireland. Allen (2000: 35) claims that Social Partnership has “become the official ideology of the Irish state much as republicanism or Catholicism were in the past”. Public policy making at departmental, regional and local level follows the Partnership model. County Development Boards, for example, operate in accordance with the model at local level.

While some commentators have lauded the contribution of Social Partnership to the Celtic Tiger (Cradden, 2004: 98; Taylor, 2002: 29), others have been highly critical. Allen argued that “the majority of Ireland’s intelligentsia advocate a form of social partnership which purports to give a voice to the excluded and the marginalised” (Allen, 2000: 35). The reality, Allen argues, is that “a continued belief in social partnership, though, can only disarm workers politically and economically”.

Collins (2008) questions its relevance in the present economic turmoil when he asserts:

SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP is widely credited with a decisive role in the creation of the prosperous Ireland of the 1990’s and the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The question now, though, is whether social partnership is capable of responding to the awesome nature of the economic challenges ahead or whether it has turned into a millstone around the country’s neck.

He answers the question, by implication, in the headline of his article in *The Irish Times* (December 25, 26, 27, 28: 2008) ‘Politicians, not social partners, are elected to govern’.

The critique by Allen is shared by some adult educators who assert that partnership has been co-opted by neo-liberalism in the interest of the market and that consultation is framed by that agenda (Connolly, 2007; Ryan, 2007). Social Partnership, as we shall see in Chapter Four, impacted on adult education policy since 1997.



### **2.3.7 The Role of Interest Groups**

As we saw in Part One, interest groups have a role in the policy process either acting alone or as part of an advocacy coalition or through corporatism.

Punnett (1994:142, cited by Murphy, 2005: 353) claims that:

interest group politics in essence means trying to influence the formation, passage through the legislature, and implementation of public policy by means of contact with ministers, civil servants, political parties, individual politicians and the public. It can also mean attempting to change existing legislation by lobbying within the relevant area of public policy.

Corporatism, just discussed, and pluralism are models used by the state to manage interest group activity. In the pluralist model the better organised and resourced interest groups, representing important or strategic political or social interests, can exert considerable influence on Government policy (Murphy, 2005: 356). Since the establishment of Area Based Partnerships in the mid 1990s, the Government has actively tried to manage the activity of local community organisations (DES, 1998b: 50).

Interest groups in Ireland are sectoral, cause-centred or community based. Sectoral groups include trade unions, farmers' organisations, organisations like IBEC, and self-regulating professional bodies like the Irish Medical Organisation. Cause-centred groups exist to promote a particular cause like AONTAS, which is concerned with the development of adult education in Ireland and represents adult learners. Community groups aim to develop the local community through empowerment and include the ICA, Muintir na Tíre, Community Councils, the local units of national sectoral or cause-centred organisations such as the GAA and trades union branches. They also include new social movements like community based women's groups (Connolly, 2007; DES, 2000a: 111).

Since 1980, cause-centred interest groups have organised effective campaigns on issues such as abortion, divorce, contraception and the environment. However, cause-centred groups also influenced other policy areas such as the rights of women and the moral agenda. Individual women's organisations like AIM (Action Information Motivation) and the Rape Crisis Centre have campaigned successfully on women's issues since the 1970s. The National Women's Council of Ireland, the representative body for women's organisations, is "committed to lobbying the Government and

political parties, as well as working with its affiliate members to promote women's equality" (Institute of Public Administration, 2007: 372). The interest groups outside of business, the trade unions and farming are represented in the partnership process through the community and voluntary pillar.

The key challenge for interest groups is access to policy makers. Without access they have little influence. Resources and appropriate staffing are essential to successfully manage effective access to the policy making process (Harvey, 2002: 55).

The Conference of Religious in Ireland (CORI) is a successful interest group that influences Irish public policy through involvement in Social Partnership, the publication of policy documents and the analysis of Government policy (Allen, 2000: 40; O'Sullivan, 2005). O' Sullivan (2005: 338) describes its basic philosophy as "Christian Communitarianism". He argues that it "sees the relationship between the various elements of society as dynamic". This implies a pluralism that will emphasise communal rather than individualistic values and integration rather than fragmentation.

CORI has a secretariat and an economist on its staff. From 2003 to 2007, it engaged in the public policy process through publishing research and policy documents, making submissions on policy and on the budget, meeting with Ministers and civil servants and participating in the National Economic and Social Council and the National Economic and Social Forum policy (CORI, 2007). Its public face, Sean Healy (who also represents the Community and Voluntary Pillar in the partnership process), is highly regarded in the policy community. His public standing is borne out by the fact that he was invited to address the Fianna Fáil Parliamentary Party at its annual September 'get-together' in Inchydoney in 2004 (Gallagher and Marsh, 2008: 10-11).

### **2.3.8 Role of Interest Group Policy Networks**

The previous section examined the role of individual interest groups in the policy process. Given the nature of Irish public policy which emphasises corporatism, interest groups need to form networks or coalitions to influence policy making and place their concerns on the national policy agenda (Adshead, 2003: 120-124). This section considers the impact of networks at local and national levels on public policy. At local level networks are mandated and encouraged by central Government. The State's encouragement involves:

- providing a wide variety of funding sources to avoid rivalry between agencies involved in policy implementation;
- integration of EU Structural Fund supports with the Irish Government National Development Plans; and
- placing an emphasis on integrated strategic planning in general and predicating government funding on securing the co-operation of other agencies and the social partners.

Adshead (2003: 123)

To operate effectively and secure funding agencies and interest groups need to form policy networks or advocacy coalitions.

At national level Government Departments and their executive agencies work closely with interest groups on policy matters. Such a close relationship is a recognised strategy for both Government and interest groups in western democracies (Hill, 2005: 67-8). Interest groups and Departments also draw on the resources of individual academics or academic institutions. An example is the relationship between the Department of Education and Science and Professor John Coolahan, National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUIM), in developing education policy during the 1990s (Walsh 1999). While a close working relationship with Government, linked to funding levels can be beneficial, it also has risks. Risks include the danger of over dependency on State funding, which can be withdrawn or reduced with a consequent loss of the freedom of independent action (Thompson, 2007: 44, Watt, 2008).

Is the Irish model of interest group involvement in policy a pluralist or corporatist model? Murphy (2005: 356) argues that there is no consensus on this question. Given the importance of partnership in the Irish policy process during the past twenty

years, the corporatist model is the one that is most relevant to this research though the pluralist model operates for issues that are outside the scope of Social Partnership.

The partnership process is a corporatist model which incorporates peak (major national representative) organisations. However, partnership deals with a limited number of broad policy issues and on a tri-annual basis. A pluralist model of policy making operates outside of the broad areas dealt with in National Partnership Agreements. Government Departments work with interest groups in a policy sector and keep abreast of academic thinking through postgraduate research, attending conferences or researching academic papers (DOL, 1995-2006: 1-17).

The involvement of interests groups at local level is pluralist despite the fact that in theory it is a mirror image of the corporatist model at national level. This is because national peak organisations often do not have full time professional staff at county level and because the links between national peak organisations and their local members are sporadic (Murphy, 2005). The nomination of representatives to local partnership-based bodies like County Development Boards illustrates this.

Such bodies often have difficulty in identifying and getting a suitable person for board membership. When peak organisations have jumped that hurdle, the nominee's capacity to provide feedback and communicate organisational policy is often limited by the weak nature of that member's relationship with the peak organisation (personal experience of County Development Boards and EU funded projects where local partnership was an essential element). In that situation, local authorities negotiate with individual interest groups at local level and thus operate a pluralist model of policy making within the discretion a centralised Government system permits.

### **2.3.9 *Impact of Irish Public Policy Process on Policy Making***

The literature review has revealed that the Irish public policy process functions at supra-national, national, interest and sub-national levels. Consequently it is complex, multi-layered and subject to a wide range of influences. This raises the question of the impact the process has on the day to day practice of policy making? An analysis

of the literature reveals that the most significant aspects of the Irish policy process, that impact on adult education policy are:

- the pervasive influence of the EU in the areas of legislation, the market and social policy and its insistence on formal planning before funds are released as well as on the evaluation of funded programmes;
- the emergence of coalition government as the norm;
- Social Partnership as the preferred way of policy making;
- the Strategic Management Initiative as the driver of public administration; and
- the highly centralised nature of the Irish public policy system.

The range of influences on the Irish public policy process bears testimony to its complexity. They also bear testimony to its incremental and evolutionary nature which often involves protracted and ongoing negotiation. The main policy agenda of the State is to develop the economy. This is influenced by the economic climate and the EU (which was originally the European Economic Community). The economy is clearly stated to be the number one priority in the *National Development Plan: A better Quality of Life for All* (Department of finance, 2007: 18-21). The first priority listed is “Economic Infrastructure,” while the second priority is “Enterprise, Science and Innovation”.

A major influence on adult education policy is the nature of the Irish public policy process and the overriding objective of the State to promote economic development.

# Chapter Two

*Part Three:*

*The Three Domains  
of Adult Education  
Policy*

## **2.4 Irish Education, Training and Community Education System**

Following consideration of policy theory and its application to the Irish public policy making process in Part One and Part Two, this section examines the development of the three domains of adult education: (i) education, (ii) training and (iii) community education. The education domain includes adult education funded by DES, while training refers to activities under the remit of DETE or other Government Departments with sectoral training responsibilities. Community education, naturally, refers to adult education delivered in a community setting.

### **2.4.1 *The Irish Education System – A Context for Adult Education***

A brief discussion of the Irish education system provides a context for analysis of the three domains of adult education. As in the rest of the developed world, the Irish education system evolved incrementally. The provision of mass primary education was the first phase. Much later the achievement of free second level education was followed by the development of third level education to provide for over 50 percent of the age cohort in recent times (Clancy, 1999: 75; 2007: 101). The organisation of DES into primary, post-primary and third level divisions reflected the evolution of the system. Little attention was paid by DES to adult education until 1997.

Developments, following the publication of the OECD led and most important *Investment in Education* (Department of Education, 1965, heralded an increased role for the State in Irish education. From 1965 to 1990 developments included the introduction of the free second level education and free transport schemes in 1967, broadening the remit of the VECs to provide the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate programmes, the establishment of community schools, Institutes of Technology and new universities in Limerick and Dublin. From the late 1980s, the emphasis switched from the provision of places to differentiation of provision. The change in emphasis led to the development of second chance adult education and the introduction of VTOS, Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training Centres (STCC), Adult Literacy and Community Education programmes.

The first half of the 1990s saw a surge in education policy making through the publication of a Green Paper in 1992, the holding of the National Education

Convention in 1993 (National Education Convention Secretariat, 1994), which was the beginning of the explicit promotion by Government of an economic agenda. The Convention was followed by the publication of a White Paper on Education (Department of Education, 1995). This phase represented a more pluralist approach to policy making, but also led to the values of the market becoming more influential (Clancy, 1999: 102; 2007:101-119). The Green Paper on Education (Department of Education, 1992) formally heralded that public policy shift. In policy theory terms, the equilibrium in Irish education was punctuated in the 1990s.

Since 1995, the pace of educational change has been rapid. Several pieces of legislation were enacted including the Education Act in 1998. A feature of the Act was that the proposal to establish Regional Education Councils was not proceeded with (Walsh, 1999). The passing of the Qualifications (Education and Training Act) (Government of Ireland, 1999a), which provided for the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework in 2003, was a key development for education generally and adult education in particular. Every qualification, including adult education qualifications, offered by a provider, has to be located on a ten level national framework. International qualifications are linked to the appropriate levels on the framework.

The Irish education system, like the rest of the Irish administrative system, is so highly centralised that DES relates directly to most education institutions. The Strategic Management Initiative, introduced in 1994, impacted on the education system. Education adopts a 'top-down' model of policy making, which is one of the policy making models available to the State discussed in Part One. Power in education policy, which in the past has been exercised by the Catholic Church, has shifted to the state, the market, the teacher unions and the Social Partners. In other words, the education system has moved from an elite model of policy making to a combined corporatist and pluralist model.

However, that shift is informed by the discourse of the market. O'Sullivan (2005: Chapters, 4, 5, 6), argues strongly that the market, through what he terms "the mercantile paradigm", is a powerful influence on Irish education policy. O' Sullivan (2005: 112) claims the mercantile paradigm exhibits the following features. The aim of education is determined by the consumers of the system; schools (and by extension the adult education services) are commercial/service organisations; the pedagogical relationship is contractual; the evaluation of outcomes uses quantifiable



mechanisms and the state adopts a managerial role in which educators are accountable.

## 2.4.2 *The Education Domain*

This section analyses the status of the education domain. Adult education was the Cinderella of Irish education until 1997, when it represented 0.016 percent of the total education budget (Hurley, 1998: 36). The Government decision to appoint a Minister of State for Adult Education and publish a Green Paper put it on the public policy agenda and provided an opportunity to bring it in from the cold (Keogh, 2003). The first Principal Officer for adult and further education was appointed one year later (Correspondence DES, FOI request: Appendix A1) During the previous 30 years, many proposals for developing this domain of adult education had been made, but the more significant ones were not implemented, as discussed next.

Government Reports published in the 1970s<sup>10</sup> and the 1980s<sup>11</sup> recommended the establishment of an integrated delivery structure for adult education. Both reports included training in their definition of adult education. In 1984, an ad hoc local adult education board was established in the VEC sector by Circular Letter (Green Paper, 198b: 55), but a proposal to establish a National Council for Adult Education was not implemented. Meanwhile, other recommendations were made and contributed to the development of this domain. These included the appointment of Adult Education Officers (AEOs), the provision of State funding to key voluntary bodies, the giving of a specific remit for adult education to community and comprehensive schools and funding for advocacy bodies such as NALA.

We saw, when discussing policy theory, that the way the State viewed its role has an influence on policy making. The Irish State began to take a more active role in public policy from the publication of the Programme for Economic Expansion in 1958 and the membership of the European Economic Community. Consequently, ANCO was established in 1967, FÁS in 1987 and second chance education, funded by the state, was introduced in 1989 (DES, 1998b,: 41, Garavan *et al.*, 1995: 67). AONTAS and NALA were also funded and developed as significant adult education interest groups (DES, 1998b: 41). They formed an adult education advocacy coalition for the 1997 general election that led to the appointment of a Minister of State for Adult Education and the decision to prepare a Green Paper (Brady: interview).

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<sup>10</sup> DES(1973)

<sup>11</sup> DES(1983)

In summary, the Irish education system evolved incrementally as a tripartite primary, post primary and third level system. It changed from an elitist policy making system to a more corporatist and pluralist one by involving a wider range of stakeholders. Change began in the mid-nineteen sixties and accelerated from 1990. The influence of *Investment in Education* (1965), membership of the EU (1972) and a number of OECD reports encouraged the State to take a more active role in policy making and intervene directly in provision.

Adult education did not have a separate existence in DES and was divided across five sections as part of three divisions: (i) Post Primary, (ii) Third Level and (iii) Building and Miscellaneous divisions (DES, 2000b). Adult education inevitably fared badly in this tripartite model that hardly acknowledged its existence and barely catered for it.

Further evidence of the low status of the adult education domain was the poor level of State financing and the high level of part time staffing delivering the service. A national adult education body, recommended in two previous reports on adult education and in the White Paper on Education (Department of Education, 1995: 81), was not established. At local level, the education domain was the responsibility of the VEC through an ad-hoc adult education sub-committee of the VEC. The Adult Education Committee had no real power over policy, staffing and the financing of adult education because it was an ad hoc Sub-Committee of the VEC, established by Circular Letter in 1984, and was not supported by Statute.

### **2.4.3 Training Domain**

The training domain is discussed in this section under the headings of general and sectoral provision by the State, and private training (Garavan, T., Costine, P., Heraty, N., 1995).

#### **2.4.3.1 General Training**

In this study, general training is all training provided by FÁS, the State training agency. Training provided within and for specific sectors of the economy such as hotel and tourism and agricultural training is not included in general training.

There was little development in general training until 1967, when the passing of the Industrial Training Act (1967) represented a sea change in policy. Under the Act, An Chomhairle Oiliúna (ANCO) was established as a statutory body reporting to the Department of Labour (Garavan *et al.*, 1995: 67). This Act started the formal separation of the education and training domains in modern times and heralded a more active role by the State. The change represented a move from a conservative 'hands off' approach to a more socialist 'hands-on' approach (Garavan *et al.*, 1995: Chapter 2).

The establishment of FÁS in 1987 under the Labour Services Act marked a new phase in the training domain. FÁS was given responsibility for training and retraining, for employment services, employment advisory services and employment schemes. ANCO, the Youth Employment Agency (YEA) and the National Manpower Service were amalgamated to become FÁS. The Minister for Labour was given an expanded role in labour market policy.

The Culliton Report (1992) recommended the "reorganisation of FÁS and the re-directing of resources to training for those at work and preparing for work" (Gunningle *et al.*, 2006: 211). Culliton led to an overhaul of FÁS and the reform of the apprenticeship system. In 1993 the Department of Labour was subsumed into the Department of Enterprise and Employment<sup>12</sup>.

There were a number of developments in training during the past 10 years. 1997 saw the publication of a *White Paper on Human Resource Development* (Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1997), 1999 the enactment of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act and 2002 the publication of the *Report of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b). The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, recommended in the *White Paper: Human Resource Development* (Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1997: 179), was also established in 1997 as part of Ireland's response to globalisation. The Expert Group published five general and several sectoral reports. The 2007 report, *Towards a National Skills Strategy*, is now part of the Government's lifelong learning strategy (Department of Finance, 2006: 189). Finally, a National Employment Action Plan has been published annually by DETE since 1998 and forwarded to the EU<sup>13</sup>. Since 2005, the

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<sup>12</sup> As we saw in Chapter One, the Department became the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment in 1997 in 1993 (Administration, Vol. 55: No. 1).

<sup>13</sup> It became the National Reform Programme in 2005.

National Reform Programme, published by the Department of the Taoiseach, has a section on labour market policy (National Reform Programme, Department of the Taoiseach, 2005: 36-50).

#### 2.4.3.2 *Sectoral Training*

The development of sectoral training in Ireland mirrored that of general training and was the result of a “focus on occupational training” (Garavan *et al.*, 1995: 96). The focus was promoted within sectors like tourism, agriculture and disability. Selected occupations or category of worker were deemed by the State to have particular training needs provided within the occupation and by trainers drawn from the occupation.

The evolution of training for agriculture illustrates this development. In 1931 legislation established the County Committees for Agriculture with a training remit. The Farm Apprenticeship scheme was set up in 1964. The County Committees were abolished in 1980 and ACOT was established to be replaced by Teagasc in 1988 (Daly, 2002). Similar developments took place in the tourism, fishing, nursing and disability sectors, where sectoral training is provided by a number of professional and representative organisations.

#### 2.4.3.3 *Private Training*

Private provision is very limited in the education domain. The main providers are 17 private third level colleges (Institute of Public Administration, 2007: 267-270). However, it could be argued that self-financing courses, catering for 156,768 adults, mainly in public schools and colleges, represent private rather than state funded provision (DES, 1998b: 53).

Training is also provided by employers to meet their own needs, by firms with training as their core business, by employer and employee representative organisations and by professional bodies. The IALS Survey (DES, 1997: 89) shows that the Government funds 19.6 percent of adult education courses taken. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that private enterprise funded 80 percent (circa) of provision in 1995. From a policy theory perspective, private providers are advocates of the market as the prime driver of adult education policy.

#### 2.4.3.4 Overview of the Training Domain

By 1997, the training domain had well developed programmes and supports (including a national delivery agency FÁS, with a regional and local network) as well as a cohort of fulltime staff. FÁS had a budget of almost £480 million and just over 2000 staff in 1997 (FÁS, 1999: 48). The relative maturity of training resulted from State intervention from 1960 through ongoing policy evaluation, legislation and financial support. The European Social Fund was an important policy and financial contributor (Gunnigle, P., Heraty, N., Morley, N. J., 2006: 227).

There was a requirement to analyse the effectiveness of the training domain as a consequence of generous State and EU financing. Reviews were also demanded by the employers through IBEC. The reviews involved the publication of White Papers and reports: (i) *White Paper on Manpower Policy* 1986: (Department of Labour), (ii) *White Paper on Human Resources* 1997 (DETE), (iii) the Culliton Report (1992), (iv) Roche and Tansey (1992), (v) the *Analysis of Industrial Training* by IBEC in 1994, and (vi) the *EU Structural Funds in Ireland: A Mid-term Evaluation of the CSF 1994-1999*, ESRI, 1997). Analysis, followed by Government action, contributed to the existence of a well developed training system in 1997. For example, the White Paper on Manpower Policy in 1986 led to the establishment of FÁS in 1987 (Garavan *et al.*, 1995: 76-7). The general training system was championed by Ministers for Enterprise (Trade) and Employment, supported by FÁS, the statutory body charged with implementing national training policy.

Power in the general training sector is concentrated in the hands of FÁS, DETE and employer bodies. As Social Partnership developed, trade unions and the voluntary pillar became more influential. In policy theory terms, the training sector shifted from an elite model of policy making to a more corporatist one.

While training was well developed in 1997 it had weaknesses outlined by Garavan *et al.*, (1995: 95-9):

- State gives poor example with the way it operates its own training;
- Wasteful use of training resource;
- Short-term thinking;
- Focus on occupational training [sectoral training];
- Too many training administrators and instructors;
- Emphasis by employers on contracting training out;

- System needs reform.

On the positive side, the sector was mature, adequately resourced, underpinned by legislation and had the support of a statutory body charged with implementing policy.

#### **2.4.4 Community Education Domain**

Community education is the last domain of adult education to develop and is driven by a bottom-up, democratic and empowerment philosophy of public policy. It developed as a distinct domain of adult education from the mid 1980s as a result of State and EU initiatives. These initiatives include:

- the Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme by the Department of Education in 1985 (Joint Committee for Education and Science, 2006: 19);
- the Community Development Programme by the Department of Social Welfare in 1990 (DESb, 1998: 90);
- Poverty Three Programme (1989-1994) funded by the EU (Frazer, 2007: 50);
- the LEADER Programme funded by the EU starting with the pilot programme in 1989 (Daly, 2002: 530-1);
- other EU Community Initiatives including NOW, EMPLOYMENT, INTERREG; and
- the establishment of ADM in 1992 (DES, 1998b: 89-90).

Community education has been defined as (DES, 1998b: 88-9):

any off-campus provision as traditionally provided by university extra-mural departments or by other outreach providers in the education, community or voluntary sector;

and

the availability of resources of local schools and other educational institutions to the entire local community for learning purposes – not merely to the day-time student population.

The Green Paper (DES, 1998b: 89) argues that “the focus on marginalisation has tended to underpin the changing character of Community Education practice in Ireland” and “the importance of Community Education lies in the way it extends and deepens the democratic process”.

A more dynamic and comprehensive definition of community education, used in this study is set out by AONTAS (Connolly, 2003: 15):

Community Education is a process of empowerment, social justice, change, challenge, respect and collective consciousness. It is within the community, and of the community, reflecting the developing needs of individuals and their locale. It builds the capacity of local communities to engage in developing responses to educational disadvantage and to take part in decision-making and policy-formation within the community.

Community education is an emerging field where the emphasis has moved from external providers to community provision. Women’s groups have been to the forefront and focus on personal and social development to achieve a greater sense of personal identity as well as social and personal rights.

Community education is a contributor to countering social exclusion, poverty and inequality (National Anti-Poverty Strategy, 1997d: 9). The community domain is fragmented and receives funding from multiple sources (DES, 1998b: 88-89), like the rest of adult education. According to the Green Paper on *Supporting Voluntary Activity* (1997: 84), twelve Government Departments were funding community organisations. As illustrated in Figure 17 below, the five largest community education funding Departments in 1997 were DETE/FAS, Health/Health Boards, Environment/Local Authorities, DES/VECs, and Taoiseach/ADM.

### Community Education Funding Departments - 1997

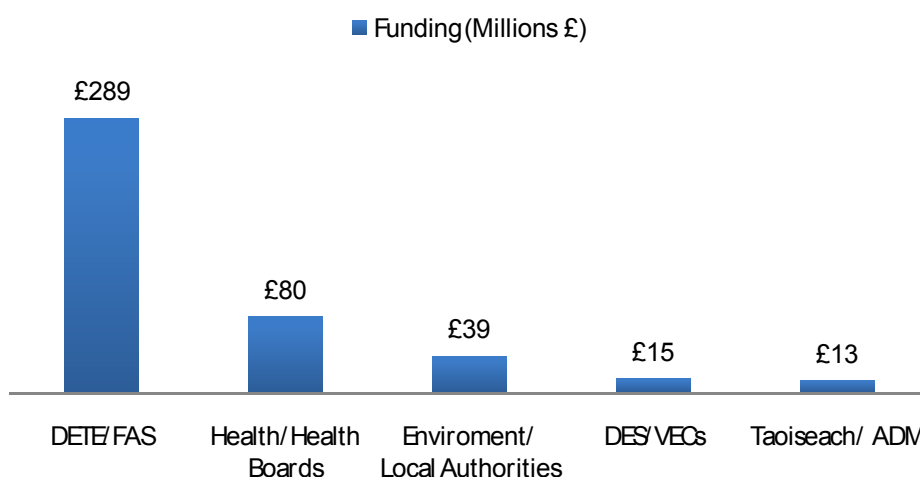


Figure 17 Five Largest Community Education Funding Departments – 1997<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Source: Green Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity (1997: 84).



EU Initiatives, including: NOW, EMPLOYMENT, INTERREG, LEADER and URBAN, provided focus and direction as well as significant funding for the development of community education.

Community education is driven by an “inclusive discourse” and a strong commitment to a pluralist and a ‘bottom up’ model of policy making in contrast to the education and training domains of adult education. It strongly opposes elitist models of policy making and argues for the retention of its own ideology and identity (Green Paper, DES, 1998: 89-90; DES, 2000a: 117). The community domain is informed by a philosophy of empowerment leading to politicisation and transformation of the neo-liberal state (Connolly, 2007: 109-130). This paradigm is the polar opposite to that embraced by DETE, the training domain and senior management within the education domain, which is described by O’ Sullivan (2005: Chapter 5) as a ‘mercantile paradigm’ and by Kirby and Murphy (2008) as a ‘competitive state’ paradigm (Adshead, Kirby, Millar, 2008: Chapter 6).

## 2.5 Themes from the Literature

The themes from the literature provide a theoretical framework for the research. The framework includes: (i) the role of the state, (ii) the impact of Irish public policy process on adult education, (iii) the ideological clash between the liberal and market-oriented state and the transformative focus of the community and education domains (part of). The status of adult education in 1997 influences the way the themes impact on the policy process in the decade since then.

### 2.5.1 *The Role of the State*

The two primary roles of the State in public policy are reviewed first. The first “concerns its role in providing a legal framework for society, ensuring that law and order prevail, protecting the national territory from external aggression, and upholding certain traditional moral values” (Dunleavy and O’Leary, 1987: 7). The second is its role in the economic and social systems. This role can include the regulation or management of production, the removal of some or all of private ownership property rights, the redistribution of income and the provision of goods or services “on a basis distinct from the market principle” (Dunleavy and O’Leary, 1987: 7).

Most political thinkers, except anarchists, have accepted that the State is a necessary institution. Commentators generally agree that the State should provide a “framework of peace and social order within which private citizens can conduct their lives as they think best” (Heywood, 2004: 85; Rose, 1976, cited by Callinan, 2007: 17). However, its role in economic and social affairs is hotly contested. At one end of a continuum is the ‘New Right’ or neo-liberal ideology, which contends that “government’s economic responsibilities should be restricted to creating conditions within which market forces can more effectively operate” (Heywood, 2004: 86). At the other end is the welfare state based on Keynesian economic policies and the politics of Beveridge, where “public expenditure grew and the state became the most influential of economic actors” (Heywood, 2004: 87, 304). Heywood (2004: 87) argues:

Although there is now a widespread recognition of the need for a balance between the state and the market in economic life, party politics in much of the industrialised West, boils down to a debate about where the balance should be struck.

The issue for this thesis is to locate the Irish State in the debate. Because the main political parties in Ireland are centrist the State tends to moderate the influence of the market through the provision of a range of social services and key utilities. However, a number of factors have moved the State towards the market as the primary allocator of resources following the 1997 general election.

The participation of the Progressive Democrats, a right wing party, in that Government and the 2002 Government has changed the ideological landscape. The influence of globalisation and neo-liberalism also impacts on the way the Irish State views its role. Public choice theory, which stresses the importance of the individual and applies the rules of the market to politics and Government, is a theoretical underpinning of neo-liberalism. It argues that politicians and public servants act in the same way as the individual consumer to maximise self interests. The Irish response to public choice theory has been to introduce the Strategic Management Initiative in 1994. Globalisation and neo-liberalism have influenced the Irish State to privatise State bodies and introduce business models into the public service.

Another dimension of the role of the State is the way its institutions exercise power. "Institutions divide powers and responsibilities between organisations of the state" and they are "the arena within which policy-making takes place," John (1998: 38-9). The exercise of power is also determined by the nature and extent of State consultation with citizens and the outcome of competition between interests for influence on policy. The involvement of citizens ranges, as we have seen from pluralism to elitism (Dunleavy and O Leary, 1987; Heywood, 2004; Hill, 2005).

Ireland has chosen Social Partnership as the primary policy making strategy for most issues. This corporatist model is a half-way house between elitism and pluralism. However, for 'deep policy issues,' there is a strong tendency in Ireland towards the elite model. In that model elites make the decisions except where they have to consult the people through referendums.

The choice of rational or non-rational methods of policy making by the State is a third issue that emerged in the literature and influences the theoretical framework. Hill (2005: 173) concludes that there are three models of policy making:

- (i) the rational model which "has much in common with the traditional approach to representative government";
- (ii) the incrementalist model, which is linked to pluralist thinking; and

(iii) Kingdon's model of "three streams - problems, policies, politics" flowing through the system and coming together in a primeval soup.

The evolutionary approach to policy making identified in Chapter One, is built on Kingdon's ideas, on Sabatier's advocacy coalition framework and on Baumgartner and Jones' "punctuated equilibrium model of agenda stability and change...and the potential for disequilibrium in policy-making systems" (John, 1998: 201).

Policy making and implementation is another factor that impinges on the role of the State in public policy. The literature links the top-down approach to rational models of decision making and the bottom-up approach to non-rational models. Non-rational models recognise that people involved in policy making and implementation, impact on the policy process. Putting people at the core of policy making is favoured by the community education domain.

Because of the centralised nature of Irish governance and the weakness of local government, top-down implementation models dominate. Top down models present a particular challenge to the transformative philosophy of community education, and also to frontline staff in the education domain. On the other hand the top-down model is in harmony with the training domain and senior management in the education domain.

### **2.5.2 *The Impact of the Irish Public Policy Process***

The nature of the Irish State and its political and administrative systems influence adult education policy making and forms part of the theoretical framework for this study. The basic structure of the Irish State was inherited from the British (Collins & Cradden, 2007: 1).

The political institutions of the Republic are, for the most part based on the 'Westminster model'. Each of the institutions referred to in Bunreacht na hÉireann (the Irish Constitution) - the Presidency, the Oireachtas (parliament), the Cabinet and the Courts - is given specific powers, to be exercised in accordance with the general principles of a British-style parliamentary democracy.

A significant variation from British and international structures is the weakness of Irish local government (Collins and Cradden, 2007: 9). Since 1972, the EU

influences the structure of the state through our membership obligations. Laffan and Tonra (2005: 430) argue that “the effects of the EU can be felt in politics, public policy and more widely in the state’s constitutional and legal systems.”

In the political sphere, the Irish system is dominated by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael with the Labour party in third place. A number of smaller parties and independents make up the balance of representation in the Oireachtas. “The party system in Ireland is different from most European party systems, because it is not based as much as elsewhere on social cleavages” (Collins and Cradden, 2001: 31). The three main political parties (Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, The Labour Party) occupy the centre of the political spectrum (Collins and Cradden, 2001: 19-22) and consequently adopt a centrist position on the role of the State in public policy. However, as we have just seen, the centrist approach has been tilted to the right by the Progressive Democrats in government and by the global influences of neo-liberalism. This has led to an emphasis on the market rather than the state in public policy and a preference for individualism rather than community.

Since 1989 Coalition Governments have been the norm and influenced policy making in a number of ways. The leader and Minister(s) from the junior Coalition partners have an input into all policy decisions, influence policy in their own Department(s) and in Cabinet discussions. The Programme for Government agreed between the Coalition partners sets the agenda for Government policy during its lifetime.

The ideological position of Coalition partners shifts the orientation of a Government to the left or to right of centre. The Labour and the Green Parties, in coalition with either of the main political parties, lead to centre-left Governments, while the Progressive Democrats in Government<sup>15</sup> with Fianna Fáil from 1997 to 2007 have tilted the Government to the right of centre.

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<sup>15</sup> The Progressive Democrats were minor partners in the Government formed after the 2007 election. They hold one Ministry and lost the position of Tánaiste. Fianna Fáil could have formed a Government with the Greens without them (O’ Malley, 2008: 207). O’Malley (2008: 215) argues that the Greens believe that “the participation [in government] of the PDs seems to owe more to Ahern’s relationship with Mary Harney as an individual than it does to the PDs as a party”. The Progressive Democrats disbanded in 2008 and Mary Harney remained as an Independent Minister for Health and Children.

The Strategic Management Initiative is the Irish version of New Public Management.

As the OECD (2008: 77) points out:

The current modernisation programme of the Irish Public Service is grounded in the 1994 *Strategic Management Initiative* (SMI), which set the broad agenda for change, primarily for the Civil Service....One of its objectives includes better management of issues that involve more than one government department.

(Whelan *et al.*, 2003: 10-11)

The institutions, legislation and organisation of the public service provide the framework for developing Irish public policy. The configuration of Government Departments at any one time influences policy making and reflects the priority of Governments when elected. In 1997 there was "...a comprehensive realignment of departments", when the Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrat Government came to power (Uí Mhaoldúin, 2007: 5-46). The realignment provided challenges and opportunities for adult education policy makers through the appointment of a Minister of State for Adult Education at DES while there was a Minister for Labour Affairs in DETE.

A practice in Irish public administration is that Government Departments act as lead Departments in European and Irish policy making for areas within their remit. For example DETE is the lead Department for the European Social Fund and the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, while DES is the lead Department for the White Paper on Adult Education. The lead Department can have an advantage in policy making because it is responsible for managing the processes. This practice is problematical for issues which involve a number of Departments, including adult education, if the Government does not make a clear decision about which Department will assume the role of lead Department.

The final dimension of the Irish public policy process, which influences the theoretical framework for this study, is Social Partnership. Social Partnership is the solution used to manage the exercise of power by interests in the Irish state since 1987.

### **2.5.3 *Ideological Clash between the State and some Domains of Adult Education***

The conflict between the neo-liberal ideology of the State and the transformative philosophy of part of the community domain and part of the education domain is also a dimension of the theoretical framework. The ideological clash is so strong that it is questionable whether community education would ever join the mainstream unless community education could transform mainstream education and training (CORI Submission on the proposed Green Paper: Towards an Agenda for a Debate on Adult and Community Education: 5-6). The transformative philosophy is in contrast to the market led philosophy of the training domain evident in policy documents from DETE such as Annual Reports and Statements of Strategy (DETE, 2003a: 4).

### **2.5.4 *The Status of Adult Education in 1997***

To date in this section we have examined the role of the State, the Irish public policy process and the ideological conflict between the neo-liberal tendencies of the State and the transformative agenda of the community and education domains of adult education. Each element of the theoretical framework impacts on adult education policy making. Equally important is the status of adult education in 1997 when the system embarked on significant policy development.

Adult education in Ireland is divided into three domains as noted in Chapter One. The education domain comes within the remit of DES, does not have a specific legislative base, is poorly organised within that Department and has a low level of funding. In contrast, general training comes within the remit of DETE, is underpinned by legislation and is well organised and resourced. Sectoral training comes under the aegis of several other Government Departments and their executive agencies. Community education does not come under the remit of any single Department, receives funding from several Departments and is highly fragmented (Department of Social Welfare, 1997: 45-53).

The institutional architecture of adult education was dysfunctional in 1997. The architecture was made up of a well developed training domain underpinned by legislation with national executive agencies to deliver services. Its main weakness

was the artificial division between general and sectoral training. The education domain, which is the next piece of the architecture, was the Cinderella of the education system. Adult education was poorly organised in DES, had no national executive agency for service delivery and was highly fragmented. The community education domain, on the other hand, did not have an architecture, because it developed out of a series of adult education projects funded by the EU and several Government Departments.

Each domain of adult education operated a parallel universe. The architecture of the system in 1997 presented policy makers with very significant challenges, heightened by the cross-cutting nature of adult education.

The policy framework to emerge from this Chapter informs the methods chosen to answer the research question, discussed in Chapter Three. The research question is to identify the lessons learned from the adult education policy making process since 1997 for the future development of adult education. Clearly the lessons from management of the dysfunctional institutional architecture will provide valuable insights for the future. It is critical that the chosen research methods reveal how the policy process managed that important issue.





# Chapter Three

## *Negotiating the Labyrinth*

The challenge is to unravel the labyrinthine nature of Irish public policy and the making of adult education policy within such a complex framework. The methods chosen should therefore reveal: (i) the role of the State in adult education policy development since 1997, (ii) the impact of the of the Irish public policy process on adult education policy making, (iii) the development of the adult education institutional architecture in the decade to 2007, as well as (iv) the impact of the ideological clash within adult education and between the State and some adult education stakeholders on policy.

The high level approaches I adopted to unravel the complexity of adult education policy making and manage the research process are discussed first. These approaches provided the overall framework for the research. Within that framework the research methods used to answer the research question are then considered and a rationale is provided for each. The research methods chosen are: (i) a literature review, (ii) documentary analysis (iii) interviews with policy elites, and (iv) critical reflection on the policy process based on personal and professional experience. A description of the research process follows. The Chapter concludes with a summary.

### **3.1 Methodology – High Level Research Approach**

I decided to break adult education and policy into manageable components and use the evolutionary approach to policy making proposed by John (1998). This section examines the strategies to break down adult education and policy making as well as drawing on the evolutionary approach to policy making. Together the two high-level approaches provide the overall framework within which the research methods were applied and the evolutionary approach helps unravel the complex and incremental nature of the adult education research process.

#### **3.1.1 *Using Stages and Domains***

I decided to break both policy making and adult education down into stages and domains respectively to manage the complexity of researching adult education policy. The policy component of the research was managed by drawing on the

stages' model discussed in Chapter Two and the adult education component was structured by dividing adult education into three domains discussed in Chapter One.

The stages' model is a heuristic device which breaks policy making into distinct stages. This was done so that research could focus on each stage of the policy process and examine how policy theory was applied to Irish adult education at each stage of the process. The stages, based on the work of Parsons (1995) and discussed in Chapter Two, are: (i) agenda setting, (ii) decision analysis, and delivery analysis. I divided delivery analysis into: (iii) implementation and (iv) evaluation because I wanted to emphasise their significance in the policy process. That decision helped structure my approach to the research by focussing on each stage of policy making when applying the research methods.

I also divided adult education into three domains. This was necessary to get a sense of how policy was made because the adult education architecture was dysfunctional. The strategy helped identify relevant documents in the Government Departments, responsible for a particular adult education domain. For example, I located documents on the training domain in DETE to get an insight into the decision making process around the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning and the National Employment Action Plans in the context of the establishment of the Taskforce while the preparation of the White Paper on Adult Education was already under way.

### **3.1.2 *Using the Evolutionary Approach to Policy Making***

The second high-level decision was to adopt John's (1998) evolutionary policy making approach. The approach draws together policy analysis techniques from the post-modern era noted in Chapter Two:

- (i) The policy advocacy coalition approach;
- (ii) The policy streams approach; and
- (iii) The punctuated equilibrium approach.

The evolutionary model of the policy process is the result of "a flow of three sets of processes or streams: problems, policies and politics". These get on the agenda when existing policy is challenged. Advocacy coalitions are formed to bring about policy change through the political process and the institutions of the state

(John, 1998: 169-176). The model has the advantage of drawing together the thinking of respected policy theorists such as Sabatier, Baumgartner and Jones and Kingdon, to formulate an approach to the analysis of the policy process.

I could have chosen other approaches, such as those identified by Stoker and Marsh (2002: 6-7), including behaviouralism, rational choice theory, institutionalism, feminism, interpretive theory and Marxism. However, having considered the complexities of the Irish policy making process, it became clear that I needed a multi-dimensional approach. As John (1998: 167) claims "...the single approach fails to explain policy change and variation...they usually offer partial accounts of political action....As a result they often leave out much of the practice of decision-making".

The evolutionary approach provided me with a research tool to interpret the complex, overlapping elements of the policy process in adult education policy theory, the Irish policy process and the particular dynamic of adult education. It also alerted me to the importance of advocacy organisations, and the way they network with academics, politicians and the bureaucracy to form coalitions and influence policy.

### **3.1.3 *Applying the High Level Research Approach***

Policy making is the exercise of power by the state acting alone or in partnership with supra-national institutions. It involves a complex set of decisions taken over time in a specified policy field or in a combination of fields (adapted from Jenkins, 1978: 15).

Researching the exercise of power in Irish public policy and specifically in adult education involved identifying the key influences on and influencers of the policy process. Heywood (2004: 150) concludes that:

Power is central to the understanding and practice of politics. It can be exercised on three levels: through the ability to make or influence decisions; through the ability to set the agenda and prevent decisions being made; and through the ability to manipulate what people think and want....Power is the ability to influence the behaviour of others, based on the ability to reward and punish.

The definition of policy used in this study and the evolutionary approach challenge the researcher to evaluate a complex process over time, involving the exercise of power through the conjunction of problems, policies, ideas and politics within a

particular institutional and time framework. The task was made even more complex because human beings are key players in policy making. John (1998: 168) argues:

Individual actors are the drivers for change and the foundations for human action. Ideas, on the other hand, give human agents purpose and are the way they express their interests.

Ryan (2006: 18) also recognises the importance of the human dimension in the research process when she concludes that “the post-positivist [research] stance asserts the value of values, passion and politics in research. Research in this mode requires an ability to see the whole picture, to take a distanced view or an overview”. Post-positive research methods are therefore appropriate to the research. This is because of the complexity of the policy process, the centrality of human beings who espouse values and act in a passionate way in support of their ideas through the political process. Post positive methods are also appropriate because of the need to get an overview of the adult education policy process.

A range of research methods are needed to reveal the complexity of adult education policy making in the light of policy theory and the nature of the Irish process. The evolutionary approach to policy making and the strategy of breaking both adult education and policy into component parts provide the overall framework for the research. Within that framework, a combination of a literature review, documentary analysis, interviews with policy elites and critical reflection contribute to answering the research question.

### *3.1.3.1 Accessing Data to Apply the Evolutionary Approach*

The sources and choices of data were informed by the nature of the process itself even though the research methods were identified early in the process. My initial focus was on sourcing data in DES. As the research progressed, it became clear that I needed to broaden the data sources to DETE. The combination of data from both Departments and my growing understanding of the impact of the Irish policy process led me to broaden the data sources further. That understanding led me to widen the literature review and seek data from the Department of Finance as well as the Department of the Taoiseach.

I needed access to departmental files to examine the process of making and implementing policy in the published adult education policy documents. I used the

Freedom of Information process for access to internal files on the preparation of the policy documents.

I got access to DES and DETE to view the relevant, available files in response to the first set of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. The access revealed that DES files were incomplete. DETE, on the other hand, had a more complete set of documents that enabled me get a greater understanding of the policy making process in that Department. In some cases these DETE files had data that was missing from DES files.

The fact that some DES files and documents were missing hampered the research process. As a result, I was unable to create an accurate narrative of the policy process for a considerable length of time. Such a narrative is critical to evaluating the policy making process. Earlier drafts of the Green Paper were not available and only some of the earlier drafts of the White Paper were on file in DETE. Examining successive drafts provides insights into the exercise of power in the agenda setting and decision making stages of policy making.

While the FOI procedure can provide access to internal departmental documentation process it has its limitations. Some documents are outside the scope of FOI and the person making the request needs precise information to elicit relevant documents. Some documents are not available because they have been mislaid or officials don't know where to source them. Limiting factors also include the time in preparing and following up on requests and the cost to the researcher.

On cost the first quotation from the Department of the Taoiseach for data on the Partnership process was €5677.45 (letter 2 February 2008). As a result I had to modify the request significantly (Appendix A7). Perhaps the greatest weakness in FOI is that, since the amendment to the Freedom of Information Act in 2003, the exemption period for Cabinet records was increased from five to ten years and measures were introduced to ensure 'protection' of communication between ministers on Government business (Collins *et al.*, 2007: 62). These limitations made it difficult to fully evaluate current Irish policy making because the role of the Minister and the Cabinet are crucial in the process.

## 3.2 Research Methods and their Rationale

This section identifies the research methods chosen and provides a rationale for each. The challenge was to choose methods to reveal the complexity of the policy process described in Chapter Two through John's (1998) evolutionary approach, and to facilitate an exploration of the application of policy theory to Irish adult education policy. A post-positivist approach for the study is identified and four linked, micro research tools to build on the stages' and evolutionary approaches are also identified.

Theorists have argued that post-positivist methodologies are appropriate for such research as they get beneath the layers of complexity in policy making to "see the whole picture" (Ryan, 2006: 18). Post-positivist methods are also appropriate because "there must be a concern to recognise the significance of discourse...and to allow for the possibility of alternative interpretations of evidence" (Hill, 2005: 18).

Ryan (2006: 22-6) identified four main tools used by the post-positivist researcher: "the concept of discourse, the concern with power, the value of narrative and the need to be reflexive".

Discourse as a research tool is examined first. Ryan (2006: 22) argues that "a discourse is a web of statements, categories and beliefs, habits and practices". Discourses are used to filter and interpret experience and "the discourses available at a certain historical moment construct the ways that people can think, talk about, or respond to particular phenomena". As well as its emphasis on meaning, discourse has a political emphasis which can account for ideology. Discourses are also "regimes of knowledge constructed over time and used to position other people".

The second tool identified by Ryan (2006) is the use of power. She links discourse and power by arguing that "the discourses available at a certain historical moment condition the way that people think or talk about, or respond to phenomena". Ryan (2006) concludes that the fixing of meaning through discourse is never a neutral act. It always privileges certain interests. In examining power, she argues that it is important to examine the "question of what discourses prevail and whose interests these discourses serve" and to recognise that the "production of knowledge is political and has real effects" (Ryan, 2006: 24).

The value of narrative is a third research tool. Ryan (2006: 24) believes that people make sense of their lives in terms of actual events and their sequence and that social structures and phenomena are understood as well as experienced by individuals. From the point of view of this research she points out how "...people actively (and sometimes knowingly) take up positions in certain discourses, and how they are (interactively) positioned by other people, and by social structures and discursive practices". Ryan believes, therefore, "that the writing up of narrative is essential to post-positivist research". It is essential for me as a researcher to construct an accurate narrative of a complex, multi layered process to analyse the process properly. As the research progressed my original narrative changed and continued to develop throughout the research.

Finally, Ryan (2006) identified the need for researchers to be reflexive in analysing competing discourses. Reflexivity helps the researcher look critically at competing discourses and understand the limits of research. Again I found this tool useful because it allowed me to draw on the considerable personal and professional experience of policy making, and also to be a reflective practitioner during the first three years of the research, while I was both an actor and a researcher.

The research methods chosen to reveal Irish adult education policy making from 1997 to 2007 were:

- (i) **Literature Review** Harrison (2001), May (2001), Scott (2000), Heck (2004);
- (ii) **Documentary Analysis** Robson (1993), Silverman (2000), Harrison (2001), Scott (2000), (May 2001), Heck (2004);
- (iii) **Interviews with Policy Elites** (Robson (1993), Rossi, Freeman and Lipsey (1999), Silverman (2000), Gubrium and Holstein (2001), Harrison (2001), Scott (2001), Heck (2004); and
- (iv) **Critical reflection on Personal Experience** McKernan (1996), McNamara and Leonard, McNiff with Whitehead (2002), Ryan (2006).

The stages' and evolutionary models provide a framework for using the methods. The micro research tools identified by Ryan (2006: 22) help explore the use of power, excavate the narrative, identify the discourses of the policy process and evaluate the process by reflecting on my own experience. Each of these research methods is now discussed.



### 3.2.1 Literature Review

Patton and Sawiciki (1993: 81) argue that the literature review led them to “develop some theoretical insights by means of a critical review of a body of literature”. I focused on policy theory, the Irish policy making process and Irish adult education policy in that order to gain similar insights. I also reviewed literature on research methodology.

My initial focus in the literature was to understand the theoretical frameworks and principles informing policy making. It was essential to understand these theories and principles and the way they impacted on the policy making process in. I also wanted to identify an appropriate theoretical framework to for this study. The following section briefly outlines my research journey towards understanding policy theory.

I analysed the work of Parsons (1995) and John (1998) first and then Colebatch (2002) and Hill (2005). I subsequently broadened the review to include literature on specific aspects of policy theory identified in Parsons and John. This allowed me to contest, modify or reject the views of John and Parsons and gain a deeper understanding of the role of the State, the contribution of politics and the importance of ideology in policy making.

The literature on specific aspects of policy theory included Dunleavy and O’ Leary (1987) on the State, Heywood (2004) and Axford *et al.*, (1997) on politics, Marsh and Stoker (2002) on the theory and methods of political science, Heywood (2007) on political ideologies, James (1997) and Moran (2005) on policy making and politics in the UK and O’ Boyle (1995) and Kettle (2000) on New Public Management. The interface between politics and the bureaucracy/administrative system was another specific aspect of policy theory to emerge from Parsons (1995) and John (1998). To review public administration and its interface with the political system I analysed the work of Weber (Turner, 2000), Whimster (2007), Hughes (2003), Hague and Harrop (2004) as well as Irish commentators such as Boyle (1995, 1996, 1999) and Collins, Cradden and Butler (2007).

The next stage of the literature review examined how policy theory influenced the Irish public policy process. Analysis of the Irish public policy process is necessary because it defines the rules of engagement and the constraints and opportunities available to adult education policy makers since 1997. The analysis also locates

Irish policy making in a broader theoretical context and helps unravel its complexity. Texts on Irish public policy researched included Chubb (1992), Dooney and O' Toole (1998), Taylor (2002), Adshead and Miller (2003), Collins and Cradden (2004), Garvin (2004), Coakley and Gallagher (2005), Taylor (2005), Collins, Cradden and Butler (2007) and Adshead, Kirby and Millar (2008). These texts also facilitated an exploration of the socio-economic and geo-political influences on policy theory and the Irish process.

Literature on specific aspects of the Irish policy system such as administration, economics, history, sociology and politics was also reviewed. In addition, general policy documents like National Development Plans, Partnership Agreements, Programmes for Government and National Anti-Poverty Strategies were analysed to get a clearer understanding of the factors at play in making public policy in Ireland since 1997.

I have indicated the sources of texts reviewed on specific aspects of the Irish policy process, rather than list them all. The main source is the Institute for Public Administration. A second source is the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) which provides:

...analyses and reports to the Taoiseach on strategic issues relating to the efficient development of the economy and the achievement of social justice, and the development of a strategic framework for the conduct of relations and the negotiation of agreements between the government and the social partners.

(Institute for Public Administration, 2007: 222-3)

In advance of the negotiations for Partnership Agreements, NESC prepares a review of economic and social policy which provides "...a framework for the negotiation of the national social partnership agreements" (NESC, 2002: xix). A third source is the series on Irish policy, published by UCD Press. These publications provide a social rather than an economic or political analysis of Irish public policy. A selection of political writing, including biographies and analyses by commentators on public policy was another source of specific aspects of Irish public policy. Finally, publications on various aspects of EU membership, and histories of Ireland covering the period from 1900 to date were reviewed.

I reviewed the *Cabinet Handbook* (Department of the Taoiseach, 1998) in addition to examining the general Irish public policy literature. The Handbook gave me an

insight into the policy making process adult education policy makers had to engage in to get Government approval for a major policy initiative. I also accessed the Department of Finance website to review the role of the Department of Finance in major policy initiatives in line Departments.

Understanding Irish policy theory and practice provided a framework to evaluate the literature on adult education policy. However, getting a grasp of adult education policy was more difficult than anticipated because of the fragmented nature of provision. It was critical to the research to develop the narrative of the policy process to gain an accurate picture of the status and nature of adult education in 1997. Recognition that adult education operated in three domains was essential to putting a structure on the research process and managing the review of the adult education literature accordingly.

I began the review by focusing on the education domain that I was familiar with. Here I examined texts on Irish education policy, including Ó Buachalla (1988), Coolahan (1989), Mulcahy and O' Sullivan (1989), Walshe (1999), O' Sullivan (2005) and Healy, Reynolds and Collins (1998, 2006). A review of adult education within the education domain drew on journals and publications including those from the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education in NUIM (MACE) as well as recent publications by O' Brien and Ó Fathaigh (2007) and Maunsell, Downs, McLoughlin (2008). Official publications such as the Murphy Report (DES, 1973), the Kenny Report (DES, 1984), The White Paper on Education (Department of Education 1995), the IALS Survey (DES, 1997b), the Green Paper (DES 1998b) and the White Paper (DES 2000a) were a valuable source of data and analysis.

I also reviewed DES documents such as Annual Reports and Strategy Statements to obtain data on the operations of the Department and on policy objectives and implementation. A critical operational document was the Cromien Report - *Review of Department's Operations, Systems and Staffing Needs of the Department of Education and Science* (DES: 2000b). Cromien was published in October 2000, two months after the White Paper on Adult Education. This Report is important because it is an evaluation of DES by a former Secretary General of the Department of Finance, while it was engaged in preparing the White Paper (DES, 2000a).

It was essential also to inform myself and understand the way the training system operated in 1997. Two general texts, Garavan *et al.* (1995) *Training and*

*Development in Ireland: Context, Policy and Practice* and Gunnigle *et al.* (2006) *Human Resource Management in Ireland* provided an overview of training policy in Ireland. While Official Reports, DETE Annual Reports and Strategy Statements, FÁS Annual Reports and Strategy Statements as well as EU evaluations gave me an insight into policy priorities and processes in the training domain.

The policy documents provided an analysis of the training system at the time of their publication as well as policy proposals for future development. The policy documents include the *White Paper on Human Resource Development* (DETE, 1997), *Report of the Taskforce Report on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b), the *Annual National Employment Action Plans 1998-2004* (DETE), the *National Reform Programme 2005-2008* (Department of the Taoiseach, 2005) and the *Mid-term Evaluations of the Operational Programmes for Human Resources Development of the National Development Plan* (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004).

The *Annual National Employment Plans* and the Mid-term Evaluations are sources of comprehensive data, in a single publication, on all three domains of adult education. This arises because of the lead role of DETE in EU policy matters. FÁS publications, including their *Labour Market Reviews* (FÁS, 2003), were also useful. As was the case for DES, the DETE Annual Reports and Strategy Statements contained valuable data on the training domain.

The review of community education literature drew on official publications such as the Green and White Papers on Supporting Voluntary Activity and the *National Anti-Poverty Strategy* (1997d), the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2013* (2007b) as well as the Green and White Papers on Adult Education and mid-term evaluations of the National Development Plan. The Green (1998b) and White Papers (2000a) on adult education provided a theoretical underpinning for, and data on, the development and status of community education.

I drew on the work of Dewey (1916), Rawls (1971), Etzioni (1993), *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (Gutting, 1994), Giddens (1994), *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (White (1995), Freire (1996), Scholte (2000) and *Understanding Weber* (Whimster, 2007) for ideological underpinning of adult education policy. These theories on adult education were applied to practice in the '*Radical Learning for Liberation*' series, published by the Centre for Adult and Community Education in the National University, Maynooth.

Adult education as an academic discipline was the third focus of the literature review. Among the works considered were Jarvis (1995, 2001), Foley (2000), O' Sullivan (2005), De Castro, Sancho and Guimaraes (2006), Maunsell *et al.* (2008) and publications from the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), Maynooth Adult and Community Education, AONTAS and NALA.

Harrison (2001: 104-121) claims that as well as using primary data the researcher can draw on secondary data such as the mass media, party sources, political biographies, autobiographies and the internet. She does note (2001: 131), however, that such sources need to be subjected to careful analysis. I have used these secondary sources to get an understanding of the political forces and personalities that shaped adult education policy.

The literature review provided me with a framework to answer the research question and examine the policy making process in adult education.

### **3.2.2 Documentary Analysis**

Documents are a key source of data in policy research (Patton and Sawiciki, 1993: 112). Yin (2003: 85-6) identifies five categories of documents:

- (i) letters, memoranda and communiqués;
- (ii) agendas, announcements and minutes of meetings, and other written reports of events;
- (iii) administrative documents - proposals, progress reports and other internal records;
- (iv) formal studies of evaluations of the same 'site' under study; and
- (v) newspaper clippings and other articles appearing in the mass media or in community newsletters.

Heck (2004: 225-6) largely agrees when he argues that relevant documents for research "might include memos, letters, meeting agendas and minutes, written reports and evaluations and newspaper articles".

Yin (2003) considers the strengths of such documents to be their stability, unobtrusive nature, accuracy in terms of basic details and their span of coverage. Among the weaknesses he notes difficulties in retrieving the documents (as experienced in this study), the danger of bias if the selection is not complete, or bias of the author and the fact that access may be deliberately blocked (as happened in the case of some of my Freedom of Information applications).

I used "documents...to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (Yin, 2000: 87). For that reason, I felt it was important to get access to internal documents in DES, DETE and the Departments of Finance and the Taoiseach on the process of preparing and implementing the key adult education policy documents.

The published policy documents contain the official position of the Government on aspects of adult education policy. However, access to internal departmental files was necessary to facilitate my understanding of how the official position was arrived at. Access enabled me to get behind seemingly sensible statements in published documents. An example from the White Paper (DES, 2000a) is the statement "while this paper bridges the traditional divide between education and training it does not aim to provide a policy blueprint for the training aspects of the field...."

The internal documents and the interviews with policy elites helped create the narrative of the adult education policy process and get behind the discourse and recommendations in the published documents. Internal documents also alerted me to issues in the policy process, which could be explored further in interviews, and allowed me to corroborate data in the interviews for the narrative or analysis.

Documentary analysis involves examining a written document (such as the White Paper: 2000 a) so that the research can make “valid and replicable inferences from data and their context” (Krippendorff, 1980: 21). There are two main approaches to documentary analysis: “a quantitative analysis involves counting occurrences, whilst a qualitative analysis places greater emphasis upon context and meaning” (Harrison, 2001: 113). Robson (1993: 277) argues that the relationship between content and context is important. The context includes the purpose of the document as well as its institutional, social, and cultural aspects. Harrison (2001) believes that content analysis is a positivist response to documentary analysis. In the interpretivist approach “documents should be analysed in terms of the social constructions” (Jupp and Morris, 1993: 43, cited in Harrison, 2001: 130).

The qualitative (post-positivist or non-rational) analysis approach to documentary analysis is used in this study. The approach has two elements - interpretism and discourse analysis

Critical analysis in social science involves an examination of the assumptions that underpin any account (say, in a document) and a consideration of what other aspects are concealed or ruled out. It can also involve moving beyond the documents themselves to encompass a critical analysis of the institutional and social structures within which such documents are produced.

(Jupp, 1996: 29, cited in Harrison, 2001: 130)

As Harrison (2001) argues, the interpretist approach proposes that the documents should be analysed in terms of the social constructions they contain. The discourse analysis approach, discussed above, claims that documents are a medium through which power is expressed. The use of language, the social relations involved and the meaning of the document are all part of discourse analysis.

I examined the philosophies, educational theory and the political and bureaucratic forces constructing meaning, when analysing the key policy documents (The Green Paper (DES, 1998b), The White Paper (DES, 2000a), the National Employment Action Plans, the National Development Plans, the Partnership Agreements and the

Report of The Lifelong Learning Taskforce (DETE, 2002b). I also examined how the various actors in the policy development process influenced the final shape of these documents.

### 3.2.2.1 *Approach to Documentary Analysis*

My approach to documentary analysis was to use the stages' model to manage the research process in each domain. I posed four questions in the analysis of the key public adult education policy documents to reflect the stages in the policy process.

The questions are:

- (i) How was setting the policy agenda managed?
- (ii) How were the policy decisions made?
- (iii) What was the implementation strategy devised?
- (iv) What evaluation strategy was proposed?

In answering these questions I drew on the literature when discussing the Stages' Model in Chapter Two – pages 54-83. I also posed a number of additional questions on each stage, drawing on the micro tools of the use of power, discourse, establishing the narrative and working in a reflexive way, identified by Ryan (2006: 22).

The first question concerned the approach to adult education policy used by policy makers. To answer this question I drew on the policy theories outlined in Chapter Two and the evolutionary approach to policy making discussed in section 3.1.3.1 i.e. how does the approach used in the policy document fit with the evolutionary approach to policy making? I posed the question in interviews with policy elites as well as in the documentary analysis.

The second question concerned the impact of the socio-economic situation in Ireland on the policy process. The influence of the Government is the third question which informed the documentary analysis. I again drew on data in Chapter Two and questions to policy elites.

The role of DES and its Further Education Section, DETE and its Labour Services Unit, the Departments of Finance and the Taoiseach were also examined by reviewing published policy documents as well as internal documents and files. The internal documents were of more value in this research. I also drew on the



theoretical data in Chapter Two, including a number of key publications on Irish public administration such as *Irish Government Today* (Dooney and O' Toole, 1998), *Cabinet Handbook* (Department of the Taoiseach, 1998), the Cromien Report (DES, 2000b) and *Modernising Irish Government: The Politics of Administrative Reform* (2007) in examining the role of Departments as well as for the interviews.

I used the discourse analysis tool to evaluate the ideological, philosophical and power bases revealed in the texts as well as posing questions to interrogate the documents. The findings from the documentary analysis were elaborated, verified or challenged through the interviews and by critically reflecting on my own experience in policy making. For that reason the documentary analysis happened before the interviews.

Discourse analysis views documents as the medium through which power is expressed (Harrison, 2001: 130). It is one of the research tools identified by Ryan (2006), as discussed earlier in the chapter. Discourse analysis examines the use of language in a document or a public discussion. It derives from the work of Foucault, who concluded that discourses are more than language - they are also practices. By analysing statements the reader can see their constraints and where they situate the speaker. Horrocks and Jevtic (1997: 87) contend that there are three rules of forming a discourse.

- (i) Surfaces of emergence - these are social and cultural areas through which discourse appears – the family, work group or religious community;
- (ii) Authorities of delimitation – institutions with knowledge and authority like the law or medical profession; and
- (iii) Fields of specification – a system by which different kinds of madness, for example, can be related to each other.

Foucault claims, in his study of discourse, that all history is a document - the past leaves traces in our present through books, accounts, acts, buildings and customs. These documents should be treated for themselves, that is what they represent, and not for their reference to historical validity. Finally, discourse can create its own object.

### 3.2.2.2 *Guidelines for Analysing Texts*

Having described the general and specific questions used in the documentary analysis, guidelines for analysing policy texts are now considered. Scott (2000: 18-21) argues that policy texts have a number of basic characteristics, which should be identified in textual analysis. Is the text:

- prescriptive or non-prescriptive?
- wide focused or narrow focused?
- open/concealed? – a policy text is always underpinned by an ideological framework, which may be made explicit or may be concealed;
- authoritative/non-authoritative?
- generic/directed?
- single authored/multiple authored?
- visual or diagrammatical/ written text?
- referenced to other texts/ free of reference to other texts? and
- coherent or fragmented?

A series of additional questions proposed by Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1991: 48, cited by May, 2001: 195), can be combined with Scott's questions to help the researcher analyse documents. These questions are:

- What is the relationship of a text's parts to each other?
- What is the relationship of the text to those who participated in constructing it?
- What is the relationship of the text to the realities conceived as lying outside it? and
- What empirical patterns are evident in these intratextual and intertextual relations and what do these indicate about meaning?

The questions were used to examine and compare policy documents that impacted on adult education policy, but emerged from the different domains of adult education. For example, it was important to identify who prepared a document and why it was prepared when examining the relationship of the documents to its authors. The White Paper on Adult Education (DES, 2000a) was prepared by a small team of DES adult education officials and external academic advisors from the National University Maynooth.

On the other hand, the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (DETE:, 2002b) was prepared by a team of officials in DETE, representatives from a number of Government Departments with a remit for adult education, representatives of state agencies with an adult education remit and representatives of the Social Partners. The terms of reference and the intended audience of these documents were different.

When examining the relationships of parts of the text to the whole text it was important to establish who wrote the different parts of the text and why it was written. For example, in the White Paper (DES, 2000a), the chapter on the history of adult education was written by Tom Collins from Maynooth; the chapter on community education was written using the resources of staff in Maynooth (interviews: Collins, Coolahan, Ryan) and submissions by AONTAS, the chapter on second chance and further education was written by DES and the sections on training were written by DETE.

Scott (2000) also suggested the use of rules for examining the way texts are constructed by identifying their underlying rules. These rules include the considerations that:

- texts are temporally framed;
- they are produced with a specific audience in mind;
- different types of text have different purposes;
- different types of text are underpinned by different ideological frameworks;
- different types of text adopt different attitudes towards the dimension of place;
- different types of text use different media to get across their message;
- different types of text may refer to other texts in a different way;
- different types of text have histories which influence how they can be read;
- texts are underpinned by distinctive types of knowledge;
- texts are produced with different types of resources; and
- texts are contingent - the rules which structure particular types of textual production are never faithfully followed.

(Scott, 2000: 8-11)

These rules and the earlier macro and micro questions help the researcher unearth the discourse underpinning texts and identify the exercise of power. They also help deconstruct adult education policy developed within three domains, managed by

different Government Departments, and articulated in general public policy documents such as National Development Plans and Social Partnership Agreements.

### 3.2.2.3 Documents Analysed

Official documents are critical in public policy research because they provide data on the policies and views of the Government and bureaucracy on a policy field at a particular point in time. I have chosen the following key policy documents published in the period 1997-2007 for analysis:

- National Development Plans: 1994, 2000 and 2007 (Department of Finance);
- Social Partnership Agreements: 1996, 2000, 2003 and 2006 (Department of the Taoiseach);
- Annual National Employment Action Plans (DETE, 1998-2004) and their triennial successor, the National Reform Programme (DETE and Department of the Taoiseach);
- *White Paper: Human Resource Development* (DETE, 1997);
- *Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning – Green Paper on Adult Education* (DES, 1998b);
- *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education* (DES, 2000a);
- *White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing Relationship between the State and the Voluntary Sector* (Department of Family and Social Affairs, 2000);
- *Report on the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b);
- *National Qualifications Framework*; (National Qualifications Authority, 2003)
- *National Skills Strategy* (Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2007).

The National Development Plans and the Partnership Agreements form the core of Irish public policy. An analysis of these documents revealed the State perspective on adult education policy and its contribution to national policy. The adult education policy documents, including the National Employment Action Plans and the National Skills Strategy, represent a textual statement of agenda setting, decision making and implementation proposals in respect of adult education between 1997 and 2007.

### 3.3.2.4 Sources of Documents

Freedom of Information legislation was used to gain access to the relevant departmental files (Appendices A1-A9). I examined files in DES and DETE, the

Departments of Finance and the Taoiseach and identified the source of further documents. Departments were helpful in the research, particularly DES and DETE. I visited both Departments as part of the Freedom of Information process and identified, copied and took notes on relevant documents. The documentation in DES was incomplete and difficult to access because of staff changes and the re-location of offices. Critically, most of the written responses to the Green Paper (DES, 1998b) were not available nor were successive drafts of the Green and White Papers, though I obtained some drafts in DETE and NUIM Maynooth. Documentation in DETE was complete to the best of my knowledge. DES gave me access to diaries kept by the Assistant Principal Officer with responsibility for adult education policy from 1995 to 2006 to compensate for the fact that documentation in DES was incomplete. These diaries, discussed in the next section, were very useful in identifying other documents which revealed the mechanics of the process and provided insights into the thinking of DES on the policy processes they were engaged in.

#### 3.3.2.5 *The Des O' Loughlin Diaries*

In addition to the normal documents in Departmental files, a series of contemporaneous notes by Des O' Loughlin (DOL), Assistant Principal Officer in the Further Education section of the Department of Education and Science, were made available to me. In essence, these notes were unedited diaries of adult education meetings attended by him from 1995-2006. The diaries were dated, numbered and kept in A4 pads. The notes I took on the data in the diaries during the research used the same numbering system as the diaries.

Typically diaries included the date, time, venue and attendance at meetings, the main points to emerge, decisions taken, and actions required. Occasionally, there were personal reflections or comments on the subject matter of particular meetings. If the meetings involved negotiation with the Irish Vocational Education Organisation, Teachers Union of Ireland, Joint Management Body (for managers of voluntary secondary schools) or a service provider, a certain amount of detail was provided in the relevant entry. Detail was also provided where DOL was not previously familiar with the topic or issue discussed.

I read each entry in the 17 diaries covering the period from 1 November 1995 until 20 June 2006. The referencing system for the diaries in this study uses the abbreviation

DOL and the number of the Diary. The dates covered by each diary are listed in Appendix P. So, for example, the reference (DOL: 8) in the text means that the source is diary number 8 kept by Des O' Loughlin, Assistant Principal Officer in DES covering the period 23/09/1999 to 06/06/2000.

The entries were evaluated: (i) having regard to a documentary analysis of the main policy documents (ii) on information and perspectives gleaned from earlier interviews with policy elites who developed and implemented adult education policy (iii) drawing on my own experience and knowledge of the adult education system<sup>16</sup>. I took notes on what I considered important meetings, decisions taken or views expressed. In some cases the notes were a verbatim record of meetings or parts of meetings that I considered important. As well as providing rich data for analysis of the policy process the diaries were invaluable in pinpointing documents to request under the Freedom of Information process and in creating a narrative of adult education policy since 1997.

The first step in the analysis of the diaries was to categorise, record and summarize meetings under the following headings:

- internal meetings in the Adult Education/Further Education<sup>17</sup> Section;
- meetings with management bodies and unions;
- meetings with subgroups of management bodies;
- meetings with AONTAS and NALA;
- meetings with VECs;
- Green Paper, White Paper and Taskforce on Lifelong Learning team meetings;
- meetings with other Government Departments; and
- general meetings.

The categories were chosen on the basis of meeting frequency and significance.

The DOL diaries have their limitations, including the fact that they were not the official minutes of the meetings, but the subjective views of one official. This fact is recognised by DOL himself and the Department.

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<sup>16</sup> This experience was as CEO of Co. Tipperary (NR) VEC, Honorary Treasurer of the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) and an IVEA representative in discussions with DES on adult education policy.

<sup>17</sup> The Adult Education Unit was merged with part of the ESF Section to form the Further Education Section in 1998 (FOI information).

Commentators such as May (2001: 189) claim that researchers need to evaluate such material for the point of view of authenticity, credibility and meaning. The DOL document is authentic because it is in his hand writing. I have seen the diaries which were still being maintained by him in June 2006 when I accessed them. They are credible because I have been able to test and verify information contained in them. They are not representative in that they are a record of the meetings attended by DOL and are not a record of all meetings held in the FE section of DES, especially those attended by the two other Assistant Principal Officers in the section. The record is also DOL's selection of what he thought was important. However, he was constrained in what he recorded in his diaries if the record was to be useful to him in his role as an APO. This was because he had to report on these meetings to senior officials in DES and to write to some of the participants or other stakeholders conveying Departmental decisions arising out of the meetings.

Despite their limitations, the DOL diaries are important to the research as:

- DOL is the only senior official in the Further Education Section of DES involved in the education domain policy process from 1997-2006<sup>18</sup>;
- There is internal consistency within the diaries;
- The diaries were used as a basis for letters issued to VECs (responsible for adult education policy implementation in the education domain) and reflect and are consistent with what appeared in policy documents including the Green Paper (DES, 1998b) and the White Paper (DES, 2000a);
- They facilitated verifying the education domain narrative of the policy process and also provided a perspective on how policy was influenced by the Ministers, senior management in DES, advocacy organisations and education management bodies;
- DOL is recognised by the interviewees as an efficient, careful, and capable public servant (interviews : Ryan; Keogh; and Collins).

I have verified the accuracy of some of the entries in the diaries through personal knowledge of events recorded, through interviews, documents in DES and DETE files and through reports of meetings with external organisations made by those organisations in Newsletters and/or Annual Reports.

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<sup>18</sup> I have used 2006 here because I viewed diaries up to 2006.

The significance of the DOL diaries to the research is revealed in the entry for 16 December 1999. On that date, a meeting took place in DES involving the Principal Officer, DOL and Tom Collins (National University Maynooth, advisor to the Green Paper team) with representatives of DETE. An initial analysis of the White Paper (DES, 2000a) led me to intuit that there could be tension between DES and DETE concealed in the following statement (p 27):

While this Paper bridges the traditional divide between education and training, it does not aim to provide a policy blueprint for the training aspects of the field, given that this task is being advanced through the National Employment Action Plans (1998, 1999 and 2000) and previous publications, and through the work of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning. The Paper seeks, however, to ensure that there is a fit and complementarity between education and training provision so as to enable the learner to move progressively and incrementally within an overarching, co-ordinated and learner-centred framework.

My intuition led me to look for evidence of tension when examining documents in both Departments. The diary entry for the meeting in December 1999 recorded the fact of the tension. According to DOL: 8, a DETE officer asserted that the "White Paper was untimely" and DETE intended to convene a broadly based committee [the Task Force on Lifelong Learning] in which DES would be involved". The date and timing of the entry is critical in the context of the White Paper process, the start of the Taskforce process before the White Paper was published, the negotiations concluding in late 1999 on the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness 2000* and the finalisation of the *National Development Plan 2000*.

The entry alerted me to an important dimension of the public policy making process in adult education since 1997 - the relations between DETE and DES. These relations will be discussed in Chapter Four. As a result of that entry I decided to examine the files in DETE and to establish in later interviews whether or not there had been such tension between these Departments on adult education policy.

### **3.2.3 Interviews with Adult Education Policy Elites**

During the literature review and documentary analysis I developed a number of hypotheses about adult education policy in Ireland since 2007. Interviewing adult education policy elites allowed me to test these hypotheses and explore dimensions of policy making, policy delivery and policy impact that cannot be adequately explored through documentary analysis.



I chose interviews as one of the methods in a multi-method approach to gather information not available in documents and to develop an interpretation of relevant events and personalities. The interviews helped bring the topic to life and get data about an area which has not been studied extensively. Harrison and Deicke: (2001: 90) citing Stedward (1997: 151), outline the benefit of interviewing:

In particular, the interview is a great vehicle for bringing a research topic to life. It is also an excellent method for obtaining data about contemporary subjects which have not been extensively studied and for which there has been little literature.

The interviews are complimented by documentary analysis of key policy documents, internal departmental files, including diaries of DOL, in DES, and critical reflections on my personal professional experience. Robson (1993: 227) claims that interviews and questionnaires are useful enquiry methods when carrying out research involving humans. He also argues that these techniques are useful in that they “lend themselves well to a multi-method approach”.

Harrison and Deicke (2001: 90) conclude that “interviews facilitate our ability to glean information not recorded in documents elsewhere or indeed allow us to develop our interpretation of existing documents, relevant events and personalities”.

I was able to establish which issues presented difficulties to policy makers, their perspectives on them and the influences brought to bear in their resolution. I was also able to get an insight into the objectives of the policy makers and how they were realised, modified or thwarted. Both objectives were achieved because the interviews were with policy elites directly involved in the policy process. Finally, the interviews allowed me to explore the dynamics between those involved and to identify the exercise of power during different stages of the policy process. These insights helped me to analyse the policy process and develop hypotheses which were tested during succeeding interviews.

I decided to confine interviews to adult education policy elites because of time and resource limitations. Policy elites, according to Bernstein and Dyer (1992: 91), are “people who are defined by their own position as being important in some way”. I identified categories of policy elites to provide different perspectives on the adult education policy-making process. It was important to choose an interview protocol that allowed me draw on the expertise of policy elites. This was because of limited

time availability of interviewees and their experience as policy makers with a considerable level of knowledge and analytical skills. I also needed to be able to adapt the interviews to clarify and/or build on information and insights from earlier interviews.

### 3.2.3.1 Interview Method

I decided to use the unstandardised interview approach with the policy elites to allow me to follow “a general area of interest and concern” (Robson, 1993: 231) and thus connect with the knowledge, perspectives and insights of those interviewed (Harrison and Deicke, 2001: 92). The interview takes the form of a:

...free-flowing conversation, relying heavily on the quality of the social interaction between the investigator and the informant that, can be subtly redirected by the interviewer if it should stray too far of the track of the research study (Burns, 2000, p. 425). The aim is to provide qualitative, detailed data, and the structure allows for greater flexibility and discovery of meaning. That is we ask questions as and when they are appropriate, because ‘people’s’ responses are highly sensitive to different forms of question wording.

(Dunleavy, 1990: 457, cited in Harrison, 2001: 92)

The unstandardised approach allowed me to deepen my understanding of the adult education policy making process and test hypotheses derived from the published policy and internal documents as well as from earlier interviews. The interviews started in 2005 and continued until 2007. The unstandardised approach was particularly useful in the final two interviews in 2007. The flexibility this approach provided was necessary because the interviewees had knowledge, insights and views on adult education policy in Ireland that I could not have anticipated. Harrison (2001: 92) indicates that “as we progress from standardised to unstandardised interviews we require fewer formalised questions”. This approach allows the interviewer to follow particular themes in the interview.

Though I was using the unstandardised approach, I prepared a series of questions in advance of the interview, as an *aide memoire*, to ensure that each interview established, verified or challenged the narrative of the policy process, clarified issues I was unclear about or that emerged in policy documents, internal documents, earlier interviews and drew on the unique perspective and expertise of the interviewees.

The *aide memoire* (Appendices B – O) also ensured that the interviews contributed effectively to the research process. I also used them to brief the interviewee on the nature of the interview and to negotiate the actual sequence and process. However,

the questions were not used in a way that determined or interrupted the flow of the interview or prevented the interviewee from giving and elaborating on their particular insights into the adult education policy making process. If time became an issue during the interview, I was in a position to ensure priority matters were dealt with by referring to the *aide memoire*. I could also abandon the *aide memoire* to facilitate the flow of the interview.

I was conscious of the two basic approaches to interviewing in the literature when choosing the unstandardised approach. The first uses a structured set of questions where each interviewee is asked the same set of questions in the same order. In reality this is the administration of a questionnaire using the interview method (Robson, 1993: 227). The second uses semi-structured interviews where, as Robson notes, “the interview has clearly defined purposes, but seeks to achieve them through some flexibility in wording and in the order of presentation of questions”.

Robson elaborates further (1993: 231), where he claims that in a semi-structured interview:

where the interviewer has worked out the questions in advance, but is free to modify their order based upon her perception of what seems most appropriate in the context of the ‘conversation’, can change the way they are worded, give explanations, leave out particular questions which seem inappropriate with a particular interviewee or include additional ones, to the unstructured (completely informal) interview, where the interviewer has a general area of interest and concern, but lets the conversation develop within this area.

I opted for the unstandardised approach, a variant of the semi-structured interview, because I needed to choose the method most suitable for excavating the complexity of the Irish public process while recognising the fragmented nature of adult education.. As Odendahl and Shaw (2001: 302) argue, when reviewing methods for interviewing policy elites “The choice between them [structured, semi structured and its variant, unstructured] is ultimately a decision about which data-generation strategy best fits the particular design and theoretical problems being addressed”.

### 3.2.3.2 *Choosing Policy Elites*

The next task is to identify policy elites for interview. I noted a widely held view that policy making is in the hands of a small number of policy making elites in the literature. Chubb (1992: 166-167) argues that:

Policy-making in Ireland emerges as a complex process, but it involves comparatively few people, who operate against a background of comment, criticism and advice in the media, and within the parameters of public opinion. Although the most authoritative decision-makers - the government and the Oireachtas, are elected officials and the process involves consultation and negotiation with spokesmen who are in some sense representative of the groups for whom they speak, the way of doing things is far from being very open or democratic. On the contrary, the critical phases are conducted in private.

Chubb (1992: 155), following Lindblom, also concludes that policy making involves what he terms 'proximate policy-makers':

In the making of much of Irish public policy, the proximate policy-makers are (i) the members of the Government (that is, the cabinet) and the Ministers of state (who are not in the cabinet); (ii) the members of the Dáil and Seanad; (iii) some senior civil servants, including temporary 'advisers' and possibly a few other public servants. The main influences upon them are the political parties, pressure groups, the public service (that is, the Civil Service, the local government service, and the executives of the state-sponsored bodies), the mass media and public opinion. In addition, there is a growing external influence, the European Communities or, more precisely, the obligations imposed upon the Irish Government by reason of Ireland's membership in the Communities.

He makes two other important points relevant to adult education policy. The Ministers, who constitute the Government, are at the centre of the process. In carrying out their role Ministers are "powerfully aided" by a small number of senior civil servants.

Ó Buachalla (1988: 327) refines the Chubb perspective in applying it to policy making in the Department of Education (as it was then):

Normally within the Department of Education the crucial decisions in major policy issues would normally be taken within a small senior group based upon earlier consultations and internal discussion; this small group includes the four assistant secretaries and the secretary.

Since the publication of Ó Buachalla's research the senior management group with responsibility for policy has been expanded. 'The Top Management Group', as it is now called, is made up of the Secretary General, the Assistant Secretaries General, the Chief Inspector and the Director of the Strategic Policy Unit and it meets weekly (DES, 2000b: ii).

A number of criteria were used to choose policy elites. The first was to interview officials from DETE and DES because these two Departments were: (i) responsible for the bulk of adult education provision and (ii) were lead Departments in developing

many of the key adult education policy documents. The second criterion was to choose Ministers and senior bureaucrats because the literature revealed both influenced the policy process. People actively and directly involved in the process were also chosen and the final criterion was to choose people from adult education interest groups and academia. That was done to provide a counterbalance balance to the official view.

I decided to interview two Ministers for State in DES, senior officials in DES and a senior official in DETE for the research (Chubb, 1992); Ó Buachalla, 1988), My initial plan was to interview the Principal Officers in DES with direct responsibility for preparing or implementing the Green and White Papers. However, it became clear, when analysing the White Paper (DES, 2000a) and examining files in DES, that I should interview the Principal Officer in DETE with responsibility for adult education in the Labour Services Unit. He was responsible for responding to DES on the Green and White Papers (DES, 1998b; 2000a) and managing the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (DETE, 2002b) process.

Though the community education domain was evolving, I decided not to interview a Principal Officer in the Department of Social and Family Affairs because there was no Principal Officer within a Government Department with overall responsibility for Community Education. In any event a number of the other policy elites interviewed from NUIM Maynooth, AONTAS and the Further Education Section DES had a sound grasp of the community domain.

I focussed on the Principal Officer grade for interview because, as Dooney and O'Toole (1998: 136-7) argue, "the grade of Principal is a central one in the sense that principals are in charge of large blocks of their department's work" and "the officials who accompany ministers on their appearances in the Dáil in connection with routine parliamentary business are usually the grade of Assistant Principal and Principal".

The role of interest groups/advocacy organisations is also a dimension of policy making in Ireland:

In the decade after 1987, when the Programme for National Recovery was launched, the interest group activity in Ireland achieved centre stage, with the tripartite agreements of the 1990s cementing social partnership. With the implementation of Partnership 2000, with its unique social pillar, the number of interest groups associating with government has grown quite substantially.  
(Murphy, 1999: 290-91)

I interviewed the Director of a national advocacy organisation to reflect the interest group/advocacy perspective.

Finally, I considered the influence of what Evans and Coen (2003) call the “epistemic community” on the policy process. Citing Adler and Hass (1992), they identified five ways in which epistemic communities can exert influence: (i) through policy innovation, (ii) policy diffusion, (iii) policy selection, (iv) policy persistence, (v) policy evolution. The staff of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth formed such a community during the preparation of the Green and White Papers. Three members of staff were interviewed. Two of them had a direct role in the adult education policy process. A third staff member was also an officer of a national adult education advocacy organisation and provided a theoretical underpinning for their work.

I identified and categorised the elite policy makers for interview following a review of the roles of policy making elites in adult education policy making. The roles I identified as important were political, bureaucratic, advocacy and academic.

- (i) Political:** Ministers of State for Adult Education at DES and the Chairperson of the National Adult Learning Council, appointed by the Minister;
- (ii) Bureaucratic:** Senior officials in the Further Education Section of DES and the Labour Services Unit of DETE;
- (iii) Advocacy:** Adult education interest groups; and
- (iv) Academic:** An Epistemic community.

Themes and hypotheses to test were identified. These themes and hypotheses were generated from the literature review, the documentary analysis, internal departmental documents, earlier interviews and critical reflection. The next section lists those interviewed by category. Context for the reader is provided through background information on those interviewed in Appendices B (1) to O (1).

### 3.2.3.3 *Ministers and Ministerial Appointee*

The Ministers interviewed were from the education domain and from 1997 to 2007. They were Willie O’Dea, TD and Síle de Valera TD. Professor Noel Whelan, who was appointed Chair of the National Adult Learning Council by Willie O’ Dea, was also interviewed.

#### 3.2.3.4 *Senior Civil Servants*

The Further Education section of DES was responsible for managing the Green and White Papers on adult education on behalf of the department. The Labour Services Unit in DETE managed the Task Force on Lifelong Learning. While researching files in DES, it became clear that the Labour Services Unit of DETE had a significant role in adult education policy. Therefore, it was important to interview a senior DETE official who had responsibility at Principal Officer-level for training policy. Because of the completeness of the files in DETE it was not necessary to interview other officials in that Department.

The following senior civil servants from DES and DETE were interviewed. Margaret Kelly, Principal Officer DES, Pauline Gildea, Principal Officer DES together with two Assistant Principals – Des O' Loughlin<sup>19</sup> and Peter Kelly, Helen Keogh, National Co-ordinator, VTOS, Ned Costello, Principal Officer DETE<sup>20</sup> and Seán Ó Foghlú<sup>21</sup>, former DES official, Higher Education Authority Officer and Chief Executive Officer of the National Qualification Authority and member of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning.

#### 3.2.3.5 *Advocacy Organisations*

Berni Brady was interviewed as a representative of advocacy organisations. She was Director of AONTAS, an umbrella body for the entire adult education sector, throughout the period of the research.

#### 3.2.3.6 *Epistemic Community*

John Coolahan<sup>22</sup>, Tom Collins<sup>23</sup>, Anne Ryan<sup>24</sup> and Bríd Connolly<sup>25</sup> were chosen as representatives of the adult education epistemic community in NUIM Maynooth. John Coolahan and Tom Collins were academic advisors to DES in the preparation

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<sup>19</sup> I requested individual interviews with Pauline Gildea and Des O' Loughlin, but that request was not granted.

<sup>20</sup> Ned Costello became an Assistant Secretary at DETE around the time he completed work on the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning and ultimately became CEO of the Irish Universities Association.

<sup>21</sup> Seán Ó Foghlú was appointed Assistant Secretary of DES in 2007.

<sup>22</sup> John Coolahan was Professor of Education in NUIM, advisor to the Minister for Education on both the Green Paper and White Paper on Education. He is also an OECD education policy expert.

<sup>23</sup> Tom Collins subsequently became Director of Dundalk Institute of Technology and then Professor of Education in NUIM.

<sup>24</sup> Anne Ryan was a senior lecturer in NUIM and appointed the first Professor of Adult Education in Ireland.

<sup>25</sup> Bríd Connolly, a lecturer at NUIM, was Treasurer of AONTAS and subsequently became its Vice President.

of both the Green and White Papers, while Anne Ryan was invited by DES to become a member of the White Paper team. Bríd Connolly, in addition to being a member of the NUIM epistemic community, was also Treasurer and Vice President of AONTAS.

### **3.2.4 *Drawing on Personal Experience***

Action research is critical reflection by the researcher on personal practice (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002). This idea of reflecting critically on one's own practice is philosophically linked to the thinking of Dewey (1916), Freire (1996) and Giddens (1994). My experience as a manager, teacher and policy entrepreneur in the VEC sector has contributed to the analysis of the adult education policy process since 1997. Reflecting on that experience through the lens of policy theory and the Irish policy process contributes to my capacity to draw on that experience in this research. Reflection is one of the research tools identified by Ryan (2006), discussed earlier in this Chapter.

I was able to link policy theory to the specifics of adult education policy making practice. For example, I could relate the rivalry between DES and DETE to my experience as a member of the Interdepartmental Committee on the establishment of TRBDI (DES, 1996). I (naively) expected, when I joined that Committee, that all the Departments involved would support the Government decision to implement the TRBDI proposal. I quickly learned that the principal objective of the line Departments involved was to ensure that they protected their budget and defended their turf even though the proposal involved activities within their remit. I also learned that within that overriding parameter some members were willing and did contribute to the work of the Committee.

The main difference between action research and reflecting on past experience is simply one of timing. In action research the researcher is researching while practicing. Action research is:

...simply a form of self reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of those practices and the situation in which these practices are carried out.

(Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 162; cited in Mc Kernan, 1996: 4)

The researcher's subjectivity is a factor in evaluating a piece of research. My career, until my retirement in 2005, was in the VEC system. As a teacher and administrator,



I was interested and involved in curriculum development and education policy initiatives. I was also involved in voluntary organisations at community, county, regional and national levels (Murtagh, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1996), which meant that I had only very limited knowledge of the training domain of adult education. It is also relevant to point out that the VEC was sometimes in competition with FÁS in the training domain.

The community is important in my philosophy. But while the individual should have regard to community welfare (Putnam, 2000), the community also needs to consider the welfare and development of each individual. The State should reflect this in its laws, institutions and approach to policy. To achieve that objective, the State should decentralise decision making and policy implementation to sub-national and community/neighbourhood levels. Linked to the importance of the community and sub-national as well as national decision making, is the notion of justice promoted by Rawls (1971), who recognises equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes. Christianity, a sense of Irish identity characterised by a love for the Irish language, an empathy with rural Ireland and social inclusion are also important to me. My educational philosophy is based on a democratic approach inspired by Freire and Dewey.

I used action research to reflect critically with colleagues on the practice of adult education in North Tipperary Vocational Education Committee while working there. The shared reflection took place in meetings with the senior management team and in ongoing discussions with the Adult Education Officer and other professionals. The process was recorded in the minutes of meetings and in policy documents. At national level, it involved analysing adult education policy through sharing and reflecting as a member of the Irish Vocational Education Association Adult Education Forum. My reflections on the policy making process are now retrospective and involve examining adult education policy making in the light of my experience informed by policy theory.

### **3.3 Reflections on Methodology**

The challenge presented at the start of this Chapter was to identify research methods to unravel the complexity of adult education policy making. The challenge was increased because each adult education domain was at a different stage of

development in 1997 and added to by the fact that there has been no research in Ireland on the overall adult education policy process. The lack of research meant that there was no blueprint, data or narrative to build on, modify or refute.

The methods chosen to meet the challenges had to enable me to get beneath, behind and inside the official versions of adult education policy outlined in policy documents and public pronouncements. They also had to take account of the fact that it is people who make and implement policy and exercise personal, political, bureaucratic, institutional, and advocacy power during the process.

The challenge was met by devising an overall framework which divided policy making into stages and adult education into domains while adopting an evolutionary approach to policy making process. A range of research methods were used, including literature review, documentary analysis, interviews with policy elites and critical reflection, within that overall research framework.

The key to successfully meeting the challenge was to focus the research while using each of the chosen methods within the overall research framework. So the literature review on Irish adult education, while covering the general literature, drew heavily on the *Mid-term Evaluation of the Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2000-2006* (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004). This was because the evaluation provides comprehensive data on each domain of adult education. This data is not available elsewhere in a single comprehensive publication and is often ignored in public discourse on adult education policy. The data also covers a critical period of this study. The evaluation in the Mid-term Review located adult education within an evolving national policy framework and provided an independent assessment of the entire adult education policy process. It also revealed the significance of the lead role of DETE in exercising power through controlling the adult education narrative in the broader Irish public policy arena.

The focus in the interviews with policy elites, on the other hand, was on their analysis of the adult education policy process, the architecture within which policy was made, the relationships between and within organisations involved and the contributions of the people engaged in making and implementing adult education policy.

Documentary analysis meanwhile, focused on internal departmental documents. That focus was informed by data in published policy documents and interviews

(Keogh: interview). I tried to get behind the rhetoric in published documents and develop an accurate and comprehensive narrative of the adult education policy process. For example, the unpublished review of the National Adult Learning Council by DES demonstrated that the original proposals to establish the National Adult Learning Council in the White Paper (DES, 2000a) were flawed. However, the review also has to be seen in the context of a fundamental shift in thinking in DES. That shift in thinking arose out of the problem created by the Government in establishing the Interdepartmental Steering Committee on the publication of the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong* (DETE, 2002b), and the change in personnel in DES immediately before the National Adult Learning Council was suspended.

The overall research framework, the choice of an appropriate combination of research methods applied within that framework and a focussed use of the methods just outlined yielded valuable data. That data will help answer the research question, and is discussed in the next Chapter.



# Chapter Four

*From Euphoria  
to Despondency*

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the data so that the lessons from adult education policy making since 1997 can be identified and applied. The backdrop to the research is discussed first and subsequently four drivers of adult education policy are identified. The policy drivers, which frame the findings of the research, are each discussed in turn.

## **4.1 Backdrop to the Research**

The research methods outlined in Chapter Three allowed me to unravel the complexity of adult education policy making. They also contributed to answering the research question which is what lessons can be learned from the policy making process since 1997 to plan a better future for Irish adult education?

The immediate policy context for this study is the peripheral nature of Irish adult education reflected in its flawed institutional architecture. The peripheral status of the system is exacerbated by divisions arising from competition between the radical ideology of some adult education stakeholders and the State's neo-liberal project. Over shadowing these factors is the impact of the Irish public policy process on a peripheral policy sub system.

The background of wealth, decreasing relative levels of State expenditure on the public service and growing inequality provides a general backdrop for this study. Ireland became one of the wealthiest EU member states in the decade since 1997. "In 2006, Ireland had the second highest GDP per capita in the EU at 45.4 percent above the EU average" (CSO, 2008: 14). The economic background has shifted, however, recently with the economic downturn and worsening public finances. Given our recent history this is likely to lead to greater inequality in Irish society.

Despite our wealth, the OECD (2008: 21) pointed out that we were ranked 26<sup>th</sup> out of 28 OECD countries in 2005 for Government expenditure as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product. However, the level of inequality was increasing at the same time.

The National Economic and Social Forum claims:

We now have a wealthier but more unequal society with the richest 20 percent of our working age population earning 12 times as much as the poorest 20 percent – one of the highest levels of market income inequality among OECD countries.

(NESF, 2006: ix)

Ó Riain, in describing the impact of State policy during the Celtic Tiger, concurs. He argues that: “tax cuts, spending gaps and deregulated markets have created a deeply unequal society in Ireland” (2008: 179).

## **4.2 Identifying the Drivers of Adult Education Policy**

### **4.2.1 *High Level Approach Adopted***

I identified a number of policy drivers from the data to help answer the research question. Inevitably, the research question led me to themes generated by the mistakes in the policy process identified by interviewees, internal documents, formal evaluations and published documents. The focus is on mistakes because it is more difficult to admit them and learn from them than to trumpet successes. For this reason, I believe that identifying mistakes will contribute more to planning a better future than analysing successes (Handy, 1993: 16).

Identifying policy drivers from the data involved two steps. The first was to identify themes from the policy literature as well from literature on the status of adult education in Ireland in 1997. The status of adult education in 1997 is important because it defines the public policy priority, resources and structures of the system at that time. The Irish public policy literature on the other hand, describes and examines policy, planning and delivery mechanisms used by the State. These mechanisms establish the parameters within which adult education policy is made and implemented. The second step was to identify specific policy drivers that define the adult education policy process.

### **4.2.2 *Themes from the Literature***

Themes from the international policy literature are discussed first, followed by those from Irish public policy and adult education literatures. The international policy literature highlighted the way the State can exercise power through its political and bureaucratic systems. Irish policy literature revealed the role adopted by the State and locates that role in a policy theory framework. The Irish State is a capitalist, western style, centralised democracy, organised on the Westminster model, which is

heavily influenced by membership of the European Union. Ireland is at the centre of the political ideological spectrum. The Irish State can have a centre, centre-left or a centre right ideological orientation depending on the make-up of the Government at any one time.

The organisation of the Irish State is dominated by the Government. Like most western democracies, the State operates a lead Government Department system for public policy making. I have highlighted this as it emerged as an important issue for adult education policy.

Membership of the European Community also influences Irish public policy. The Government designated certain Departments to manage aspects of EU policy. In that context, DETE is the lead Department for EU human resource policy and is also responsible for the administration of the European Social Fund in Ireland. Consequently, all EU human resource policy, including adult education, is managed on behalf of the State by DETE. Because National Development Plans initially attracted significant EU funding, DETE is also the lead Department for the human resources dimension of the National Development Plans. These operational arrangements influenced the development and implementation of Irish adult education policy. As Ó Foghlú (interview) argues, DETE has the final say on the education dimension of the National Development Plan.

Other notable features of the Irish public policy making process include the dominance of Coalition Government, the Strategic Management Initiative and Social Partnership. This corporatist approach adopted by the State has led to seven Social Partnership Agreements since 1987 (Hastings, Sheehan and Yeates, 2007).

A dominant theme in Irish adult education literature is the fragmented nature of the adult education. System fragmentation is reflected in three separate adult education domains with each domain at different stages of development. These domains also operate from different ideological positions, ranging from the market driven ideology of the training domain to the transformative ideology of community education. Fragmented adult education provision was also an outcome of the dysfunctional adult education institutional architecture described in Chapter Two.

### **4.2.3 Themes from the Interviews, Documents and Critical Reflection**

A number of themes emerged from the interviews, documents and critical reflections. These themes focus on aspects of adult education policy making, so that lessons can be identified to facilitate more effective policy making in the future. The themes reveal the drivers of the adult education policy process since 1997, which are:

- (i) the Irish public policy process;
- (ii) the silo approach to adult education policy by DES and DETE and the institutional rivalry between them for control of the adult education policy agenda;
- (iii) the management of adult education policy making by DES; and
- (iv) adult literacy policy.

An analysis of the data from each of the policy drivers forms the core of this Chapter.



## 4.3 First Driver of Adult Education Policy - The Irish Policy Process

The role of the Irish public policy process in adult education policy making is reviewed in this section by analysing the impact of Coalition Government, National Development Plans, Social Partnership Agreements, the core Departments of State and the dysfunctional adult education institutional architecture.

### 4.3.1 Coalition Government

Coalition Government is now the norm in Ireland. Its political impact on adult education policy is considered in this section by examining how the general principles underpinning Coalitions affected adult education policy since 1997. In that year the Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrat Government became the fourth consecutive Coalition elected in Ireland since 1989 (Uí Mhaoldúin, 2007: 45).

Elgie and Fitzgerald (2005: 243-4) identified four factors that influence the policy process in a coalition:

- (i) the Taoiseach's power of appointment is restricted; it is shared with the leaders participating in the coalition;
- (ii) in office the representatives of the coalition partner may be in a position to shape the policy of the departments that they head;
- (iii) it may also mean that the Tánaiste becomes a significant political actor; and
- (iv) if the Taoiseach rides roughshod over the concerns of the coalition partner, then the Government runs the risk of collapse.

These factors influenced adult education policy making during the life of the Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrat Coalition which was 10 years in office. Mary Harney, leader of the Progressive Democrats, was Tánaiste as well as Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment in the Coalition Government from 1997 until 2004. Consequently, she had leverage in adult education policy. Her political power as Tánaiste and Minister were strengthened by her excellent relationship with Charlie McCreevey, the Minister for Finance. Collins (2006:185) argues that:

The relationship between Harney and McCreevey, based as it was on a shared analysis of the economic system as well as personal friendship, was the foundation-stone of Ahern's first government. In the early days of the coalition one senior Fianna Fáil advisor expressed his astonishment that the real axis of this government was Charlie McCreevy and Mary Harney.

Some of her power derived from the fact that the survival and cohesiveness of the Government was important to Fianna Fáil. Harney also had considerable rapport with the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern (Collins, 2001: 301) given the fact that he put great emphasis on Government stability. He learned a bitter lesson from the collapse of the Fianna Fáil/Labour Coalition in 1994. Downing (2004: 130-140) suggests that ... “on 15 December 1994, Bertie Ahern was sitting shell-shocked on the Opposition benches looking at John Bruton’s election as Taoiseach and “both privately and publicly...this loss of power hurt like hell”.

Harney’s exercised her power in the day-to-day running of Government through

a system of informal meetings between the party leaders [which] has sometimes operated to circumvent unnecessary argument at cabinet. These meetings finalise the cabinet agenda and generally ensure that issues that are not capable of immediate resolution between the parties do not appear on the agenda until a compromise has been reached.

(Farrell, 1993: 538, cited in Connolly, 2005)

The lead Department for the education domain was DES. Micháel Martin, Fianna Fáil, was Minister for Education and Science from 1997 to 1999, when he was succeeded by Michael Woods. Both DETE and DES had Fianna Fáil Ministers of State with responsibility for Labour Affairs and Adult Education respectively.

Another political factor affecting adult education policy is the party affiliation of Ministers. Connolly (2005: 331) argues that:

...the party affiliation of a Minister has a definite bearing on the policy programme pursued in a given department, although allowances must always be made for the fact that some Ministers are more effective than others in bringing their policy ideas to fruition.

(Laver and Shepsle, 1994; cited in Connolly, 2005: 331)

DETE, led by the Tánaiste and the leader of the Progressive Democrats, was, therefore, in a powerful position to influence adult education policy making in the 1997 Coalition Government. DES, with a Fianna Fáil Minister, was politically weaker in the institutional rivalry for hegemony over adult education policy, given the Taoiseach’s emphasis on Government stability and the excellent relations between the Tánaiste and the Minister for Finance. The influence of DES in adult education policy was weakened further in 1999, when Michael Woods, who was coming to the end of his career, replaced Micháel Martin, a rising star in Fianna Fáil (Collins, 2001: 301, 331).

The power of DETE was also enhanced by the excellent working relationship between Harney and her Secretary General, recognised as an effective civil servant (Costello: interview). Collins (2006: 19) notes:

Harney had one very important asset in the Department of Enterprise and Employment [sic]: the secretary general, Paul Haran, was not only one of the brightest young civil servants in the system, he was also sympathetic to her political perspective...His energy and intelligence were a vital asset to Harney as he helped deliver on an agenda that went far beyond her own Department.

DETE was in a powerful position *vís a vís* DES to control the adult education policy agenda from 1997 to 2004. This was because of the dynamics of coalition Government, the determination of Bertie Ahern to maintain stability following his 1994 experience and the close relationship between Mary Harney and Charlie McCreevy. DETE power was counterbalanced somewhat by the dynamism and capacity of Micháel Martin, while he was Minister for Education and Science. DETE power was largely unfettered during the time Michael Woods was Minister and until Noel Dempsey was appointed in 2002. From the perspective of adult education policy making, DES was very weak during the crucial period from the end of 1999 to 2002.

There is some evidence that the civil servants in DETE were conscious of this powerful position, in the way they emphasised the role of the Tánaiste in exchanges between the Departments (DES, 1998d). While the data in this Section relates to the particular circumstances that pertained in adult education from 1997 to 2004, it also highlights the importance of the political dimension of the Irish policy process discussed in Chapter Two. The political factors at play in the adult education policy process were: (i) the impact of Coalition Government (ii) the status and relationships of the Minister(s) in the lead Departments with the Taoiseach, the Minister for Finance and the leader of the junior partner in a Coalition (ii) the capacity of the Minister and the Secretary General of a Department as well as the capacities of the Ministers of State.

### **4.3.2 *The National Development Plan***

National Development Plans are a feature of Irish public policy since 1989, when a process was initiated to prepare Ireland's submission to the EU for structural funding. The submission informed the *EU Community Support Framework 1989-93* for the development and structural adjustment of the regions whose development is lagging behind (Commission of the European Communities, 1990). The EU and Irish

Government planning processes were integrated in 1994 when the first National Plan, covering 1994-1999, was prepared. A further refinement happened in preparing the 2000-2006 Plan, when the Social Partners were “comprehensively” consulted (Collins *et al.*, 2007: 67).

There are some activities, integral to the national development planning process, which provide useful data for researchers. The activities include an ex-ante evaluation (an evaluation before the plan is prepared), annual progress reports on the implementation of the plan, an independent mid-term review (a review in the middle of the period covered by the plan) and an ex-post evaluation of the plan (an evaluation at the end of the period covered by the plan). The approach to public policy making just described recognises the importance of evaluation, which was discussed in Chapter Two.

This section focuses on the 2000-2006 National Development Plan (Department of Finance, 1999b) and the *Operational Programme for Employment and Human Resource Development* (DETE, 2000a) which is part of the Plan. The focus on the 2000-2006 Plan and its Operational Programme, arises from the centrality of both to adult education policy in the decade since 1997. There is more emphasis on the Operational Programme in this study because it spells out the details of the Plan through the implementation measures. The Annual Implementation Reports on the *Operational Programme* and the *EHRDOP 2000-2006 Mid-Term Evaluation* (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004) provide valuable data on how the adult education policy proposals were implemented. Where appropriate, I also draw on my professional experience in reflecting on the Plan. This experience, as described in Chapter Two, is as an actor in adult education policy and a policy entrepreneur.

Preparation of the 2000-2006 Plan started in 1997 and continued until the end of 1999 (Kelly: interview). It was published in 2000 and implemented from 2000-2006. The lifecycle of the Plan coincides with the adult education policy making decade being researched. The Plan and its *Operational Programme for Employment and Human Resources Development 2000-2006* (EHRDOP) provides a comprehensive statement of adult education policies and implementation measures during the first seven years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The only important adult education measure not included is the provision of self-financing part-time courses in second and third level educational institutions.

#### 4.3.2.1 *The Significance of the National Development Plans for Adult Education Policy Making*

National Development Plans are more important as policy instruments than White Papers, National Employment Action Plans or Reports such as the Taskforce Report on Lifelong Learning. There are two reasons for this. Policy proposals in the National Development Plans are allocated a budget to cover the life of the plan (Department of Finance, 2007a: 15-26). The guarantee of funding over a seven year period (in normal economic circumstances) facilitates long term planning. It also provides a sounder basis for planning than the annual estimates process. A policy proposal, without a budget, is simply a pious aspiration.

National Development Plans are also important because policy proposals have to compete with others from across the public service for inclusion in the Plan. Proposals have an automatic public policy priority once included. The competition for inclusion short-circuits direct negotiations on the budgetary aspect of policies in a White Paper with Finance and at the Cabinet table.

The importance of the National Development Plan as an adult education policy instrument is reflected in the *EU Memorandum on Lifelong Learning: Response to the Irish Consultation Process* (DES, 2001b: 11):

The strategy to respond to the challenges presented by the priority needs for Lifelong Learning, in relation to available resources, is outlined in the *National Development Plan (NDP), 2000-2006*. It sets out an ambitious and coherent development strategy supported by a fully quantified multi-annual investment commitment in the areas of infrastructure development, education and training, the productive sector and the promotion of social inclusion.

*The White Paper* (DES, 2000a: 200) acknowledges the importance of the *National Development Plan 2000-2006* (Department of Finance, 1999) in its final sentence:

The programme of change and development set out in this White Paper will be implemented on a phased basis in light of the resources made available in the context of the National Development Plan and the annual Estimates for Public Services provisions.

The adult education proposals in the Plan have resources attached to them, while those not included have to compete in the Annual Estimates for the Public Service process.

The White Paper team was conscious of the importance of the 2000-2006 Plan, published in November 1999, nine months before the White Paper. Internal

documents and interviews show that the Principal Officer of the Further Education Section was aware of its significance and ensured that adult education policy priorities were included (Kelly: interview).

Section 2.11.3 of the White Paper (DES, 2000a), which provides the policy context for adult education, lists initiatives funded through the Plan and their indicative budget (DES, 2000a: 58-9). It is worth noting that the adult education policy proposals in the White Paper contained in the 2000-2006 National Development Plan were implemented. Proposals not included, such as those on structures and the putting in place of a generic training programme for adult educators, were not successfully implemented or have not been implemented to date (DES, 2000a:150-54; Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004: 209-236).

The key lesson from the analysis of the impact of the National Development Plan 2000-2006 is that adult education stakeholders need to understand and actively engage in the process for the three years before the Plan is published and throughout its lifespan. Adult education stakeholders should pay particular attention to the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme (DETE, 2000a) and to the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Operational Programme (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004). In my experience, the requirement to understand and engage in the entire national development planning process is not appreciated by most adult education stakeholders.

My professional experience bears out this lack of understanding and engagement with the process. I was only generally aware of the significance of the National Development Plan and the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme as funding mechanisms and providers of overall policy direction for adult education while a CEO and an officer of the IVEA. I recognised the need to be familiar with the Plan, but I did not understand the importance of engaging in policy making by participation in the national development planning process through appropriate representative bodies. Even the level of appreciation I had was largely driven by my experience as a member of the team which made the case to Government for the Tipperary Institute. However, I did not understand how to influence the preparation of National Development Plans, the significance of the Human Resource Operational Programme and its Mid-term Evaluation until I started this research in 2002. I was not even aware of the importance of the Mid-Term Evaluation and the annual implementation reports before then.

Given my own lack of understanding, I was not surprised that most members of the National Guidance Forum were not conscious of the significance of the NDP 2007-2013 process in 2005 and 2006, while preparing the National Guidance Strategy (National Guidance Forum, 2007). The Forum prepared a submission to the 2007-2013 National Development Plan when the importance of the process was explained. Had the Forum not made the submission and lobbied to have its broad policy recommendations included in the 2007-2013 National Development Plan, the chances of being implemented would have been considerably lessened.

#### *4.3.2.2 Adult Education in the Employment and Human Resource Development Operational Programme 2000-2006*

Adult education policy forms part of the 2000-2006 National Development Plan through: (i) the Employment, Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2000-2006 (DETE, 2000a) (ii) Social Inclusion and Community Measures in the Border Midlands and Western Region (2000) and the Southern and Eastern Region Operational Programmes (2001) and (iii) EU Community Initiatives (DES, 2000a: 58-59; DETE, 2003a: 24-25).

The significance of NDP Operational Programmes for adult education policy continues in the 2007-2013 National Development Plan (Department of Finance, 2007) where adult education policy is outlined in the 2007-2013 NDP under the headings of: (i) the Human Capital Priority (ii) Social Inclusion Priority and (iii) the Enterprise, Science and Innovation Priority (Department of Finance, 2006: 189-205, 248-250, 252-4, 260-67).

This section focuses on the 2000-2006 Employment and Human Resources Operational Programme (EHRDOP) and the Mid-term Evaluation of the Programme because of their importance in adult education policy. They contain the most comprehensive statement of adult education policy during the period covered by this research supported by a seven year budget. An overview of the EHRDOP is provided in Table 2 under the priorities: (i) Employability (ii) Entrepreneurship (iii) Adaptability (iv) Equality (v) Infrastructure and (vi) Technical Assistance. Tables 2-7 in Appendix S show the measures funded under each Priority by domain, lead Department, Implementation Body, Budget, and Recommendations on funding arising out of the Mid-term Evaluation to assist the reader in understanding how adult education policy was accommodated in the National Development Plan. I have

shown these tables in the Appendix rather than in the body of the text to provide the reader with an overview of the EHDOP. However, the detail is shown in Appendix S to give important information on adult education provision during the decade covered by this research.

Measure	Planned Spend (€million)	Percentage of overall spend
Employability	7,677.44	54.00%
Entrepreneurship	641.88	4.50%
Adaptability	3,369.90	23.70%
Equality	20.79	0.15%
Infrastructure	2,507.81	17.60%
Technical Assistance	8.94	0.05%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,226.76</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

*Table 1 Summary of planned expenditure by Priority – EHRDOP 2000 – 2006<sup>26</sup>*

Table 1 shows that the direct market-led priorities: (i) Employability and (ii) Entrepreneurship account for 58.5 percent or €8.319 billion of the total EHRDOP expenditure. Adaptability, an indirect market priority, represents 23.7 percent or €3.369 billion of the budget. The Adaptability priority is aimed at moulding individuals to labour market needs rather than preparing them directly for the market.

A combination of the three market-led priorities accounts for 82.2 percent of the entire Human resources Development budget or €11.369 billion. These figures clearly demonstrate that the EHRDOP is market driven. The message becomes clearer when you drill down to the individual measures under each priority shown in Appendix S. Surprisingly even general measures such as early education, school completion, early literacy, traveller education, Youthreach, school guidance and third level access come under the heading of Employability while BTEI and the National Adult Literacy Strategy are funded under Adaptability. This market-led paradigm for adult education is supported by DETE and the entire training domain. The paradigm is also probably supported by senior management in DES. However, it is contested by many others in the education domain and the vast majority of those in community education.

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<sup>26</sup> Source: Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004: 11.



It could be argued that senior management in DES was pragmatic and succeeded in achieving significant funding for education, including adult education, through the EHRDOP that it would not have otherwise received. The argument goes that this pragmatic strategy does not impact on the nature of the education system. However, there is a price to be paid for pragmatism. The price, as commentators like Fleming (2004), O' Sullivan (2005) and Connolly (2007) have argued, is the increased marketisation of adult education and a move away from its democratic principles and transformative possibilities.

The data in Table 1 and in Tables 2-7 in Appendix S supports the claim made earlier that the 2000-2006 EHRDOP (DETE, 2000a) is more important than the White Paper (DES, 2000a), the National Employment Action Plans (DETE, 1998-2004) and the Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (DETE, 2002b) for adult education policy. The reasons for the assertion are:

- (i) It ultimately controls the entire adult education system because the Operational Programme (OP) determines the adult education measures to be funded, the allocation per measure and the reallocation of funding through annual reviews and the Mid-term Evaluation. While the lead Department for the measures is involved in the policy process, the final decision on the Operational Programme is made by the Managing Authority (DETE).
- (ii) The OP covers all domains and programmes except self-funded adult education courses in the education domain;
- (iii) The organisation of the OP reflects the existing adult education institutional architecture and therefore re-enforces the silo approach to adult education policy by DETE and DES. For example, the OP supported the continuation of a Local Employment Service under the remit of DETE and an Adult Guidance Service under the remit of DES serving the same geographical areas (Tables 2-6; Appendix S).
- (iv) The fragmented nature of the adult education system is also maintained. Analysis of the data reveals instances of similar programmes delivered under different measures by different Government Departments and agencies. An example is the Youthreach/Travellers provision by VECs (Table 3) and the early school leavers' provision by FÁS (Table 2). The dichotomy is masked in the 'measure description':

The Department of Education and FÁS have developed a series of measures to meet the needs of early school leavers. These were developed in 1998 and 1999 to include foundation training places.

(Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004: ii)

- (v) It emphasises an economic paradigm in adult education policy through the allocation of funding and its policy priorities, which are predicated on improving the capacity of the labour force (DETE, 2000b: 63). As Table 1 shows 82 percent of the expenditure is on employment related activities. While social inclusion forms part of the OP it is as a means to employment.
- (vi) There is a clear implementation strategy supported by annual implementation reports and the Mid-term Evaluation. This is in contrast to the White Paper on Adult Education (DES, 2000a) which did not have a general implementation strategy. The parts of the White Paper (DES, 2000a) that were implemented were implemented through the 2000-2006 EHRDOP (DETE, 2000a).
- (vii) The Mid-term Evaluation, which forms part of the implementation strategy, impacts on adult education policy through its capacity to recommend the re-allocation of finance from one measure to another to the Monitoring Committee and to recommend important policy changes such as a fundamental restructuring of the Community Employment Scheme (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004: 211). The nature of the re-allocation is shown in the right hand column of Tables 2-7 in Appendix S.
- (viii) The financial implication of the OP is very significant for adult education both in terms of the total spend and the prioritisation of expenditure. Most of the €7.6 billion budget for the Employability Priority is allocated to adult education of which €2.1 billion is for Community Employment Programmes. The biggest single measure under Adaptability is the Back to Education Initiative with an allocation of just over €1 billion. The next biggest Adaptability measure is the National Adult Literacy Strategy at just over €100 million. The low priority accorded to the National Adult Literacy Strategy in the budget is surprising.

The State was shocked by the results of the International Adult Literacy Survey in 1997, which showed that approximately 500,000 adults had literacy issues. The total

allocation for adult literacy in the OP was €101.2 million (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004). The proposed expenditure on agricultural training measures, during the same period, was about 20 percent less while spending on tourism measures (excluding full time third level courses) was almost 80 percent greater at €187 million. This situation begs the question about the priority given by the State to adult literacy policy. It also begs the question about the impact the low 1997 funding base for literacy and the marginal nature of adult education had on the expectations of DES in seeking the NDP funding needed to tackle the literacy problem.

### **4.3.3 Social Partnership**

So far this section has examined data on the impact of Coalition Government as well as the National Development Plans and its *Operational Programme for Employment and Human Resources Development 2000-2006* on adult education policy making. Data on the role of Social Partnership in Irish adult education policy since 1997 is considered next.

Social Partnership, as we saw in Chapter Two, involves the Government, employers, the trade union movement, farming organisations and the voluntary and community pillars, negotiating pay as well as social and economic policy. Agreements are made through “a combination of consultation, negotiating and bargaining” (NESC, 1996: 66).

Partnership Agreements (1996, 2000, 2003 and 2007) have reframed the lifelong learning discourse to promote the social inclusion and economic dimensions of adult education. The agreements, listed below, helped shape the broader adult education policy framework with the National Development Plans and the National Employment Action Plans as well as the *White Paper* (DES, 2000a) and the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b). The titles and duration of the agreements are (O’ Donnell and Thomas, 2006);

- Partnership 2000 for Inclusion Employment & Competitiveness (1997-2000);
- Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2001-2003);
- Sustaining Progress (2003-2005); and
- Towards 2016 (2006-2015).

*Partnership 2000*, negotiated at the end of 1996, is considered first.

#### 4.3.3.1 *Partnership 2000*

The adult education policy agenda for the White Paper on Adult Education (DES, 2000a) and the White Paper on Human Resource Development (DETE, 1997) was influenced by four of the five themes underpinning *Partnership 2000*. The Agreement also created a broad policy framework within which adult education policy makers operated. The four themes are – competitiveness (p 61), social inclusion (p 17), equality (p 29) and modernisation of the public service as a contribution to competitiveness (p 67). An analysis of the adult education policy documents, published after the agreement, reveals the influence of these themes.

Two examples, in particular, illustrate the point. The framework for and core principles of adult education policy contained in *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education* (DES, 2000a: 28, 30) explicitly refer to “competitiveness” and “cohesion”, which encompasses “social inclusion” and “equality”. *The National Employment Action Plan’s* (DETE, 2004) opening Chapter on the economic, social and political context refers to “competitiveness” (p 8) and “social cohesion and inclusion” (p 14). Modernisation of the public services influences the policy process through the Public Services Management Act (1997), the Strategic Management Initiative and the work practices of public servants (Kelly: interview).

Specific adult education measures in *Partnership 2000* (Government of Ireland, 1996) include:

- strengthening the Community Development Programme of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (p 25);
- targeted employment and education measures, active labour market and adult education policies, including reviewing the Community Employment and Pilot Part-Time Jobs Programmes, as well as further development of the Local Employment Service (p 20-2). In the education domain both Youthreach and VTOS are to be expanded, and the learning from the EU Initiative, Youthstart, is to be mainstreamed;
- providing for lifelong training and education (p 7, 38);
- developing a business-led approach to training policy (p 59);
- development of a certification system under TEASTAS<sup>27</sup> (p 39); and
- a review of training by Teagasc (p 57).

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<sup>27</sup> A national certification authority was established on an ad hoc basis by the Minister for Education in 1995. It was the forerunner of the National Qualifications Authority (O’Sullivan, 2005).

The social inclusion and equality measures include the Community Development Programme and targeted 'employment and adult education measures'. Competitiveness measures are the promotion of lifelong learning, developing a business-led approach to training, the development of the certification system and reviewing training by Teagasc. It is worth noting that lifelong learning and mainstream training are depicted in the document as part of the competitiveness theme, while the other adult education proposals form part of the social cohesion theme. This supports the assertion, by commentators such as Connolly (2007) and Fleming (2004), that the state has co-opted adult education and the lifelong learning banner in support of competitiveness and the economy.

The themes of competitiveness, social inclusion, equality and the modernisation of the public service have dominated Irish public policy since 1997 and impact on the adult education policy process (National Development Plans 2000-2006, 2007-2013, Social Partnership Agreements 2000, 2003, 2007; Annual National Employment Action Plans 1998-1995; National Reform Programme 2005-2008; Green Paper on Adult Education, 1998; White Paper on Adult Education, 2000; Taskforce Report on Lifelong Learning, 2002).

There is tension in these key public policy documents between social inclusion and the employment/competitiveness role of adult education. Commentators like O'Sullivan (2005) and Kirby and Murphy (2008) argue that competitiveness is the dominant paradigm. There are two basic arguments that the State uses to support its social inclusion policy. At one end of the spectrum, there is an emphasis on social inclusion because it is just and fair, while at the other end the emphasis is on social inclusion to ensure an adequate supply of a qualified and well educated labour force in a competitive global economy (adaptability). The emphasis will vary according to the philosophy of the lead Department and relevant section in the lead Department that has responsibility for preparing the particular policy document. The lifelong learning discourse provides a convenient cloak for the social inclusion or competitiveness discourses.

#### 4.3.3.2 *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Government of Ireland, 2000) was issued in the same year as the White Paper on Adult Education but it was finalised at the end of 1999 (FOI: Department of the Taoiseach). Its overall aim is to keep the

economy competitive, provide the basis for further economic prosperity, improve the quality of life for all, and “bring about a fairer and more inclusive Ireland” (Government of Ireland, 2000: 3).

The core objective of the Programme is to build a fair, inclusive society in Ireland based on:

- (i) a dynamic and competitive economy in a rapidly changing world;
- (ii) full employment and the effective elimination of long-term unemployment;
- (iii) equal opportunity;
- (iv) lifelong learning;
- (v) adaptation to the information society;
- (vi) the promotion of research and development;
- (vii) balanced sustainable development between and within regions and between urban and rural areas;
- (viii) an entrepreneurial culture; and
- (ix) Ireland playing its full part in the European Union and the international community.

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Government of Ireland, 2000: 4) consists of five operational programmes: (i) ‘Living Standards and Workplace Environment’, (ii) ‘Prosperity and Economic Inclusion’, (iii) ‘Social Inclusion and Equality’, (iv) ‘Successful Adaptation to Continuing Change’ and (v) ‘Renewing Partnership’. The Agreement acknowledges the existence of the two conflicting objectives of competitiveness and social inclusion as discussed in the previous section. It justifies using both approaches:

It is necessary to work towards the creation of a society in Ireland which responds effectively to the constantly evolving requirements of international competitiveness understood as the necessary condition of continuing economic and social success. At the same time, the Programme recognizes that there is a reciprocal relationship between competitiveness and social inclusion. Competitiveness helps to generate the resources to enhance social inclusion, increased social inclusion facilitates enhanced competitiveness.

(Government of Ireland, 2000: 47)

This Agreement builds on the main themes of *Partnership 2000* and adopts a similar framework to the 1998 EU Employment Action Plan Guidelines (National Employment Action Plan, DETE, 1998: 1). That framework involves (i) living standards and workplace environment, (ii) improving employability, (iii) developing

entrepreneurship, (iv) encouraging adaptability in businesses and their employees, and (v) strengthening the policies for equal opportunities. This is yet another example of the way Irish and EU policies dovetail and how Irish public policy documents re-enforce one another.

*Partnership 2000* (Government of Ireland: 1996), the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Government of Ireland, 2000) and the *National Development Plan 2000-2006* (Department of Finance, 1999) together with the *EU Employment Guidelines* (1997) set the broad policy parameters within which adult education policy was developed in the White Paper (DES, 2000a) and the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (DETE, 2002b).

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Government of Ireland, 2000) played a decisive role in maintaining and further exacerbating the already dysfunctional adult education institutional architecture by proposing that:

... a strategic framework for lifelong learning will be developed through the publication of a White Paper on Adult Education early in 2000’.

and

as a priority...the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will establish a Lifelong Learning Task Force in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science.

The proposals were among the recommendations under the fourth operational framework “Encouraging Adaptability in Businesses and their Employees” (p 113).

The publication of the White Paper and the establishment of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning appear to be the mechanism chosen by the Ministers for Education and Science and Enterprise, Trade and Employment to avoid conflict between Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats on an institutional architecture for adult education.

Such mechanisms to resolve differences are encouraged in the Cabinet Handbook (Department of the Taoiseach, 1998). Departments should evaluate arguments as comprehensively as possible and the maximum degree of agreement between Ministers and between Departments should be established prior to submission of memoranda [for Government] to avoid wasting the time of Government in seeking to establish facts or reconcile differences. In particular, Ministers and Secretaries General of Departments should involve themselves personally in sorting out, as far as possible, not only differences as regards to policy, but differences as to

administration, staffing, legal and constitutional implications, etc., before memoranda are submitted to the Government.

The chosen mechanism seems to have provided a political compromise for the Taoiseach and Tánaiste (who was also Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment) on the future architecture of adult education. The compromise was facilitated by the administrative ingenuity of DETE in proposing the Taskforce in the 1999 *National Employment Action Plan* (DETE, 1999a: 20) and securing its acceptance in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Government of Ireland, 2000: 113).

The recommendation to publish the White Paper and establish the Task Force cemented the silo approach to adult education policy by DES and DETE. This was despite the use of the rhetoric of “in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science” in published documents (Kelly: interview; DOL: correspondence; DES, 2000c). The rhetoric aims to gloss over the institutional rivalry between the two departments and at tying DES into the establishment of the Taskforce.

The compromise facilitated DETE in re-taking the lead role in adult education policy which it reclaimed on the publication of the White Paper (DES, 2000a). It is not clear whether the Social Partners appreciated the full implications of the proposal to establish the Task Force during the negotiations on the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Government of Ireland, 2000). Freedom of Information requests to establish the policy process that approved the establishment of the Taskforce, while the White Paper was nearing completion, were only partially granted. The information released contains a summary of the submission by ICTU, which quotes from NESC (1999: 271), to support the development of a strategic framework for lifelong learning. The information given did not include the minutes of the meeting where the decision to establish the Task Force was made (Appendices A (6) and A(7) ).

The compromise, which facilitated the publication of the White Paper and the establishment of the Taskforce led to frustration in the Further Education Section of DES. A DES official; argued “but when the Taskforce came along we felt we needed it like a hole in the head” (Kelly: interview). The decision also led to a significant duplication of effort between the two Departments, a diversion of resources to protecting turf, a truncation of the White Paper process to three meetings (DOL: 8),



confusion on the part of stakeholders and a later, second compromise on structures following the publication of the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b: 10).

While the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Government of Ireland, 2000) was the vehicle for formalising the establishment of the Taskforce and cementing a stove pipe approach to adult education policy, it did contribute directly to the development of adult education policy. The contribution is evident from examining its impact on the White Paper (DES, 2000a). The Agreement argues that the role of adult education involves “contributing to competitiveness through labour market policies, investing in lifelong learning” and “integrated competition and social inclusion policies that recognise the reciprocal relationship between competitiveness and social inclusion” (p 47).

The following elements of the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (2000) influenced the White Paper. Recommendations concerning the community domain were:

- developing community involvement in and provision of education (p112);
- introducing a dedicated social economy programme targeted at disadvantaged communities (p 91); and
- reforming the National Employment Service and shifting the emphasis in Active Labour Market Programmes to training (p.116).

The Social Economy Programme will partly replace the Community Employment Scheme and is a resource for community organisations. It could be argued that the reform of the National Employment Service has nothing to do with community education. However, the reform involves linking the Local Employment Services, which had a community input, with the national service.

The next set of recommendations in the Agreement concern training and include:

- supporting enterprise led approaches, such as that embodied in the Skillsnet<sup>28</sup> initiative, in consultation with management and unions/employees (p 59);

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<sup>28</sup> Skillnets are enterprise-led training networks funded through the National Training Fund and operated by Skillnets Ltd (Institute of Public Administration, 2007: 362).

- supporting in-company training to develop the skills of management and employees to best international practice (p 59);
- FÁS to review vocational training programmes for people with disabilities “with a view to achieving a more integrated mainstreamed approach” (p 101); and
- the review of agricultural training will be completed.

There is a strong focus on enterprise-led training and the enhanced role and funding for Skillsnet is an important policy initiative. This significance is recognised in the White Paper (DES, 2000 a: 129) which notes that:

...the *National Training Networks Programme* launched by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in 1999...provides £12.7 million over a three year period for employer-led training initiatives for small and medium enterprises. The aim of the initiative is to develop sectoral networks to bridge skills gaps, so that groups of companies can share best practice, discuss common problems and pool resources towards purchasing or developing common training solutions. A company called *Skillnets Ltd* has been established to oversee the programme.

There are community education and Freirian dimensions to Skillsnets, which also form part of the 1999 National Employment Action Plan (DETE, 1999: 41-2). The essence of Skillnets is to support training networks within particular types of businesses or sectors. “Each network delivers training, upskilling and professional development programmes for its members that are enterprise led and designed to specific industry needs” (Skillnets, 2009).

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Government of Ireland, 2000) made the following proposals for the education domain:

- implement a Back to Education Initiative (p 110).
- rapidly expand the adult literacy services (p 111);
- strengthen and consolidate the Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centre Programme (p 110);
- establish a national Adult Guidance Service (p 111);
- review PLC provision (p.111); and
- participation by mature and disadvantaged students at post second-level will be encouraged (p 111).

These proposals are included in the White Paper (DES, 2000a), published eight months later and in the National Employment Action Plan (DETE, 1999: 16; 2000:

22-23) and, EHRDOP 2000-2006, DETE, 2000a). It is worth noting that the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* was published in January 2000, the National Development Action Plans' documents were published in Spring 1999 and 2000, the White Paper in July 2000 and the EHRDOP in September 2000.

A number of observations can be made on the nature and extent of direct adult education measures in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* and indeed on the Irish public policy process. The first is that many of the measures in *Partnership 2000* (Government of Ireland, 1996) are repeated in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Government of Ireland, 2000). There is a much greater emphasis on social inclusion, community education and equality than in *Partnership 2000*. This is partly because the Community and Voluntary Pillar, strong advocates of such measures in public policy, were now more experienced in Social Partnership, having participated in Partnership 2000 and being involved on Partnership and EU monitoring and evaluation committees. One observer noted that "the Community and Voluntary Pillar involvement in partnership and monitoring led to much more rigorous monitoring (Kelly: interview).

Most of the policy recommendations in the White Paper (DES, 2000a) are included in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Government of Ireland, 2000). That fact is not surprising given that they were being developed at the same time and published within eight months of each other. However, it is also a reflection of the complex tapestry and duplication in the Irish policy process. I can well imagine that hard-pressed, senior public servants resort to the cut and paste functions on their computers during these overlapping processes.

The nature of the public policy process also confers enormous power on Government Departments such as DETE, which is the lead for the National Employment Action Plans and the human resources aspect of the National Development Plan. Being lead Department and having close operational links to business and trade unions confers leverage to DETE in the negotiation that is part and parcel of Social Partnership Agreements. In these circumstances it is no surprise that SIPTU championed the establishment of the Taskforce during the partnership negotiations in November 1999 (FOI - Department of Taoiseach – part release: Appendix A6/A7).

The many strands, processes and sequencing in Irish public policy making highlight the necessity for adult education stakeholders to understand and engage in every

strand, process and cycle of Irish public policy making. The White Paper team met for the first time in late December 1999. I wonder what the reaction of adult education stakeholders would have been if they understood (or were engaged enough to care about) the real impact of the partnership proposal to establish the Taskforce agreed the previous month.

#### 4.3.3.3 *Sustaining Progress*

The successor to the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* was *Sustaining Progress* (Government of Ireland, 2003). The themes of the two previous partnership agreements underpin *Sustaining Progress* (Government of Ireland, 2003) with environmental sustainability added (*Sustaining Progress: Foreword*). Other emerging issues in the Agreement include migration, interculturalism and workplace learning. The competitiveness and social inclusion dualism is maintained. The emergence of Workplace Learning as an important adult education site is a noteworthy aspect of *Sustaining Progress*

*Sustaining Progress* focuses on what is necessary to make the economy:

- competitive in a changing world;
- environmentally sustainable;
- efficient through finding and implementing appropriate market and regulatory regimes in different areas; and
- socially acceptable.

(Government of Ireland, 2003: 6)

Social inclusion is stressed. “A central theme of this Agreement is the building of a fair and inclusive society” (p 8) “...and to ensure that people have the resources and opportunities to live life with dignity and access to the quality public services that underpin life chances and experiences” (p 15).

In addition to the “overall scope of the Agreement” ten special “cross-cutting” initiatives will be undertaken. The relevant initiatives for adult education include (i) “Migration and Interculturalism”, (ii) “Long-term Unemployed”, (iii) “Vulnerable Workers and those who have been made Redundant”, (iv) “Tackling Educational Disadvantage – Literacy, Numeracy, Early School Leaving” and (v) “Including Everyone in the Information Society” (p 23).

Many of the proposals are concerned with implementing policy decisions in the *White Paper* (DES, 2000a), the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b) as well as the *National Employment Action Plans* (DETE: 1998-2004). The proposals in *Sustaining Progress* can be categorised as structural and programme development proposals. The structural proposals under the heading of “Adaptation to Continuing Change” include the implementation of the Report of the *Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b: 50-51). A second development is “the establishment of a National Office for Equity of Access to Third Level Education” (p 51).

The Government decision to establish the Steering Committee as the “overarching structure to co-ordinate, review and report on the implementation of the framework set out in this report and the recommendations underpinning it” (*Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b: 10), is endorsed by the Social Partners. The compromise, which facilitated the publication of the White Paper (DES: 2000a) and the establishment of the Taskforce, gets the official blessing of the partnership process.

The Government and the Social Partners agree that those recommendations of the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* as agreed by the social partners, together with the *White Paper on Adult Education*, now provide the strategic framework within which lifelong learning should be progressed. Work on implementing the recommendations of the Task Force will be progressed as a strategic priority as resources permit, overseen by a Steering Committee chaired by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The National Adult Learning Council [recommended in the White Paper (2000)] provides a mechanism for social partner participation in this policy area.

(Government of Ireland, 2003: 51)

The overall lifelong learning policy framework outlined in *Sustaining Progress* includes the Steering Committee, the National Adult Learning Council and the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs as well as the National Office for Equity of Access to Third Level Education and the National Qualifications Authority.

The programme developments for adult education in *Sustaining Progress* identified were:

- *Migration and Interculturalism*
  - Literacy and language training for adult minority linguistic groups will be expanded as resources become available (p 26);
- *Social Inclusion*
  - Support disadvantaged communities (p 56);

- *Equality*
  - An integrated strategy to improve the participation and achievement of Travellers at every level of education (p 60); and
  - A management information system will be developed to track the participation of different groups in Further Education to support targeting of resources and evidenced-based decision making (p 61);
- *Equal Opportunities*
  - A review will be carried out of the impact of moving responsibility for training people with disabilities from the Department of Health and Children to the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment in 2000 (p 82-3);
- *Develop Work Place Learning through:*
  - the implementation within available resources of the recommendations of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning as agreed by the social partners;
  - the development of innovative action through initiatives such as Skillnets and the adult literacy budget;
  - ensuring that the National Training Fund achieves its full potential in supporting training in the workplace; and
  - the development of an appropriate framework on competencies and qualifications (p 84).

#### 4.3.3.4 *Towards 2016*

Three years later, *Towards 2016* was negotiated and is currently in place. *Towards 2016* is an attempt by the social partners to engage in strategic corporatist planning. There is a systemic shift in the Agreement towards focusing on the needs of the individual during the life cycle and away from the community as a fundamental grouping in Irish society. The objectives of *Towards 2016* (Government of Ireland, 2006: 5) are:

- “nurturing the complementary relationship between social policy and economic prosperity;
- developing a vibrant knowledge-based economy;
- re-inventing and repositioning Ireland’s social policies;
- integrating an Island-of-Ireland economy; and
- deepening capabilities [of individuals], achieving higher participation rates [by individuals] and more successfully handling diversity, including immigration”.

The basis for achieving these objectives agreed by the social partners is:

a dynamic, internationalised, and a participatory society and economy with a strong commitment to social justice, where economic developments is environmentally sustainable and internationally competitive.

(Government of Ireland, 2006: 10)

The key policy instruments to achieve the objectives of *Towards 2016* (Gov. of Ireland 2006: 11) are (i) the new National Development Plan 2007-2013; (ii) the National Spatial Strategy; (iii) National Action Plan on Social Inclusion; and (iv) at EU level, the revised Lisbon Agenda to which Ireland subscribes and through the National Reform Programme<sup>29</sup>, that is prepared under it.

The underlying principles in the National Development Plan identify education as a priority “with an emphasis on a knowledge economy and investing in human capital with a focus on upskilling early school leavers, literacy, lifelong learning and with particular emphasis on retraining those with least educational attainment” (*Towards 2016*: 23). The *National Action Plan on Social Inclusion* builds on the *National Anti-Poverty Strategy* published in 1997, while the *National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020* (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2002) has been largely ignored by the State (Collins and Cradden, 2007: 70).

Despite the emphasis on social policy, the central objective of *Towards 2016* is outlined in the first paragraph on macroeconomic policy which argues (Government of Ireland, 2006: 14):

The overriding focus and priority, in pursuit of the overall objectives as indicated in chapter 1, is to build a strong economy and society by maintaining a supportive macroeconomic policy framework in order to enhance productivity and competitiveness.

Investment in human capital (not social capital) and adapting the education and training systems is a factor in promoting enterprise. Other factors include innovation and productivity (p.16), investment in science, technology and innovation (p.17) and developing the knowledge society (p18). In the introduction to Section 17 on ‘Education and Training’, a reference is made on the need to ensure “an integrated approach to addressing skills needs across the education and training sector, addressing barriers to access and progression, the issue of lifelong learning and tackling early school leaving and literacy and numeracy issues” (p 31). This is

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<sup>29</sup> The National Reform Programme incorporates the National Employment Action Plans and is prepared every three years. The first programme is from 2005-2008. The lead Department for the Plan is the Department of the Taoiseach.

another example of the rhetoric that cloaks the reality of a twin track approach to the education and training domains of adult education policy.

The outcomes expected from education and training (p 31) include:

- “substantially reduce literacy problems...in the adult population;
- learning opportunities targeted at vulnerable groups and those in disadvantaged communities with low levels of educational attainment;
- roll out of measures under the DEIS initiative for educational inclusion;
- further development of second chance educational measures for vulnerable groups;
- drive the lifelong learning agenda by enhancing access to training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognised qualifications and progression to higher level qualifications;
- development of a National Skills Strategy which will map out the skill needs of the economy to 2020 with a particular emphasis on qualifications leading up to level 7 of the National Qualifications Framework; and
- increased focus on integration of services and partnership working at national, regional and local level”.

*Towards 2016* represents a shift in the balance of the dual competitiveness/social inclusion paradigms of the State and the Social Partners towards competitiveness and the market economy. In adult education policy terms, the shift is achieved by locating labour market policies in a lifelong learning framework. The vision for “people of working” age identifies the need to focus on workplace learning as part of lifelong learning and on the “activation” of those who are unemployed (Government of Ireland, 2006: 51). Activation is an innocuous phrase for coercing the unemployed into the workforce through “introducing an active case management service for social welfare customers of working age”, “supporting lone parents into employment” (*Towards 2016*, 2006: 51) and using the FÁS Pathways Programme and High Supports Process (DETE, 2004: 17).

The shift towards competitiveness is copper-fastened into the future through the commitment in *Towards 2016* to:

Formulating a national skills strategy, which will put in place a strategic framework for the implementation of [the] skills and training strategy, into the medium term. This strategy will recognise the respective roles of the public and private sectors with the emphasis of the former on where the market fails, including the low-skilled.

(Government of Ireland, 2006: 50)

This Social Partnership Agreement, covering a ten year period, is a comprehensive statement of adult education policy. However it lacks the theoretical and philosophical underpinning of the White Paper (DES, 2000a). Neither the *Report of*



*the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b) nor the *White Paper on Adult Education* (DES, 2000a) is mentioned in *Towards 2016* (Government of Ireland, 2006). As there is so much important data on adult education in the Agreement, I have included the detail in Appendix R.

Although Social Partnership has served adult education well, it contributed to the structures' debacle and failed to satisfactorily address statutory paid learning leave for workers and the payment of a grant for fees for part time adult education students. The failure occurred despite the fact that proposals to resolve the issues were proposed in *The Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b: 39, 48-50). Social Partnership was unable to overcome the veto power of employers on paid learning leave and that of DES on the payment of grants to adult education students attending part time courses (DETE files, DES files, *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning*: DETE, 2002b). Some progress was made on the fees issue with agreement in *Towards 2016* (Government of Ireland, 2006: 88) to establish a pilot project.

It is worth reflecting on the theoretical implications of the policy shifts and the reformulation of adult education policy in *Towards 2016*. The policy changes represent a move towards the market paradigm from a social inclusion paradigm and a shift to strategic long-term planning. *Towards 2016* also includes a comprehensive statement on adult education.

Corporatism is now more embedded in the Irish policy system by the strategies and structures put in place or recommended in *Towards 2016* (Government of Ireland, 2006: 10-11). The partnership ideal is strengthened at national and local levels through planning, legislation, training and other supports (p 74-76). However, the partnership process has its limitations, as revealed in two interesting failures in adult education policy discussed earlier. Partnership can also be used by participants to progress actors' hidden agendas.

Partnership Agreements are becoming more sophisticated. *Towards 2016*, with a ten year planning cycle (2006:10), adopts a lifecycle approach (2006: 40) as does the National Development Plan 2007-2013. *Towards 2016* also emphasises gathering data (p 77, 88, 99, 103, 117, 136). It is more prescriptive on implementation and values research which this study argues is an important part of policy making.

New Public Management theory, discussed in Chapter Two, permeates *Towards 2016*. Three themes – (i) ‘Public Service Modernisation’ (14, 113-37), (ii) ‘Better Regulation’ (p.17-18, 21, 71, 104), and (iii) ‘Governance’ (p. 12, 28, 48, 59, 60, 66, 70, 71, 75), as well as economic prosperity and social inclusion underpin the Agreement. The Strategic Management Initiative (the Irish version of New Public Management) has a key role in *Towards 2016* through being linked to pay increases (2006:114).

Sustaining Progress set out an extensive agreed programme of measures designed to achieve improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery. This programme built on the progress achieved in modernising the public service through the Strategic Management Initiative/Delivering Better Government in the Civil Service and similar frameworks in other sectors. The public service must continue to modernise and at a faster rate than heretofore if it is to continue to meet the expectations and requirements of our increasingly sophisticated, complex and diverse society. The parties reaffirm their full commitment to the further development and accelerated implementation of modernisation frameworks in each sector of the public service in order to secure the flexibility required to achieve the highest international standards.

and

The pay increases provided for in this Agreement are predicated on co-operation in the areas of modernisation and flexibility set out in Sections 28 to 32 of this agreement. It is agreed by the parties that implementation of such initiatives in the areas of flexibility and change will not give rise to claims for increased rewards for staff in the form of promotions, re-gradings, allowances or other benefits.

Adult education is presented as a stove pipe process, involving education and training (Government of Ireland, 2006: 31, 50). The twin track (silo, stove pipe) nature of adult education is concealed by the rhetoric of integrating the approaches to education and training (Government of Ireland, 2006: 31):

The National Reform Programme highlights key priorities in the context of ensuring an integrated approach to addressing skills needs across the education and training sector, addressing barriers to access and progression, the issue of life-long learning and tackling early school leaving and literacy and numeracy issues.

This statement should be viewed with a certain amount of scepticism in light of similar statements in public policy documents on adult education and the actions of the Government in 1999, 2000 and 2002, discussed earlier.

The partnership process was unable to resolve conflict over important adult education policy proposals in the Task Force Report (DETE, 2002b). One proposal was the granting of paid/statutory learning leave. The employers, represented by

IBEC and the Chambers of Commerce, vetoed such leave (DETE files on Task Force process, 2000-2002). Despite this, the *Taskforce Report* (DETE, 2002b: 52) recommended that the Government “commit to the introduction of statutory learning leave”. However, the “modalities” had to be worked out by the social partners. Because the social partners could not agree, statutory learning leave has not been approved by Government to date and in the present economic climate is unlikely to be approved in the medium-term.

A second recommendation in the *Report of the Taskforce* (DETE, 2000b) is the abolition of part time fees at third level. The recommendation was resisted by DES, just as it was during the White Paper (DES, 2000a) process (Minute of meeting of TMG 11 November, 1999). Some limited progress has been made on part-time fees through Partnership, with agreement that “a targeted fund will be put in place to alleviate the fees in public institutions for part-time courses at third level for those at work who have not previously pursued a third level qualification” (Government of Ireland, 2006: 88).

The Partnership process had some capacity to facilitate a solution to the part-time fees issue when the policy proposal was being resisted by a Government Department. It did not have the same capacity to resolve policy conflict in adult education when the employers’ side vetoed a policy proposal from DETE.

#### **4.3.4 Role of the Core Departments**

We have examined the role of Coalition Government, National Development Plans and their Human Resources Operational Programmes as well as Social Partnership on adult education policy making. The role of the Departments of the Taoiseach and Finance, which are the ‘core departments’ of Government is examined next (OECD, 2008: 95).

The Departments of the Taoiseach and Finance play a central role in the management of public policy, including ‘cross-cutting’ issues (Whelan *et al.*, 2003, 60, OECD, 2008: 66). While the Social Partnership process facilitated adult education policy development in community education, second chance education, training for the socially excluded and for those in employment, the core departments

of Government (Connolly, 2005: 331) were unwilling or unable to manage the critical issue of the institutional architecture for adult education.

There were two factors at work that facilitated the silo approach to adult education policy and the dysfunctional institutional architecture to remain largely intact. The first was the priority given by the Taoiseach to the stability of the Coalition Government. Though there was disagreement between DES and DETE about control of adult education policy, the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste allowed the dysfunctional adult education architecture to remain in place by opting for compromise and failing to nominate a Department to take the lead role for adult education policy. The compromise was to give both Departments a role rather than insisting on a sensible, co-ordinated structure for adult education with a designated lead Department. The policy priority was Coalition stability rather than institutional planning for a marginal policy sector.

It is likely the compromise was accepted because of the low priority of adult education and because powerful players in education such as the teachers' unions were not too concerned about what was happening in adult education policy<sup>30</sup>. Consequently, the Government probably felt that the unions would not create controversy on the structures' question. In the DOL diaries there is no record of the Teachers' Union of Ireland meeting with DES Officials on the Green Paper or the White Paper. The only occasion the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland met DES on the White Paper was to try to ensure that additional adult education officers were not assigned to VECs (DOL, 1-17).

The second factor that facilitated the continuance of the silo approach was the political relationship between the two line Ministers (at DES and DETE) and the Minister for Finance, Charlie McCreevey. As we saw earlier, Mary Harney had a good personal relationship with Charlie McCreevey and shared a similar free-market ideology with him. As a result DETE was in a strong position in institutional rivalry with DES. The fact that Michael Woods, rather than the dynamic Micheál Martin, was Minister for Education and Science at the time White Paper was being finalised, made matters easier for DETE. In all the circumstances, DES was probably glad of

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<sup>30</sup> A partial exception to this however, was the Teachers' Union of Ireland, which was concerned about the staffing of Post Leaving Certificate Courses. However, these were mainly located in second-level schools.

the compromise. If DES insisted on a resolution, the likely outcome would have been that all adult education policy would become a function of DETE.

The Department of the Taoiseach was the lead Department for the Social Partnership Agreements, negotiated triennially with the Secretary General of that Department in the chair (Hastings, Sheehan and Yeates, 2007: 34). The Further Education Section of DES and the Labour Market Policy Section of DETE had both to ensure that adult education policy proposals got on the Partnership agenda.

Adult education was no different to any other public policy process in terms of administrative relationships with Finance. Finance influenced the process through controlling budgets and the sanction of appointments (Kelly: interview, NALC files). As an example, the Department of Finance insisted that a statement be added to the White Paper (DES, 2000a: 200; internal files):

The programme of change and development set out in this White Paper will be implemented on a phased basis in the light of the resources made available in the context of the National Development Plan and the Annual Estimates for Public Service provision.

In the case of the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b), no additional finance was sought by DETE nor provided to implement the recommendation of the Report (internal DETE files). It could be speculated that this might be the price paid by DETE for approval to establish the Taskforce, even though there is no evidence of this in the files.

The Department of Finance controls staffing and budgetary allocations for all Government Departments – “...the Department of Finance retains authority in decision-making on departmental numbers (a ‘political issue’) and departmental compensation (an ‘administrative issue’),” (OECD, 2008: 114). When a Department is implementing policy proposals agreed by Government, it has to negotiate the budget detail and staffing with Finance. Internal DES documents reveal the challenges faced by the Adult and Further Education section negotiating the implementation of the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), the appointment of Community Education Facilitators and the establishment and staffing of NALC with Finance (DES files obtained under FOI). The challenges faced by the FE section were exacerbated by the low priority accorded to adult education by senior management in DES, which lead to delays in establishing NALC, appointing

Community Education Facilitators and rolling out the Back to Education Initiative (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004: 209-230).

#### **4.3.5 Overview of the Impact of the Irish Public Policy Process on Adult Education Policy Making**

The second part of this Chapter analysed the impact of the Irish public policy process on adult education. A constant theme has been the emphasis by policy makers on competitiveness, on the one hand, and social inclusion and equality on the other. The question of whether competitiveness or social inclusion is the dominant paradigm is important for adult education policy and State policy.

The question leads us back to the role of the State discussed in Chapter Two. The argument in Ireland is really about whether the State primarily sees itself as a 'competition state' as argued by Kirby and Murphy (2008) or not as claimed by Ó Riain (2008). Kirby and Murphy (2008: 121) assert that:

the concept of competition state describes more accurately the nature and operation of the Irish state in the era of the Celtic Tiger, since it prioritises goals of economic competitiveness over those of social cohesion and welfare.

The implications of the competition state for social inclusion are that:

domestic social security policy is subordinated to the economic needs of international competitiveness. Low levels of taxation and wage moderation limit the state's capacity to fund social security more generously and create pressure for spending cuts. Public goods, especially those related to social justice and redistribution are increasingly privatised or subject to profit criteria.  
(Kirby and Murphy, 2008: 128)

The features of the competition state are regulation, retrenchment, residualisation and activation/conditionality as Kirby and Murphy argue. Regulation involves new public management regulatory frameworks which enable "government to steer but not row" (Cerny P., Menz, G., Soederberg 2005: 17). Retrenchment means that "fiscal pressures lead countries to short-term cost containment and cost avoidance". Residualisation involves "reducing welfare recipients' dependency on the State, employment is prioritised as a route out of poverty, at the expense of redistributive and egalitarian objectives". Finally, activation/conditionality is about moving from a policy of "passive income maintenance...to active spending on training and education". Through a combination of incentives and punishments (love or fear), income support "is more conditional and linked to obligations to participate in the labour market" (Kirby and Murphy, 2008: 129).

The analysis of adult education policy in the *Employment and Human Resource Development Operational Programme 2000-2006* (DETE, 2000a), the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b) and the more recent Partnership Agreements, shows how powerful and influential the 'competition state' emphasis is on public and adult education policy.

Ó Riain (2008: 166, 169, 170) accepts the existence of the competition state, but argues that it "imposes a single logic upon what remains a complex world of creative negotiation of governance challenges posed by globalisation". The competition state is but "one of a number of competing projects within the state system – projects that combine strategies for accumulation, legitimation and institutionalisation". This has led to a "variety of struggles taking place over the character of state institutions".

These included:

- in industrial policy, an alliance between science and technology oriented state agencies, technical professionals and university constituencies;
- the extension, institutionalisation and legitimation of Social Partnership including the social welfare, education and social development systems;
- developmentalism and democratisation leading to state institutions which have "been central to the development that has taken place within the Irish state to date".

(Adshead, Kirby and Millar, 2008: 23)

However, other economic and social foundations of the Irish success have been "gravely threatened by the neo-liberal stories that Irish society and elites have told themselves of the successes of the past fifteen years" (Ó Riain, 2008: 184).

This thesis has placed an emphasis on the role of Social Partnership in adult education policy and the Irish policy system. The question needs to be asked: is Ireland a partnership state rather than a competition or developmental state?

O' Donnell (2008: 73) argues that "since 1987 Irish economic and social policy has been conducted by a form of negotiated governance". The focus of partnership deals with three types of policy – (i) macro-economic policy, (ii) distributional policy (iii) and structural or supply side policy. Interestingly, O'Donnell links the evolution of Partnership to the emergence of Coalition Governments and argues that it is "pushing Irish Government towards consistency in policy making and that there has been a state building dimension to it" (O'Donnell, 2008: 88-9).



Despite the successes of partnership, O' Donnell (2008: 86) points out that it is defined by and must operate within "the key aspects of the Irish state – its core political, administrative and legal order". He rejects the idea of Ireland as a partnership state and claims that instead "the 'partnership state' should be viewed as a practical project, with all the complexity and ambiguity that characterises collective experimentation, rather than a theoretical entity".

#### **4.4 The Second Driver of Adult Education Policy: The Impact of the Silo Approach to Adult Education Policy**

The Government Departments with responsibility for the majority of adult education provision adopted a silo approach to adult education policy, as we saw earlier in this chapter (DES, 2000a: 47)<sup>31</sup>. This section examines the impact of this approach on policy and also the related impact of DETE as lead Department for adult education policy for most of the decade under review.

The impact of DETE as lead Department for adult education policy is considered first. The primary impact was that DETE had a better understanding of the operation of adult education policy making in the Irish public policy making context than DES. There were a number of reasons why this is so. The first is the experience DETE gained as the lead Department for the human resource aspects of National Development Plans, the National Employment Action Plans and European Social Fund programmes (Fitzpatrick and Associates, 2004: 13; DETE, 2003a: 24). The experience gained meant that DETE had significant expertise in Irish and European policy making.

In addition the training system was organised within the Department so that the two sections responsible for adult education had ongoing access to senior management and the accumulated adult education expertise in DETE informed and was informed by overall departmental policy (Internal DETE files). Critically, the Department had the support of FÁS in its policy role. The support was provided by the Research and Development Unit, which produces annual labour market updates and regular labour market reviews (FÁS, 2003). The technical and professional support by FÁS to DETE is significant on Labour market issues (internal DETE files on Taskforce process). On the other hand, in contrast, the DES inspectorate provided very little policy support to the Further Education Section of DES (Kelly; DOL: 1-17). Finally, adult education mattered to DETE. (DETE, 2000c: Strategic Goal 3). The evidence from this research is that senior management in DES viewed adult education as a marginal activity.

The fact that DETE was designated by Government and the EU as the lead Department for Human Resource policy and also valued its training remit, meant that

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<sup>31</sup> Programmes under the remit of DETE are listed under 'Training Provision' and are delivered by FÁS.

it was likely to challenge any attempt by DES to be lead Department for adult education policy. The lead role in adult education policy for DES was implicit in the Government's decision to approve a proposal from it to prepare a White Paper on adult education. Institutional rivalry was inevitable in such circumstances and in circumstances where the Government would not decide on the lead Department for adult education.

The rivalry was about control of the policy agenda and the exercise of power to influence adult education policy decisions. Such rivalry was understandable because the adult education institutional architecture facilitated it. Carte blanche was given to both Departments to pursue sectoral interests and ignore exhortations to pursue 'joined-up thinking' in managing 'cross-cutting' policy issues when the Government did not address the adult education institutional architecture and opted instead for fudge cloaked in the discourse of co-ordination, integration and co-operation.

The compromise, which facilitated both Departments in pursuing their own interests, is surprising because, as Ó Foghlú (interview) notes, "there are good examples where twin-track<sup>32</sup> approaches in the area [cross-sectoral issues involving DES and DETE] have changed and are no longer twin track". The example is that DES was allocated the lead role in respect of qualifications and DETE was given the lead role in science policy (Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999; DETE, 2003a: 7).

The Government demonstrated a capacity to deal with 'turf' issues between these two Departments in the examples above. It can be speculated that the Government felt it could settle for a compromise in the case of adult education policy, because of its marginal status and because it was unlikely that there would be a concerted effort by powerful sectoral interest groups to insist on the Government nominating the lead Department.

Institutional rivalry between DES and DETE first manifested itself in this study in the formal response by the Tánaiste to the Memorandum for Government on the Green Paper (DES, 1998c, 13 November). The main area of disagreement was on "the

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<sup>32</sup> I used the phrase 'twin track' in the interview with Ó Foghlú. Other phrases to describe the phenomenon include the silo approach and the stove pipe approach.

paper's treatment of local structures". The response also argued that the need for "a specific [national] executive body in this area should be reviewed". DETE was concerned because a national executive body for adult education could challenge the FÁS national training hegemony. Local Adult Learning Boards, as envisaged, could give DES-controlled VECs local hegemony in adult education and challenge the role of FÁS at local level. The net effect of these recommendations in the Green Paper would be to move the institutional power for adult education policy from DETE to DES. This could happen once the recommendations in the White Paper became Government policy and were given legislative effect.

The next piece of evidence was revealed in the way the draft 1999 Employment Action Plan, prepared by DETE, was responded to by DES. The draft proposed the establishment of a lifelong learning working group (which later became the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning). DETE argued in the draft Employment Action Plan that a working group is needed because a clear strategic framework for lifelong learning is absent. In its response to the draft circulated by DETE in accordance with the Cabinet Handbook (Department of the Taoiseach, 1998), DES argues:

...that given the role of education in promoting a continuum of lifelong learning from early childhood through to and throughout adulthood, and the government's proposal to establish a National Adult Learning Council as an executive agency of the D/Education and Science, in consultation with the Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment, that the proposals of your Department to establish a working group in this area is inappropriate...and has major implications for education in the drawdown of future Structural funds. Furthermore it is inconsistent with the policy already published in the Green Paper.

(DES, 1999)

DETE strategy appears to be to regain the institutional ground it lost (as lead Department for adult education policy) when the Green Paper was accepted by Government in November 1998.

It took the first step in that direction early in 1999. DETE supported the concept of lifelong learning at a plenary session of the Social Partnership process and introduced the idea that it (DETE) intends to frame an Irish lifelong learning strategy in the context of the EU Employment Guidelines (Presentation to a Plenary Session of the Social Partners by John Walsh, Pat Nolan, Ned Costello and Frank Doheny to the April Plenary of Partnership 2000 on Enterprise Jobs and Small Business: April 22, 1999, obtained under FOI, Appendix A5).

Another piece of evidence was provided at a meeting on 16 December 1999 between officials from DES and DETE on the White Paper on Adult Education. At the meeting a DETE official pointed out that DETE intended to convene a broadly based committee on lifelong learning and that, therefore, the White Paper was untimely. There was a commitment in the *National Employment Action Plan 1999* (DETE, 1999) for a separate Forum for Lifelong Learning, which included the involvement of DES. DES responded by arguing that the Partnership 2000 talks did not take issue with DES finalising the White Paper (DOL: 8).

From the evidence obtained under FOI (Appendix A(6), A(7) ), it appears that the decision to approve the establishment of the Taskforce was taken at the Partnership talks on 25 November 1999. This decision effectively cemented the existing silo approach to adult education policy making for at least the lifetime of the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Government of Ireland, 2000).

The next piece of evidence of the institutional rivalry is the letter sent by the Principal Officer in the Employment and Training Strategy Unit of DETE to the Principal Officer in the Further Education Section of DES on a draft of the White Paper in May 2000.

The letter points out that:

Part three of Chapter 1 of the draft [White Paper] states that “while this Paper bridges the traditional divide between education and training, it does not aim to provide a policy blueprint for the training aspects of the field. It does seek, however, to ensure there is a fit and complementarity between education and training provision so as to ensure that the learner can move progressively and incrementally within an overarching co-ordinated and learner centred framework”. It is important that the Paper should adhere to this intention if there are not to be implications for training policy/provision. In this connection, there are a number of references in the document which as they stand could have this effect.

The statements which offended DETE occur in the terms of reference of NALC<sup>33</sup> and the LALBs<sup>34</sup> as well as the chapters on Workplace Learning<sup>35</sup> and ‘Continuing Education and Training’. These are the areas where there is rivalry between the two Departments for control of adult education policy. The letter concludes:

It is unclear as to why the LALBs are to be established under the VEC Act. Could this not be seen as compromising their autonomy? Also the Paper might locate the activities proposed for LALBs in the wider context of CEBs,<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> National Adult Learning Council.

<sup>34</sup> Local Adult Learning Board.

<sup>35</sup> It became Workplace Education in the published version of the White Paper (2000).

<sup>36</sup> County Enterprise Boards under the remit of DETE

ADMs,<sup>37</sup> Local Authority functions and the Activities of FAS/LES<sup>38</sup> and Social Economy Working Groups.<sup>39</sup>

The institutional rivalry meant that the declared objective of both Departments, articulated in adult education policy documents published since 1997, to develop an integrated and co-ordinated adult education service was not realised. The failure to develop an integrated approach to adult education policy arose partly because of the lack of a Government decision on who would be the lead Department. It was also because some of the adult education resources of both Departments were diverted to maintaining hegemony over adult education policy. These embedded practices of protecting turf continued in Government Departments despite the introduction of the Strategic Management Initiative in 1994. The strength of such practices is captured by Kelly (interview) who suggests:

...you see the White Paper on Human Resources came out in 1997 – so we couldn't presume to be treading on their territory – what we were doing was dealing with our own component.

Costello (interview) claimed that “there just wasn't a huge level of engagement between the two Departments”. It is also worth noting that, as he points out, “that there wasn't any animosity between the two Departments”. Both Kelly and Costello agree that there is now much more co-operation between them.

This silo approach to adult education policy meant that the capacities, abilities and experience of staff involved in the Green Paper and the White Paper teams, as well as the Taskforce, were mainly focussed on the domain of adult education controlled by their lead Department. This meant that attention was diverted from the broader objective of tackling the “boundary issues” in adult education (DETE, 2002b: 9).

Had the impressive capacities of the two Principal Officers, responsible for adult education policy between 1998 and 2002, been focused on developing adult education policy, rather than defending turf, the outcome might have been a more effective and integrated service underpinned by appropriate structures. Had a single adult education policy team been established in 1997, when the Green Paper process commenced, the institutional architecture proposals that emerged would have been subject to much more rigorous analysis. In such circumstances senior management in DES would have had to pay more attention to the adult education

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<sup>37</sup> Area Development Partnerships currently under the remit of the Department of the Taoiseach

<sup>38</sup> Local Employment Services under the remit of FÁS.

<sup>39</sup> Under the remit of FÁS.

policy making process and the debacle of suspending the National Adult Learning Council in 2003 could have been avoided.

#### **4.4.1 *Changes in the Lead Department Role for Adult Education Policy 1997-2007***

From 1997 to 2004, there was confusion about the lead Department for adult education policy. The confusion was exacerbated by the institutional rivalry between DES and DETE.

Table 2, on the following page, shows the main adult policy documents and their status each year in the decade since 1997 to demonstrate that three different Departments were lead Departments for adult education policy in that time. The establishment of the National Adult Learning Council and the Interdepartmental Steering Committee and their progress in each year since their establishment is also shown. The Table indicates the domain(s) and lead Department for each policy document and the structures proposed in these documents.

For example, the *White Paper on Human Resource Development* published in 1997, related to the training domain and DETE was the lead Department. The National Adult Learning Council (NALC) which was established in 2002 and DES was the lead Department. NALC was responsible for the education and community education domains of adult education and was also responsible, in theory, for the training domain.

Year	Policy Development Process	Adult Education Domain			Status	Lead Department
		Education	Comm. Ed.	Training		
1997	White Paper on Human Resource Development			✓	Published	<i>DETE</i>
	Green Paper on Adult Education	✓	✓	✓	Initiated	<i>DES</i>
	Green Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity		✓		Published	<i>DSFW</i>
1998	Green Paper on Adult Education	✓	✓	✓	Published	<i>DES</i>
	White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity		✓		Initiated	<i>DSFW</i>
	National Employment Action Plan (Annual)	✓	✓	✓	Published	<i>DETE</i>
1999	White Paper on Adult Education	✓	✓	✓	Initiated	<i>DES</i>
	White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity		✓		Initiated	<i>DSCFA</i>
	National Employment Action Plan (Annual)	✓	✓	✓	Published	<i>DETE</i>
2000	White Paper on Adult Education	✓	✓	✓	Published	<i>DES</i>
	White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity		✓		Published	<i>DSCFA</i>
	National Employment Action Plan (Annual)	✓	✓	✓	Published	<i>DETE</i>
	Task Force on Lifelong Learning	✓		✓	Initiated	<i>DETE</i>
2001	National Employment Action Plan (Annual)	✓	✓	✓	Published	<i>DETE</i>
	Task Force on Lifelong Learning	✓		✓	Ongoing	<i>DETE</i>
2002	National Employment Action Plan	✓	✓	✓	Published	<i>DETE</i>
	Task Force on Lifelong Learning	✓		✓	Published	<i>DETE</i>
	National Adult Learning Council (NALC)	✓	✓	✓	Initiated	<i>DES</i>



Year	Policy Development Process	Adult Education Domain			Status	Lead Department
		Education	Comm. Ed.	Training		
2003	National Employment Action Plan	✓	✓	✓	Published	DETE
	National Adult Learning Council	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing/Susp ended June	DES
	Interdepartmental Steering Committee	✓	✓	✓	Initiated	DETE
2004	National Employment Action Plan	✓	✓	✓	Published	DETE
	Interdepartmental Steering Committee	✓	✓	✓	Initiated	DETE
2005	National Reform Programme (Triennial)	✓	✓	✓	Initiated	Taoiseach/DETE <sup>40</sup>
	Interdepartmental Steering Committee	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing	DETE
	5 <sup>th</sup> Report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs	✓		✓	Initiated	DETE
2006	National Reform Programme Annual Report	✓	✓	✓	Published	DETE
	Interdepartmental Steering Committee	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing	DETE
	5 <sup>th</sup> Report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs	✓		✓	Ongoing	DETE
2007	National Reform Programme Annual Report	✓	✓	✓	Published	DETE
	Interdepartmental Steering Committee	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing	DETE
	5 <sup>th</sup> Report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs	✓		✓	Published	DETE

Table 2 The Operation of the Silo Approach to Adult Education Policy Making in Ireland between 1997 - 2007

<sup>40</sup> Department of the Taoiseach was the lead Department for the Overall Programme, while DETE was responsible for the Human Resource and Micro Economic Programme.

The Table includes community education. It is clear from internal documentation in DES and DETE that the Department of Social Welfare and its successors did not engage in institutional rivalry for control of adult education policy (internal DES and DETE files obtained FOI), though it did contribute to the policy process. For that reason the discussion in this section will focus on the continuing confusion for stakeholders and policy makers over whether DES or DETE was the lead Department for adult education policy.

The seeds for the confusion were sown in 1997, with the publication of *The White Paper on Human Resource Development* in May, by DETE. The cat was put among the pigeons following the general election with the appointment of a Minister of State for Adult Education at the Department of Education and Science.

That appointment, while positive for adult education in one sense, sowed the seeds for confusion because there was a disconnect between the definition of adult education accepted by the State (Department of Education 1995: 77) and the fact that the Minister, through his appointment at DES, had responsibility for the education domain. When the new Minister announced his intention to publish a Green Paper for adult education the question of which Department was to lead adult education policy making was certain to become an issue. This was particularly true, because the practice of appointing a Minister of State for Labour Affairs at DETE, with responsibility for the training domain, continued following the 1997 general election. In addition, as we have seen, DETE had just published a White Paper on Human Resource Development, focused on the training domain.

As Table 2 shows, the adult education policy making process became even more confused in 1998 with the commencement of the 'Annual National Employment Action Plan' process, Ireland's response to an EU initiative. The lead Department for this initiative was DETE because of its responsibility for EU human resource programmes. In outlining its future strategic direction the Plan aims to:

Promote a framework for lifelong learning which encourages individuals to access quality education and training on an ongoing basis. This requires new flexibilities within the education system in terms of the availability of a mix of full-time and part-time options and more systematic provision for and funding of adult education.

(DETE, 1998: 10)

However, the institutional rivalry and the consequent confusion became manifest in 1999, during the National Employment Action Plan policy making process for that year. Despite the fact that the Green Paper, published months earlier (DES, 1998b: 114-124), recommended the establishment of a National Learning Council and Local Adult Learning Boards, the *National Employment Action Plan* (DETE, 1999a: 20) argued:

The range of education and training initiatives set out under the relevant guidelines of this Action Plan, together with the initiatives which will flow from the forthcoming White Paper on Adult Education, all constitute a substantive input to lifelong learning in the context of the broad definition which has been adopted.

It then recommended:

a broader strategic framework which provides the basis [for] the further development and expansion of lifelong learning activities, particularly outside the initial education domain. In that regard, D/ETE proposes to set up a working group or “think tank” in collaboration with D/ED & SC, to develop the framework and define participation targets within the context of the Employment Guidelines.

The use of the phrase “collaboration” is rhetoric to cloak the rivalry between the two Departments.

The year 2000 was chaotic for the adult education policy process and illustrates the overlapping and competing functions of DES and DETE. The White Paper team was completing its work from January to June, while at the same time the Task Force met three times (DOL: 8, 9; Minutes of Taskforce on Lifelong Learning: FOI: Appendix A 4). The National Employment Action Plan was published in spring by DETE while the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2000-2006 (DETE, 2000a) was published in September.

The duplication and waste of resources involved in these separate processes is considerable. It was particularly wasteful and contrary to sensible planning to have the Taskforce and White Paper processes running in parallel. No wonder Kelly (interview), in referring to the Taskforce, said “we need it like a hole in the head” and Ó Fohglú questioned “how the Taskforce would focus on specific groups of adult learners, and how the Department of Education’s White Paper on Adult Education will overlap with the work of the Taskforce” (Minutes of meeting of Taskforce 18 February, 2000).

The compromise, which allowed the publication of the White Paper and the establishment of the Taskforce was an agreement to develop a “strategic framework for lifelong learning”, through the White Paper and the Task Force (Government of Ireland, 2000: 13). It was also a political compromise by a Coalition Government.

Chaos returned in 2002, with the establishment of the National Adult Learning Council in March, recommended in the White Paper (DES, 2000a). The Council, under the remit of DES, had an objective “to promote co-ordination of the work of participating bodies within an agreed national strategy and policy framework....” A few months later, the *Report of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b) was published, and an Interdepartmental Steering Committee led by DETE was established as an overarching structure for adult education policy. The Interdepartmental Steering Committee was to oversee the work of the National Adult Learning Council.

The net result was that there was one broadly representative national body (NALC) under the remit of DES responsible for adult education policy and another (Interdepartmental Steering Committee) responsible for adult education policy under the remit of DETE. To make matters more confusing the Interdepartmental Steering Committee was to oversee the work of NALC “who will have the task of co-ordinating, reviewing and reporting [to the Steering Committee] on the implementation of the framework set out in this [Taskforce] report” (internal memo by the Assistant Secretary, DETE to Minister for Labour Affairs: 7 November 2002: obtained under FOI).

If the institutional architecture for adult education was considered dysfunctional in 1997 the situation was not improved by this debacle. Matters were to get worse as Table 2 shows. NALC was suspended and met for the last time in June 2003. It was eventually disbanded in 2008 as a token contribution by DES to the rationalisation of State agencies. The Interdepartmental Steering Committee however continued to meet. In the absence of NALC, however, it was only in a position to receive progress reports on in implementing the Taskforce recommendations. These recommendations did not have a budget attached to them.

The confusion created by the Government decision to establish the Interdepartmental Steering Committee and the decision by DES to suspend NALC is evident when the question is posed which Department has overall responsibility for adult education

policy in 2003 or for that matter in 2008. The situation outlined in Table 2, described in this section, reveals confusion about which Department was responsible for adult education policy. The situation was brought about because many adult education policy processes were running in parallel and by the failure of the Government to make a decisive decision about nominating a lead Department for adult education policy. This led to confusion among policy makers on the one hand and to frustration by other stakeholders. The situation also led to a waste of resources and lost opportunities for adult education.

#### **4.4.2 The Survival of the 1997 Institutional Architecture**

The dysfunctional adult education institutional architecture of 1997 survived 10 years of a concerted adult education policy process. The architecture survived despite the earlier policy documents acknowledging it as an issue for adult education (*Report on the National Education Convention, 1994; White Paper on Education, (Department of Education, 1995, White Paper on Human Resource Development (Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1997)*). Adult education policy documents published since 1997 have also acknowledged the problem and have made proposals to rectify it (DES, 2000a: 27; *DETE, 2002b: 9*).

The nature of the institutional architecture for the three domains of adult education is discussed next, starting with education. This is followed by an analysis of the reasons behind the dysfunctional architecture within each domain.

##### **4.4.2.1 Institutional Architecture of Each Domain**

The education domain was the Cinderella of the Irish education system and was the responsibility of DES. For example, in the university sector there was no Professor of Adult Education, no undergraduate courses and mature students were thin on the ground in 1997. White claims that in 1995 only 2.5 percent of students in universities were over twenty five (White, 2001: 271). The Cinderella status was reflected in its fragmented organisation in DES, where the management of the service was spread across five sections and three divisions (Department of Education, 1996: 9-11). There was no single national body with overall responsibility for adult education planning and service delivery.

On the other hand, the training domain was a core activity of DETE, the lead Department, and was properly located within the departmental structures (DETE files, 1998-2006). FÁS, a statutory body, was the national agency responsible for the delivery of general training (Government of Ireland, 1987). In 1997, FÁS had a budget of almost £480 million (FÁS, 1999: 39). The very strength of DETE, while positive for the training domain, contributed to the overall dysfunctionality of adult education.

Sectoral training was a core activity of a number of other Government Departments. Some of these had statutory agencies under their remit with a training role. The relevant Department with the agency under its remit in 1997 is shown below<sup>41</sup>:

<i>Department</i>	<i>Agency</i>
<b>Agriculture and Food</b>	<i>Teagasc</i>
<b>Tourism and Recreation</b>	<i>CERT, ADM</i>
<b>Health and Children</b>	<i>NRB, An Bord Altranais</i>
<b>Marine and Natural Resources</b>	<i>BIM</i>
<b>Justice, Equality and Law Reform</b>	<i>Prison Service</i>

A further string to the bow of DETE in the training domain is its role as the managing authority for the EU Social Fund, which includes funding for adult education. As part of the role policies and reports on EU human resource policy are prepared by DETE, in consultation with the relevant Departments (Laffan, 2005: 171-188). DETE is also responsible for the Employment and Human Resource Development Operational Programme of the National Development Plans (ESRI, 1997: 214; Collins *et al.*, 2007: 68). It is responsible too for the Productive Sector Operational Programme of the National Development Plan (Collins *et al.*, 2007: 68). In addition, DETE managed the preparation of the annual National Employment Plans (DETE, 2003: 24), submitted to the EU. These lead roles gave it powerful leverage in adult education policy since 1997. Finally, the community education domain had no lead Department and its management was spread across several Government Departments. It was in a very weak structural position *vis a vis* both DES and DETE.

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<sup>41</sup> Green Paper (1998: 59-63).

#### 4.4.2.2 *Why the Institutional Architecture Survived*

This section outlines the reasons the institutional architecture remained intact after 10 years of policy making, during which adult education policy makers proclaimed that they were intent on putting proper structures for adult education in place. The primary reason was that the DETE proposal to establish a Task Force on Lifelong Learning (accepted by Government at the end of 1999) appeared to be a strategy to regain control of adult education policy making. This strategy was to remedy the situation after partially ceding the lead role to DES during the Green Paper and White Paper processes. The proposal in *The Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b: 10) to “establish an overarching structure to coordinate, review, and report on the implementation of the framework set out in this [Taskforce] report and the recommendations underpinning it” was perverse, given that the National Adult Learning Council had already been established months earlier. The net result was that the institutional solution proposed under the White Paper (DES, 2000a) was under threat even before the White Paper was published.

A second reason the 1997 architecture remained intact was the acceptance by Government of the flawed structures for adult education proposed in the White Paper (DES, 2000a: 184-200) and in the Report of the *Task Force on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b: 10). This failure by Government to ensure an effective institutional architecture for adult education at the time of the publication of the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b) was even more perverse than establishing the Taskforce in the first place.

Another reason was that the architecture proposed in the White Paper (DES, 2000a) and the Taskforce Report (DETE, 2002b), was flawed despite the fact that it was meant to address the structural problems existing in 1997. This view was subsequently accepted by DES itself (DES, 2004: 9). It was the responsibility of senior management in DES to ensure a viable set of institutional proposals were sent to the Government following the White Paper process. Allowing a set of unworkable proposals to go to Government did serious damage to the adult education system and as we shall see in section 4.7 led to despondency among adult education stakeholders.

The National Adult Learning Council proposed in the White Paper (DES, 2000a: 184-200), which was at the heart new architecture, was suspended by DES on 17 June 2003, 15 months after its establishment (Minutes of National Adult Learning Council Meeting, 17 June 2003). The overarching structure recommended in the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b: 10) and established by Government decision was predicated on “overseeing” the work of the National Adult Learning Council. Subsequently, the Local Adult Learning Boards recommended in the White Paper (DES, 2000a: 192-200) were not established and the ad-hoc Adult Education Boards, established in 1984, as outlined in the Green Paper (DES, 1998b: 55) and critiqued by the White Paper (DES, 2000a: 192), remain in situ.

The overarching structure proposed in the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE: 2002b) was approved by Government in the knowledge that the National Adult Learning Council was already in existence. The recommendation for the ‘overarching structure’ by the Taskforce Report (DETE, 2002b) is that it should “...co-ordinate, review and report on the implementation of the framework set out in this report and the recommendations underpinning it”. The proposed framework had the following “essential elements”:

- “developing and implementing the National Framework of Qualifications”;
- “ensuring Basic Skills for All”;
- “providing Comprehensive & Coherent Guidance and Information”;
- “addressing delivery, access, and funding issues”; and
- “better learning opportunities in the workplace and for workers”.

Analysis shows that elements of the framework are adequately addressed by other public policy instruments as argued in the report of the Central Policy Unit of DES on the National Adult Learning Council (DES, 2004). Developing and implementing the National Qualifications Framework is the statutory responsibility of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (Government of Ireland, 1999). Ensuring basic skills for all is provided for in the National Adult Literacy Programme implemented as a result of the White Paper (DES, 2000a). Other aspects of the framework are covered in *Ireland’s Employment Action Plan April 2002* (DETE: 2002a). As the Irish Congress of Trade Unions *Response to the 2002 Employment Action Plan* notes, “the Report [Ireland’s Employment Action Plan, 2002] incorporates substantial amounts, if not the totality of the Draft Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning” (DETE files).



The proposals in the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b) on the institutional architecture were modified by Government. The Government agreed to the establishment of the “overarching structure”, (the Steering Committee) and that it be chaired by DETE. Its role was to oversee and direct part of the work of the National Adult Learning Council. In addition, the National Adult Learning Council (NALC) is to be designated as the body to co-ordinate, review and report on the implementation of the framework set out in the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b):

a Steering Committee, to be chaired by a senior official of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, which will include officials of the Department of Trade, Enterprise and Employment and the Department of Education and Science will oversee and direct the work of the National Adult Learning Council insofar as it relates to the implementation of the Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning<sup>42</sup>.

It could be inferred, from this decision, that the Government addressed the structures issue by establishing a Steering Committee and bringing the National Adult Learning Council within its remit. It can also be inferred that either the Government’s analysis of the institutional architecture was weak or it did not want to confront the structures’ issue and the institutional rivalry between DES and DETE.

It is not surprising that the National Adult Learning Council, DETE and DES found it difficult to interpret the precise institutional architecture proposed in the Government decision on the publication of the *Report of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b). When the National Adult Learning Council was suspended by DES, the institutional architecture now underpinning adult education became fuzzy. The net result was that the architecture remains essentially the same as in 1997, with the added complication of the Steering Committee supervising a non-existent National Adult Learning Council.

The Steering Committee’s function is unclear when the National Adult Learning Council does not exist. The Steering Committee has met regularly since its establishment, but the minutes obtained under FOI indicate that it gathers information on how the proposals in the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b) are progressing. According to Ó Foghlú (interview), “what happens now is there is a series of updates on implementation rather than a co-ordination of implementation across the two Departments”.

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<sup>42</sup> DETE Memo 05/12/2003 to the Taoiseach’s Department: accessed FOI request, Appendix A (6) and A (7).

Local Adult Learning Boards, proposed in the White Paper (DES, 2000a), were not established. The reasons given by DES centred on the status of the National Adult Learning Council. These included the fact that the National Adult Learning Council was not established, or after it was established, it was finding its feet. From 2003 on the reason given was that NALC was under review (personal information from attending meetings in DES from 2000-2005 both as CEO and IVEA representative).

There is some evidence that the opposition of the Tánaiste and DETE were significant factors in not establishing the Local Adult Learning Boards (DES, 1998c; letter PO, DETE to PO, DES, May 2000; DES, 2000c) rather than the reasons given by DES to education stakeholders.

## **4.5 Third Driver - Management of the Adult Education Policy Process by DES**

DES did not manage the adult education policy process effectively during the crucial 1997-2004 period, when major decisions on adult education policy were being made. This section examines the reasons for this failure by evaluating the findings of the Cromien Report, examining the organisation of adult education in DES, examining the capacity of DES and its impact on the policy process as well as evaluating the Department's engagement with the adult education policy making process.

The *Cromien Report* (DES, 2000b) is examined first, because it is an external, independent evaluation of the capacity of DES in 2000, at the time when the White Paper was being prepared.

### **4.5.1 The Cromien Report on the Staffing and Structures of DES**

The Cromien Report (DES, 2000b: 2-3), prepared by a former Secretary of the Department of Finance, on the operations, systems and staffing needs of the Department of Education and Science, concluded:

The most obvious characteristic of the Department of Education and Science is that it is a Department which is overwhelmed with detailed day-to-day work which has to be given priority over longer-term strategic thinking.

and

There is a vagueness caused by the absence of clear structures, about where in the Department policy is formulated and whose responsibility it is to formulate it.

The report, which finds serious organisational deficiencies in DES, is important to the research, because it was prepared while the White Paper was being developed. It is also a contemporaneous, external, independent account of the capacity of DES to manage a policy process such as the preparation of a Green or White Paper. Cromien began work in May 2000 and published his report in October 2000. Planning for the Green Paper began in September 1997 and the decision making stage was completed with the publication of the White Paper in July 2000.

The *Cromien Report* (DES, 2000b) was accepted by the Department, which "embarked upon a major programme of structural reform" (DES, 2001a: 40). The

clear implication of the report is that DES was under severe pressure and had no clear structures for policy making. In these circumstances a marginal and poorly organised policy sector like the education domain of adult education faced enormous challenges in embarking on a public policy exercise like publishing a Green and White Paper. The sector's difficulties were made more acute by its fragmented nature and the institutional rivalry between DES and DETE.

#### **4.5.2 Organisation of Adult Education in DES**

The organisation of adult education was divided among five sections<sup>43</sup> in 1997. Critically, there was not a Principal Officer with sole responsibility for adult education then. Such an appointment was not made until May 1998, ten months after the preparations for the Green Paper began and five months before its publication. The number of sections with a direct role in adult education policy was reduced from five to four<sup>44</sup> in May 1998 on the appointment of a Principal Officer. That change marginally improved the organisation of adult education though it strengthened its voice and status through the new senior management appointment.

Because of the way adult education was organised in 1997, the day-to-day responsibility for preparing the Green Paper was delegated initially to the Assistant Principal Officer in the Adult Education Section (DOL: 3, internal DES files). The lack of capacity in the Adult Education Section led the Assistant Principal Officer to seek expert advice four months after the formal policy process began. The request resulted in Professor John Coolahan and Dr Tom Collins becoming part of the Green Paper Team (letter by APO to the PO with responsibility for Youth and Sport, School Transport and Adult Education, November 1997; DOL: 3, 4).

The failure of senior management in DES to allocate a Principal Officer, with sole responsibility for adult education, to manage the process, had a number of consequences. These included a delay of five months in putting a Green Paper Team together, the appointment of an unrepresentative team, which did not include the Social Partners, an undermining of the process *vis-a-vis* other sections in DES

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<sup>43</sup> Adult Education Section, ESF Section, Post-Primary Administration, Post Primary Teachers and Colleges.

<sup>44</sup> Adult and Further Education, Post-Primary Administration, Post-Primary Teachers and Colleges.

and a lack of capacity to face up to the fundamental institutional issues. All of this led to the Minister of State becoming frustrated (O'Dea: interview).

The acknowledged weakness of the then Adult Education Section is demonstrated by the difficulty the section experienced in preparing a draft chapter on "A Profile of Adult Education and Training Provision", for the Green Paper. Their task was to assemble coherent data on a fragmented system. The task was made more difficult by the nature of the system. It was further complicated because the section also had to carry out day-to day administrative tasks (DOL: 3, 4). Adult education submissions, prepared by an Assistant Secretary for the Green (Department of Education, 1992) and White Papers on Education (Department of Education, 1995), were ignored despite the fact that DES was having difficulty in managing the policy process. The reason may have been a lapse of corporate memory resulting from staff changes. This material, which I have reviewed, succinctly addressed many of the key issues for adult education (DES files).

The difficulties experienced by the Department were exacerbated by the fact that from the time a Principal Officer for Adult and Further Education was appointed in 1998 until the White Paper was published in 2000 three different Principal Officers were responsible for managing the process (DOL: 4, 5, 6; DES files; Kelly: interview). To add to the problems, two sections of DES engaged to a very limited extent in the policy making process. These sections were the third level section and the inspectorate. It is noteworthy that while an Inspector was nominated to the team to prepare the Green Paper he attended very few meetings (one out of seven) while a representative from third level was only added to the team in November 1999 (Coolahan: interview, DOL: diaries, Kelly: interview, Minutes of TMG: 11 November 1999).

The team charged with developing adult education policy lacked strategic direction and resources from senior management to undertake such an important policy task, even though an Assistant Secretary was a team member. The lack of resources and strategic direction was a result of the poor organisational capacity of DES, its lack of clear policy making structures (DES, 2000b) and the precarious nature of adult education within DES. The team's problems were exacerbated by a lack of support and direction from senior management and the failure of some other sections of DES to engage.

A clear vision and sense of direction by senior management is essential for successful policy making. This observation is based on my experience in curriculum development projects and policy initiatives like the establishment of the Tipperary Institute. Vision and direction is especially important when drawing on external expertise in policy development. The time and skill of the external experts is wasted in trying to divine it, if that vision and direction is not present. Also, other stakeholders in the system do not engage either through a lack of understanding or a fear of getting sucked into a meaningless or purely symbolic exercise.

The choice of the policy making team, including the leader, is critical in policy development. Finally, in my experience, the sponsor of a major policy initiative has to commit adequate resources to enable it to thrive. The commitment of resources, as well as being essential for success, is also a measure of how serious the sponsor is about the initiative. The evidence from the research is that senior management in DES did not provide a vision, leadership or resources to adult education policy since 1997. That lack of engagement is discussed next.

#### **4.5.3 *Engagement of Top Management Team in Adult Education Policy Process***

The prime responsibility for putting resources in place for a policy initiative rests with senior management in the lead Department. The resource problems described in the last section could have been addressed had senior management engaged seriously in the process, as it was bound to do under the Public Services Management Act (Government of Ireland, 1997).

The critical failure in the development of adult education policy in DES was the lack of engagement by senior management. An indication of the lack of engagement is tellingly pointed out by a member the Green Paper team at the meeting of 8/4/1998, when he notes that the extent of “the Department’s commitment to adult education is a half of a PO” (DOL: 5).

Evidence of senior management engagement with the process (other than by the responsible Assistant Secretary) is limited. The evidence in the files is that only one

meeting of MAC<sup>45</sup> (TMG) on the Green Paper took place on November 11, 1999 and a number of Assistant Secretaries attended meetings in the Adult and Further Education Section in May 2000 (DOL: 1-9; internal files). This is also borne out by the fact that the responses to requests for minutes of meetings, where aspects of adult education were considered, only yielded the minutes of the MAC meeting of November 11, 1999. No application for minutes of MAC meetings was refused on grounds other than the grounds that the information was not available (Appendices A (1), A (2) and A (3)).

In defence of the DES it can be argued, as Cromien (DES, 2000b) does, that the Department was stretched with the implementation of the Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998) and the Universities Act (Government of Ireland, 1997), the preparation and implementation of several other pieces of legislation and the trauma of managing the fallout from child abuse that took place in residential institutions under the control of DES. There was also the pressure of day-to-day activities. In such circumstances, however, DES should have either secured the necessary resources to embark on developing adult education policy or informed the Government of the capacity problem.

#### **4.5.4 Capacity of DES to Manage Adult Education Policy Process**

The lack of capacity in DES to manage adult education policy impacted in several ways. The withholding of a clear commitment by top management and their lack of engagement led to poor project design, project management being delegated initially to an inappropriate level, limited project oversight, poor commitment to implementation and policy failure in the institutional architecture for adult education policy. These problems are discussed briefly, starting with the fundamental issue of poor project design.

Preparation of the Green Paper was happening for five months before a project team was appointed. The membership of the team, apart from the academic experts from NUIM, was narrowly focused. Most members had a limited range of policy development skills, which were confined to the education domain. The team was not

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<sup>45</sup> Management Advisory Council, which is also called the Top Management Group (TMG).

representative of DES and neither did it have representatives from DETE and the Department of Social, Family and Community Affairs: two other important stakeholders in adult education (DOL: 1-9). The decision on team membership is surprising because there was considerable policy making expertise in DES gained in the preparation of the Education White Paper published in 1995. For example, one of the policy development experts in DES was not asked to be a member of the team. His expertise was used simply to advise on planning the consultative process following the publication of the White Paper. The rest of his considerable expertise gained during the preparation of the White Paper on Education (Department of Education, 1995) was not availed of by the FE section. However, DES did recognise and avail of his expertise in preparing the qualifications legislation (S. Ó Foghlú: interview; DOL: diaries).

The composition of the team was surprising because cross-departmental co-operation was part of government policy through the Strategic Management Initiative (Whelan, Arnold, Aylward, Doyle, Lacey, Loftus, McLoughlin, Molloy, Paine and Pine, 2003: 8). Even more surprising, given the Government's commitment to partnership, was the fact that the Social Partners were not invited to take part in the process other than through submissions, attending public meetings and making oral presentations. To my mind this was a serious error and is a reflection on senior management.

The error was serious because of the political significance the incoming (1997) Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrat Government accorded to Social Partnership. The fact that the development of a Green and White Paper proceeded without the active engagement of the Social Partners is a serious error of judgement by the Department in the context of the evolving Irish public policy process. Even when the senior management reviewed the membership of the White Paper team at its meeting in November 1999, it did not avail of the opportunity to put representatives from the Social Partners on the team. It is reasonable to suggest that had the Social Partners been involved in the process the proposal to establish the Taskforce, finessed through the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Government of Ireland, 2000), might not have been adopted.

That decision to establish the Taskforce robbed the White Paper process of legitimacy and contributed to the fact that the institutional architecture it proposed was not subjected to serious challenge or analysis. The decision also meant that the Community and Voluntary Pillar, favourably disposed to adult education, was limited



to participating in the consultative phase of the policy process and was not represented on the policy teams for the Green and White Papers.

The project design failings identified earlier were the responsibility of senior management in DES and were exacerbated by a political failure to agree on a lead Department. The project design and political failures, coupled with the lack of direction and resources for the policy process, led to poor engagement by other sections of DES during policy development. The failures also led to low levels of commitment to implementation by senior management following the publication of the White Paper. This low level of commitment meant that adult education got a low priority when it came to prioritising adult education activities in discussions with Finance or in internal discussions on the overall education budget (internal files; DOL: 1-17; Kelly: interview).

The Top Management Team did not resolve the basic question of whether the proposed National Adult Learning Council should have a funding role. The Team favoured a funding role but the Principal Officer did not (DOL: 8). The disagreement led to another fudge in the White Paper (DES, 2000 a: 186). The extent of the fudge can be gleaned from the following extract:

As constituted at present, they [terms of reference of NALC] do not envisage a function for the Council as a funding administration body in relation to programmes (other than staff development programmes) in the Further Education Sector. However, this issue will be revisited in the light of emerging developments in relation to a review of organisational structures and roles within the Department of Education and Science itself [Cromien Report].

Policy making on the institutional architecture for the adult education service was poor. Decisions on such an important and politically sensitive issue as structures were quite rightly left to senior management and Ministers by the White Paper Team (DOL: 5; Kelly: interview). The terms of reference of the National Adult Learning Council and the Local Adult Learning Boards, the key adult education structures, are critical to an effective institutional architecture for adult education. It is clear, from the internal documents examined, that senior management and the Green Paper/White Paper team did not carry out an in-depth analysis of the terms of reference for these bodies, which were key to bringing about an integrated and co-ordinated adult education service.

The evidence to support this assertion comes from a number of sources. In the case of the Green Paper/White Paper Team, it appears that the only discussion on

structures was in May of 1998, just a few months before the publication of the Green Paper. However, the main focus of that discussion was on the Local Adult Learning Boards rather than on the National Adult Learning Council. This local focus is borne out by the interviews and the feedback from the consultative process. The focus of the debate on structures of the Local Adult Learning Boards is supported by the statement in the White Paper that the only issue arising from the consultative process is whether or not the local adult learning board comes under the remit of the VECs (DES, 2000a: 79).

The discussion at the meeting of the 'White Paper Group'<sup>46</sup> with the Minister for Education and Science on 11 November, 1999 was mainly about the VEC/LALB question. The minute states:

No decision was made on whether the National Adult Learning Council was to have a funding role for provision (along the lines of the HEA), and the rationale for such an approach needs to be examined further. Both the National Council and the Local Boards are to go ahead in the White Paper.

The rest of the discussion on structures was on the local boards and the decision of the TMG was to go with the VECs, as they "were the only realistic option, but with protection built in".

In fairness to TMG, it could be argued that it was discussing the issues as presented by the Principal Officer, which included the statement "that there was widespread acceptance of the need for co-ordinating structures as proposed". It could also be argued that the matter had been decided by the acceptance by Government of the *National Employment Action Plan* (DETE, 1999a) which recommended the establishment of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning. Despite these arguments the TMG had to be aware of the serious reservations expressed by the Tánaiste, as outlined in the Memorandum for Government on the Green Paper, about the proposed National Adult Learning Council because the Minister and the responsible Assistant Secretary were present at the meeting (November 11, 1999). The failure to discuss the National Adult Learning Council, other than its funding role, was another serious error of judgement. It is symptomatic of the finding by Cromien that there was a lack of capacity in DES to engage in the policy making process.

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<sup>46</sup> This was the term used in the Minutes of the meeting.

Perhaps the most damning evidence of the poor quality of the decision making about the National Adult Learning Council comes from the Department itself, which suspended the Council to review its terms of reference. The *Interim Review of the Role and Functions of the National Adult Learning Council (NALC)*, prepared by the Central Policy Unit, recommended that (p 2, 5):

NALC should be restructured, repositioned to have a more focused terms of reference....The Council, per se, would be a consultative council with representation similar to the existing council [NALC]. It would not have executive functions.

(DES, 2004: obtained under FOI)

The White Paper proposals on the institutional architecture for adult education were unworkable because they were developed without the benefit of serious analysis and were not subject to challenge, other than by DETE (DOL: 1-17; Observations and correspondence from DETE on Green Paper and White Paper). The essence of that challenge and analysis appears to have been ignored, probably on the grounds that it was self-serving. The net result was a set of proposals for institutions whose terms of reference were limited by the rivalry between DES and DETE, and by internal disagreement in DES on a funding role for the National Adult Learning Council. The proposals were also fundamentally defective as the internal report demonstrates (DES, 2004).

A surprising aspect of the debate on the institutional architecture was that it concentrated more on local rather than on national structures. Perhaps this was because the policy makers were more concerned about a backlash around proposals for local adult education structures. One of the outcomes was that adequate time was not devoted to analysing national structures. The only debate on structures at the meeting of MAC (TMG) in November 1999, as noted already, was on whether the proposed National Adult Learning Council should have a funding role.

#### **4.5.5 National Fragmentation of the Institutional Architecture Leads to Local Fragmentation**

The fragmentation of adult education at national level in 1997 was mirrored at local and community levels. Fragmentation led to rivalry within and between the domains

and the establishment of a plethora of statutory bodies with an adult education remit (NDP/CSF Support Unit 2003: 3-6). Fragmentation and marginalisation meant that powerful actors in the education domain did not consider adult education as a sufficient priority for them to engage with the adult education policy process. The lack of engagement weakened the capacity of education actors to participate effectively and gave significant power by default to a weak and disinterested DES. (DOL, 1-17, interviews; submissions from ASTI, and TUI).

The only time the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI), the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) representing voluntary secondary school managers, and the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS) management bodies met DES officials to discuss the Green Paper or White Paper was on the question of the deployment of additional AEO's proposed in the White Paper (DOL: 1-17).

As we saw earlier, the White Paper (DES, 2000a: 79) argued that there was “no consensus regarding the hosting of local structures for Adult Education”. It then went on to claim that “where disagreement emerged, it crystallised around one issue-pro VEC and anti VEC”. At a meeting in DES on 9 June 2000, ‘anti-VEC-role’ management bodies and the ASTI argued strongly against the proposal to establish Local Adult Learning Boards under the VECs and to assign Adult Education Organisers to VECs (DOL: 9).

There is ample evidence of rivalry between FÁS and the VECs at local and community levels (O’ Sullivan, 2005: 163-164; O’ Connor, 1998). There is also evidence in the White Paper (DES, 2000a: 114) that the community education domain wanted to retain as much autonomy as possible to maintain the ‘community education ethos.’

The basic critique of the proposed Local Adult Learning Boards is that their capacity to operate is severely constrained by the dysfunctional national adult education architecture. Local Adult Learning Boards, as proposed in the White Paper, did not have the competence [legal] to determine how or what adult education programmes FÁS, Teagasc, CERT, ADM or third level institutions delivered locally. These bodies reported directly to and were funded by different Government Departments and their national executive agencies.

A second criticism is that they were too big with a possible membership of 26. A third critique is that the issue of the role of VECs *vis a vis* the Boards was fudged with the proposal to establish them as “autonomous sub-committees which are administratively hosted by VECs and where the VEC also provides a technical service as an employer of additional staff appointed to the Boards” (DES, 2000a: 194-5). In the end the Local Adult Learning Boards were not established. The current situation (February 2009) is that the only local adult education body in existence is the ad-hoc Adult Education Boards established in 1984, under the remit of VECs.

In essence then, the only change to the 1997 dysfunctional adult education architecture was the appointment of a Principal Officer to a newly established Further Education Section and the establishment of the Interdepartmental Steering Committee, which simply receives reports on the implementation of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (Ó Foghlú: interview; internal DETE documentation).

#### **4.5.6 *The Implementation of Adult Education Policy by DES since 2000***

The White Paper (DES, 2000a) together with the *Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2000-2006* (DETE, 2000a) is the definitive statement of adult education policy by the Irish Government during the period covered by this research. While aspects of adult education policy are briefly outlined in other policy documents such as National Development Plans, Social Partnership Agreements, the *National Reform Programme 2005-2008* (Department of the Taoiseach, 2005) and the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002 b), the White Paper is the first cohesive statement of the Government's adult education policy supported by an institutional architecture (flawed as it is) and a philosophy of adult education. That philosophy is located within the complementary, or as some would argue, competing state philosophies of competitiveness and social inclusion. The *Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2000-2006* (DETE, 2000a) contains a detailed statement of all adult education funded by the National Development Plan with an indicative budget for each adult education measure.

Because the White Paper (DES, 2000a) is one of the key adult education policy documents since 1997, an analysis of the successes and failures in the implementation of the White Paper (DES, 2000a) (other than the institutional architecture) also contributes to answering the research question (what lessons can be learned for the future development of adult education policy from the adult education policy making process in the decade since 1997?). It also provides an opportunity to evaluate the management of the adult education policy process by DES.

The White Paper (DES, 2000a) explicitly located adult education within Irish public policy the first time in the history of the State and provided a theoretical underpinning for adult education. Locating adult education within Irish public policy was achieved by linking investment to the competitiveness and social inclusion agendas of the State. Getting adult education on the public policy agenda was achieved through a judicious use of Irish and international educational data to reveal the relatively poor educational attainments of the Irish adult population in absolute and comparative terms. On the basis of the data the White Paper argued the case for investing in adult education:

Low levels of literacy and poor education levels, particularly among older adults, continue to pose fundamental challenges for Ireland in maintaining competitiveness and growth and in promoting social inclusion. Adult Education has a key role to play in meeting this challenge.

(DES, 2000a: 52)

More importantly, the rationale for investing in adult education, proposed in the White Paper, has been adopted by (or was proposed by) the Social Partnership Agreements, National Development Plans and National Employment Action Plans since 1997. The 5<sup>th</sup> Report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (2007) is a further example of the approach of the White Paper (DES, 2000a) being adopted by another adult education policy document.

Policy responses in the White Paper (DES, 2000a) to the analysis of the educational attainments of the adult population include the development of an Adult Guidance Service, Back to Education Initiative, the Third Level Access Fund, the appointment of Community Education Facilitators and the National Adult Literacy Programme.

The initiatives mentioned in the previous paragraph emerged from the White Paper and are repeated in the *National Development Plan 2007-2013: Transforming Ireland*

(Government of Ireland, 2007a). The NDP (p 248) recommends an additional 2,000 places for BTEI bringing the total to 10, 000. The Adult Guidance Service will continue to be funded (p 250) as will the Third Level Access Fund (p 250-252). Maunsell *et al.* (2008: 25) argue that “the work on the ground of Community Education Facilitators whose role, in actively encouraging and promoting links between both formal and informal education providers is to help create a positive learning experience” is seen as “fundamental” to increasing participation in the formal and informal sectors. The establishment the Adult Guidance service, the appointment of Community Education Facilitators and the establishment of the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education were all successful policy initiatives arising out of the White Paper (DES, 2000a).

Workplace Education addresses the educational needs of adults in the context of the workplace. Most of the ‘Workplace Education’ proposals in the White Paper (DES, 2000a) were outlined in a separate chapter through recommendations on workplace literacy, upskilling IT workers, developing Skillnets, the development of plans by FÁS for training for those in employment, the development of trainers for workplace learning and the introduction of statutory learning leave.

It was intended that the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning would pay particular attention to workplace learning. In fact, the Taskforce did not add much to Chapter 6 of the White Paper (pp.121-136). For example, the focus on workplace literacy was provided for in the White Paper (p.135) as was the focus on the needs of those already in employment through promoting the concept of the ‘learning organisation’ (p 127).

However, ‘Workplace Education’ has developed as an important field of adult education. Two initiatives have contributed significantly to the legitimacy of the concept. The first is the establishment and operation of Skillnets, which is an industry-led body to support enterprise led training. (Institute of Public Administration 2008: pp 375-76) and comes under the remit of DETE. The second successful initiative is the workplace literacy programme for local authorities involving co-operation between the Local Authority National Partnership Boards, the VECs and NALA.

In the case of the Post Leaving Certificate sector the White Paper stated that a further review was needed. The White Paper recommended the establishment of a

working group. This was done and it reported in 2002 with a comprehensive set of recommendations for the development of the sector (McIver, 2002). At the time of writing (February 2009), there has been little progress in implementing the recommendations of the McIver Report. This is clear from the aspirational statements in *Towards 2016* (Government of Ireland, 2006: 51).

Finally, the recommendations on the training of adult educators have not been implemented. The White Paper (DES, 2000a: 150) argues the case very strongly when it asserts that:

If the Adult Education sector is to make the quantum leap envisaged for it in this White Paper, it can only do so on the basis of a highly trained corps of adult educators and trainers who are dynamic and equipped to lead change, to play a key role in the policy debate and to reflect the distinctive identity of the sector in the field of professional practice and research.

The White Paper (DES, 2000a: 152) also argues that “the qualification of an adult educator will be a third-level one”. Sadly, there has been no significant development in addressing the issue of pre-service training for adult educators.

#### **4.6 The Fourth Driver of Adult Education Policy - The National Adult Literacy Programme**

Having commented generally on the implementation of policy proposals (other than adult education structures) in the White Paper in the previous section, this section examines the implementation of the National Adult Literacy Programme. I have chosen the National Adult Literacy Programme because it was the number one policy priority in the White Paper (DES, 2000a) and adult literacy has remained high on the public policy agenda since the publication of the IALS Report in 1997. I also chose it because implementation is an important aspect of the policy process and there is a general feeling that the National Adult Literacy Programme has been successfully implemented.

Literacy was propelled to the top of the adult education and social inclusion agendas by the International Adult Literacy Survey Report (IALS) published in 1997. Since its publication adult literacy has been to the forefront of Irish public policy and has dominated adult education policy. A year after the publication of the IALS Report the Green Paper (DES, 1998b: 69) recommended the establishment of a National Adult



Literacy Programme as “the primary Adult Education priority in Ireland”. The White Paper (DES, 2000a: 88-90) made proposals for developing such a programme and making effective use of the €93.7<sup>47</sup> million allocated for it under the *National Development Plan 2000-2006*: (Department of Finance, 1999: 191). The *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b: 8) identified literacy as one of the building blocks of its lifelong learning framework. *The National Reform Programme: 2005-2008* (Department of the Taoiseach, 2005: 50) affirms the importance of adult literacy when it states that “the further development of literacy and numeracy skills will remain a priority in the context of adult learning”.

So ten years after the IALS Report was published, adult literacy is still firmly on the public policy agenda. The *National Development Plan 2007-2013* (Department of Finance, 2006: pp 249-50), declared that “adult literacy is the Government’s top priority in adult education”. The Plan commits the Government to “an increase of 7000 [literacy] places over its lifetime”.

The National Adult Literacy Programme, which was the main policy instrument to tackle adult literacy, aimed to provide a literacy service for 113,000 adults by the end of 2006 (DES, 2000a: 88). The basic implementation strategy adopted by DES was to appoint NALA as its executive agency and use the Vocational Education Committees, FÁS and Community and Voluntary groups as the main policy delivery vehicles. NALA’s funding was increased significantly to implement the Programme and a National Adult Literacy Training Co-ordinator, based in NALA, funded by DES, was appointed to up-skill those charged with delivering the literacy programme in 1999.

This strategy is in line with policy theory discussed in Chapter Two, where governments opt for a mix of policy delivery mechanisms. It is also in tune with the Strategic Management Initiative and public choice theory, which advocate using private enterprise and third sector organisation in policy implementation.

A sign of the Government’s continuing commitment to adult literacy, is that in 2007 the *National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2007-2016* (Government of Ireland 2007b).

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<sup>47</sup> This figure is lower than the figure of €101.6 used by Fitzpatrick (2004), which is close to the expenditure figure calculated from the data in the Report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Science Report on Adult Literacy in Ireland (2006).

re-iterated the commitment in the 2007 NDP and set a target to reduce the proportion of the population with a significant literacy difficulty from 25 percent to between 15 percent and 10 percent. It also allocated €2.2 billion for the further education sub-programme, with priorities on addressing low literacy levels in the adult population and the large number who have not completed upper secondary education (NALA, 2008).

The National Adult Literacy Programme has been among the most successful adult education initiatives in the decade to 2007. The Programme, which has provided literacy training for approximately 237,000 adults, has remained on the public policy agenda and secured its future through the *National Development Plan 2007-2013* and the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016*. The Annual Implementation Report (2006) of the Employment and Human Resources Operational Programme 2000-2006 (DETE, 2007: 196) notes that:

This measure [National Adult Literacy Programme] has gone from strength to strength with client numbers increasing from year to year and an increase in the variety of programmes on offer. The end-of-year report indicates 39,514<sup>48</sup> clients, which is a 22% increase on the 2002 figure....

However, the success of the overall National Adult Literacy Programme has only been measured in quantitative terms. The quantitative data has its limitations because it is self-reported and gathered by NALA on behalf of DES from VECs. There has been no formal, qualitative evaluation of the entire Adult Literacy Programme since it was introduced.<sup>49</sup> A general analysis of the quantitative data in the public domain reveals some issues around the implementation of the National Adult Literacy Programme that require further investigation. The purpose here is not to carry a detailed statistical analysis of the literacy data. It is rather to broadly demonstrate that the claims being made about the success of the National Adult Literacy Programme mask the full story.

The National Adult Literacy Programme has contributed to the steady growth and professionalisation of the adult literacy service. According to the Fourth Report of the Houses of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Science (2006: 21), the budget for adult literacy increased from €1.10 million in 1997 to €22.94 million in 2006 as illustrated in Figure 18.

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<sup>48</sup> There is a lack of consistency in data in State publications on the number of learners benefiting from the Programme.

<sup>49</sup> Individual aspects of the Programme such as the 'Read Now- Write Now' series have been evaluated.

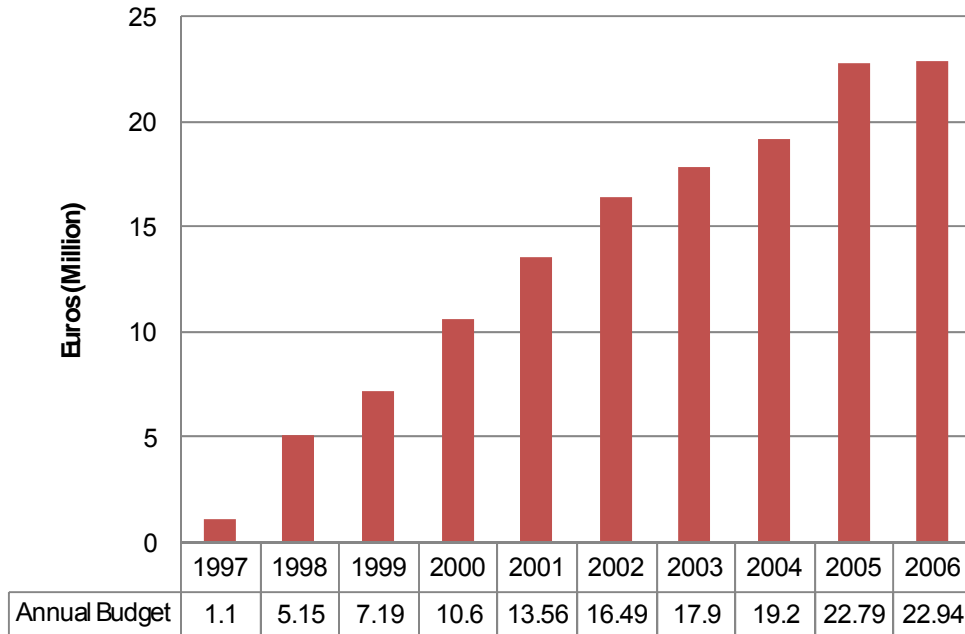


Figure 18 Adult Literacy Learner Budget per Annum 1997 – 2006<sup>50</sup>

The level of funding per learner outlined in Figure 19 reveals a different story. The funding per learner increased from €220 in 1997 to €572 in 1998 as a direct result of the publication of the IALS Report (DOL: 3). Following a reduction in 1999 to €553 funding increased again to €618 in 2000. The figure reduced in 2001, 2002 and 2003 when it reached its lowest level since 1998. That trend was briefly reversed in 2005 when funding reached its highest level ever at €641. The overall trend of reduced funding per learner continued in 2006 when it reached €564. This is its lowest level since the IALS report impacted on DES budgets.

<sup>50</sup> Source: Fourth Report on Adult Literacy of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Science and Summary Analysis of Adult Literacy Returns 2006 prepared by John Stewart, (NALA, 2007).

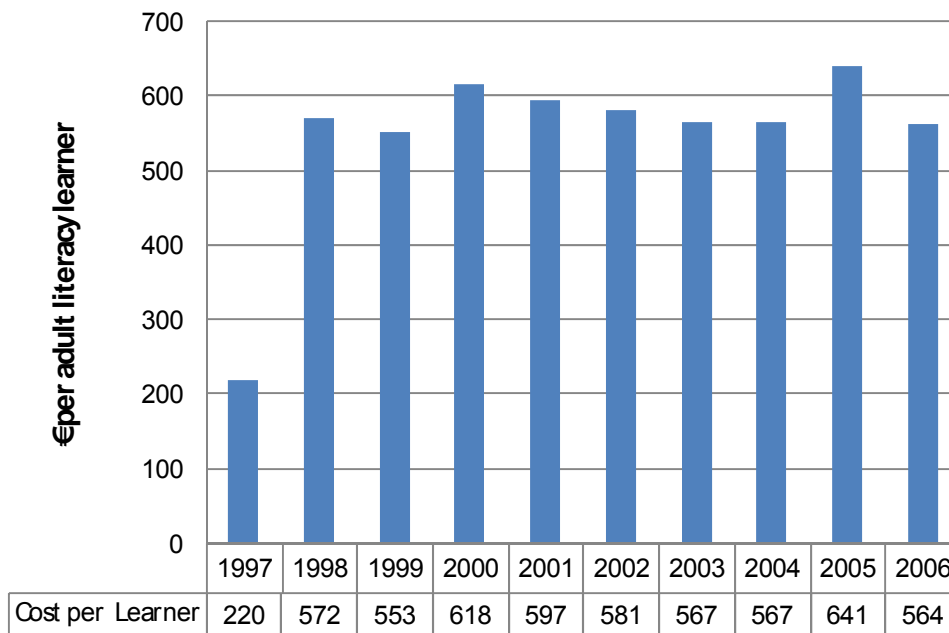


Figure 19 Level of Funding per Adult Literacy Learner 1997 – 2006<sup>51</sup>

The reduction in funding per learner is likely to be related to the switch in provision from one-to-one tutoring and an increase in group size. The number of learners in groups increased from 21, 224 in 2002 to 35,105 in 2006. As well as a reduction in funding per learner the number of tuition hours per learner has been reduced by 30 percent (NALA, 2007). It is interesting to note that in the period 1998 to 2006 funding per learner reduced from €572 to €564 while at the same time State funding per second level student increased from c. €4,500 to just over €8000 while the figure for third level in 2006 is just over €10,000 per annum (DES, 2008: Figures H and O). Further research is clearly needed (NALA, 2007) into the financing of the Adult Literacy Programme.

This data requires further study because, on the face of it, adult literacy learners, who have been failed by the State already, have a paltry €564 per annum invested in them to remedy the injustice of leaving the education system illiterate and to provide them with their fundamental human rights. Further research, which is outside the scope of this study, is clearly needed into the financing of the Adult Literacy Programme paying particular attention to funding per learner and the financial as well as the educational impact of tuition group size.

<sup>51</sup> Source: Fourth Report on Adult Literacy of the Joint Committee on Education and Science and Summary Analysis of Adult Literacy Returns 2006 prepared by John Stewart, (NALA, 2007).

The second issue to consider in the Adult Literacy Programme is the number of learners identified by the IALS Report as having literacy issues catered for by the National Adult Literacy Programme in the decade since 1997. The IALS Report (DES, 1997) identified 500,000 adults with literacy problems (referred to as IALS learners in this study).

I have chosen these 500,000 learners as a basis for my analysis for a number of reasons (i) their existence leveraged the significant increase in funding for adult literacy and brought about the establishment of the National Adult Literacy Programme (ii) IALS learners represent a cohort that has been independently identified and therefore the quantitative impact of the Programme can be measured against accurate baseline data; and (iii) in reporting the data NALA (2007) has identified the total number of adult literacy learners benefiting from the Programme. The NALA data is made up of IALS learners, ESOL learners for whom data is available from 2001 onwards and early school leavers with literacy issues, for whom no specific data is available.

The total number of adult learners with literacy issues catered for by the Programme increased from 5,000 per annum in 1997 to 28,550 in 2006 (Figure 20). The increase over the period is 571 percent.

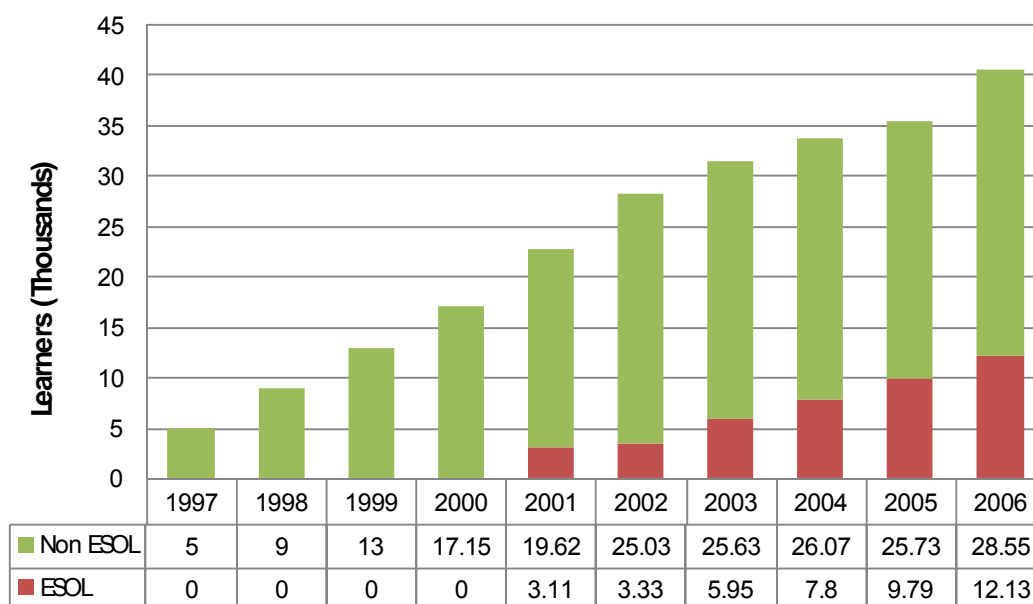


Figure 20 Breakdown of Total Number of Adult Literacy Learners 1997 – 2006<sup>52</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Source: Fourth Report on Adult Literacy of the Joint Committee on Education and Science and Summary Analysis of Adult Literacy Returns 2006 prepared by John Stewart (NALA, 20078).

In all 236,920 adult learners participated in the Adult Literacy Programme between 1997 and 2006. This represents 47.4 percent of the 500,000 IALS learners identified as having literacy issues. The figure includes the ‘new Irish’ with English language difficulties because provision for ESOL is funded through the literacy budget. As Figure 20 shows the total number of ‘new Irish’ learners (ESOL learners) on adult literacy schemes’ was 42,020 (NALA, 2007). The figure 42,020 is an understatement of the numbers because they do not take into consideration data on ESOL learners for the period 1997 to 2000, which were not sought at that time (personal communication John Stewart, January 2009).

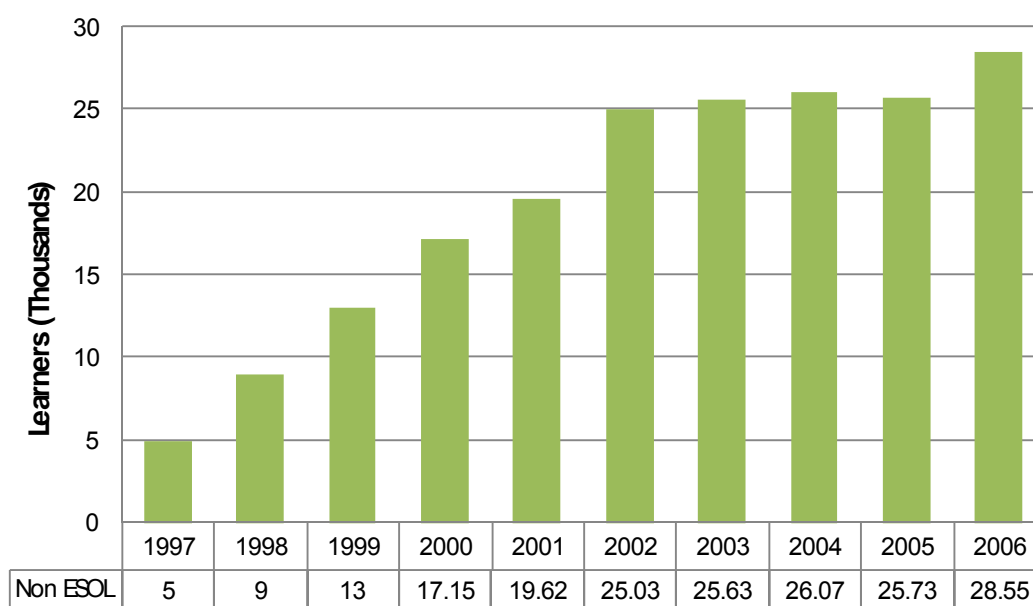


Figure 21 Total Number of IALS (Non ESOL) Adult Literacy Learners 1997 – 2006<sup>53</sup>

The impact of provision for ESOL on the IALS learners is shown in Figure 21. Effectively from 1997 to 2002 there was a steady increase in the number of IALS learners catered for. From 2002 to 2005 the number remained fairly static over that four year period. The figure increased again in 2006. Until the 2007 data becomes available it is not possible to establish whether this is the start of a new trend. ESOL learners should not be included when calculating the numbers of IALS learners who benefited from the National Adult Literacy Programme. This exercise reveals a different picture. The number of IALS learners who benefited from the National Adult Literacy Programme since 1997 is 194, 900 or approximately 39 percent of those in need identified by IALS.

<sup>53</sup> Source: Fourth Report on Adult Literacy of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Science and Summary Analysis of Adult Literacy Returns 2006 prepared by John Stewart NALA (2007)..

The number of early school leavers with literacy problems should also be discounted from the IALS figure but without accurate data it is not feasible to do so. The existence of early school leavers with literacy problems is borne out by the data for 2006. The data shows that almost two percent of those availing of tuition were under eighteen, and almost 14 percent were between 19 and 24 (DETE, 2007: 198).

The number of IALS learners, who benefited from the National Adult Literacy Programme between 1997 and 2006, shown in Figure 20, is 194,900 or 39%. This is a disappointing statistic given the rhetoric about tackling literacy in public policy documents over the last decade. It points up the challenge in the target set for the lifetime of the current National Development Plan (2007-2013) to reduce the number of adults with literacy problems to between ten and fifteen percent. It is very unlikely that provision will be made for 205,000<sup>54</sup> IALS learners over the seven years of the Plan when you exclude ESOL students. The reason is that when you consider the total number of IALS learners catered for from 2000-2006 is almost 168,000. Without a radical policy change the target is unlikely to be met.

Even if the NDP 2007-2013 target is achieved and all of the students were IALS learners a significant number of them and students who left the education system since 1997 with literacy problems could have to wait for a long time for adult literacy tuition. That statement, while accurate, ignores the question of whether those availing of the National Adult Literacy Programme actually become literate as defined by the IALS Report. That issue is considered next.

A critical factor in achieving literacy is the number of tuition hour provided per learner. Maunsell *et al.* (2008) argue that current provision is 60 hours per annum except for a pilot scheme where learners get approximately 84 hours over a fourteen week period. The number of hours per week suggested by Maunsell *et al.*, is also largely borne out by NALA (2007). International research and experience suggests that “between 550-600 hours of instruction are needed to become fully literate and numerate’ (Moser Report, 1999: 31, cited in Maunsell *et al.*, 2008: 17). The difference between the Irish figure and the recommended international norm should be taken into account by policy makers. Irish provision is c.10 percent of the

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<sup>54</sup> The figure was arrived at by calculating 46% of 500,000. The 46% is calculated by taking the 39% provided for from 1997-2006 and subtracting a further 15% which is the upper end of the target percentage who will not benefit from literacy tuition during the 2007-2013 period (100% less 39% less 15%).

recommended number of tuition hours per learner if the international research is accurate.

A second factor in evaluating both provision and outcome is the literacy level of learners entering the programme and the length of time learners spend on the Programme. Data taken from the *Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme Annual Implementation Report 2006* (DETE, 2007: 197-8) shown in Table 4<sup>55</sup>, provides useful information on the operation of the Programme.

Literacy Level	Percentage of Adults
1 – major difficulty with reading and writing	31.24%
2 – can read, major difficulty with spelling and grammar	42.35%
3 – need more advanced skills for career change or return to education	26.41%

Table 3 Literacy Levels of Adults in the Adult Literacy Programme in 2006<sup>56</sup>

According to the Report, about 31 percent of the literacy students availing of the service had a major difficulty with reading and writing, 42 percent can read but have major difficulty with spelling and grammar, while about 26 percent need more advanced skills for career change or return to education. Finally, 42 percent of the learners spent six months or less in the Programme and a further 24 percent spent between seven and twelve months there.

These figures indicate the possibility that up to 31 percent of those availing of the service (those with major difficulty with reading and writing) did not achieve adequate levels of literacy. By using the time spent in tuition as a measure, it is conceivable that less than 104,000 or 21 percent of IALS adults actually became literate as a result of the National Adult Literacy Programme. That figure is arrived at by reducing 194,900 by the 81,858 adults who spent less than six months (30 hours) availing of tuition.

The effectiveness of providing 60 hours tuition for this 31 percent of learners identified in the *Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme Annual Implementation Report 2006* (DETE, 2007: 197-8) as having

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<sup>55</sup> Source: DETE, 2007: 198.

<sup>56</sup> The learners are all at low literacy levels, though these do not relate IALS Report levels.



major difficulty in reading and writing should be seriously questioned. It is probable that a proportion of adults availing of the Adult Literacy Programme leave without having attained literacy levels equivalent to IALS level three, when you also factor in that 42 percent of literacy participants spend six months or less (30 hours or less) on the Programme.

A future evaluation of the National Adult Literacy Programme should address the issues of the number of tuition hours and of learners benefiting from the Programme as a first priority. The issues are linked because an increase in the number of tuition hours per learner to the international norm could involve a tenfold increase in the number of tuition hours to cater for the same number of learners. An alternative is to increase the group size. But there are limits to the extent to which group size can be increased. The increase in the number of literacy tutors to deliver the service would involve a significant increase in the literacy budget. As a briefing note for the Minister of State for a meeting involving the Tánaiste and the Director of NALA puts it: "Given the context of the National Literacy problem, there is no limit to the amount of funds it could absorb if they were available" (Briefing note, 25 June 2004 - obtained under FOI).

The fact that the Programme with a budget of approximately €94 million (Government of Ireland, 1999: 191)<sup>57</sup> has not been formally evaluated is surprising, given the culture of accountability and transparency driven by the EU and the Strategic Management Initiative. It is also surprising in the light of the commitment given in the White Paper (DES, 2000a: 93):

In order to ensure that the National Adult Literacy Programme is realising its objectives, a National Adult Literacy Survey will be conducted three years hence, and at regular intervals thereafter. While it is desirable that this be conducted as part of an international comparative study akin to the seminal study of the OECD, in the absence of such an international study, a national study will be conducted.

What is even more surprising is that DES actively considered commissioning a further IALS survey and rejected the idea because of a fear of what the study might reveal and who the results might offend. The data just discussed indicate that there were good grounds for the fear. Meetings to consider evaluating the National Adult

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<sup>57</sup> This figure is lower than the figure of €101.6 used by Fitzpatrick (2004), which is close to the expenditure figure calculated from the data in the Report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Literacy (2006).

Literacy Programme as promised in the White Paper (DES, 2000a) were held in the Further Education Section of DES on October 2001 and January, February and April 2005 (DOL: 1-17). The meeting in early in 2001 was called to respond to the Minister of State who wanted a new literacy survey by April of that year. It was attended by representatives from the Further Education Section, the Inspectorate, St Patrick's Education Research Centre (involved in the IALS Survey) and NALA.

Various options were considered and put to the Minister. The main policy consideration identified was the cost, estimated to be in the region of €0.5 and €0.75 million. Other types of evaluation were also considered but found unsuitable. The second policy consideration was the possible outcome of an IALS-style survey, given that tuition of two hours per week was not adequate to bring learners from level one to level three in the IALS framework. Consequently, the results of a survey could be a cause for concern. In putting the options to the Minister, it was suggested that he be informed that we should not risk antagonising parties of goodwill such as NALA by carrying out a survey. A survey was not carried out at this point.

The meeting in January 2005 involved the FE Section of DES, the relevant Assistant Secretary General and the Director of NALA. The meeting appears to have been in response to pressure from the OECD to participate in a new literacy study ten years after the first survey. Cost was again a major issue. The outcome was that Ireland would not participate and that the Departments of the Taoiseach, Finance and Social Welfare be sounded out for their reactions. Sounding them out was considered necessary because they could be dissatisfied with a situation where there was little objective evidence to support the claims by DES that adult literacy targets in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, National Development Plan and Social Partnership Agreements were being met.

Meetings of the IALS 'Steering Committee' took place in February and March 2005. They were attended by the Assistant Secretary General, the DES Statistician, Staff from the Further Education Section of DES, a representative from St Patrick's Research Centre and the Director of NALA. The main thrust of the meetings was to ensure that DES was in a position "to know how our literacy investment has improved the position; to show we have met NAPS targets". The meeting also considered technical issues such as the need to have some continuity with the last survey and the length of time required to complete a survey. It was agreed to carry out an Irish survey of our own "that will not throw up international comparisons". Approval would

be sought by means of a paper, via MAC (TMG), to the Minister and the Social Inclusion Committee and also from the Social Partners (DOL, 13, 15).

This decision could be seen to be a negation of the commitment in the White Paper (DES, 2000 a). However, it can be argued that the commitment in the White Paper was to carry out an IALS-style survey or an Irish survey. On the other hand if the record of the meeting is accurate, carrying out a survey to frustrate comparisons with IALS undermines the value of such a survey and indicates a concern that the results will not be good.

These meetings on the question of conducting a survey on the impact of the National Adult Literacy Strategy provide a useful insight into policy making in Ireland. The meetings are even more interesting when you consider the fact that those with responsibility for this policy area understood that a survey was likely to reveal the inadequacy of the State's response to the literacy problem revealed by IALS.

The 2001 meeting reveals how the civil servants set out to manage the expectations of a Junior Minister that were clearly unachievable in the time scale he had envisaged. However, the Minister's wish to evaluate the Programme had merit from every other point of view especially in the context of the commitment given in the White Paper (DES, 2000a). It also made political sense for the Minister who wanted to get kudos for his achievements in adult education and thus strengthen his case for a Cabinet post.

The meetings reveal the capacity for analysis in the civil servants and how they evaluate policy proposals. The process also provides an insight into how an advocacy body such as NALA can capture an aspect of policy making by becoming so important that senior DES officials did not want to upset them. The civil servants won the day and succeeded in having the survey postponed. The rationale used was cost and fear of an unfavourable result. Cost was a safe and classic way for public servants to scuttle a recommendation they did not endorse. Cost also provided a useful fig leaf for the real reason: a fear of the wrong result and of upsetting a now powerful literacy advocacy body on which they had become dependent.

The outcome of the DES strategy was that Government policy to evaluate the National Adult Literacy Programme, outlined in the White Paper, was deliberately thwarted. In addition, Government policy on accountability and transparency through

the Strategic Management Initiative, the National Development Plans and National Anti-Poverty strategies was ignored.

From a policy theory perspective, the decision is a classic example of the bureaucracy maximising its position as argued by public choice theorists. From a public interest perspective the decision meant that a badly needed review of the National Adult Literacy Programme was not carried out. The additional resources needed to address the literacy problem never even got to the public policy agenda. Finally, adults with literacy problems identified by the IALS, who did not receive tuition, or who received inadequate tuition, continue to suffer neglect by the Irish State.

The development and implementation of the National Adult Literacy Programme offer further insights into the public policy process through the lens of the stages' model discussed in Chapter 2. The first part of the stages' model concerns the emergence of an issue on the public policy agenda.

Before the publication of the International Adult Literacy Survey, adult literacy was hardly recognised as a policy issue. For example, *Charting Our Education Future: White Paper on Education* (Department of Education, 1995: 78), referring to literacy provision, noted:

In general, these [adult literacy] provisions have succeeded in meeting demand in that all those coming forward could be accommodated. Accordingly, the policy priority will be to ensure that suitable and effective programmes are in place, for all who wish to overcome literacy and numeracy problems.

The easy going, self-satisfied approach of the 1995 White Paper was shattered by an external evaluation of literacy levels by the International Adult Literacy Survey (1997). The survey showed that 25 percent of the population had low levels of literacy. As the *White Paper on Adult Education* (DES, 2000a: 55, 86) argues, "this study illustrated and focussed attention on the significant mismatch in the resources being allocated to adult literacy and the scale of the task" and "...the International Literacy Survey (DES, 1997) elevated concerns about the adult literacy problem to centre stage in educational policy".

Patricia Curtin of FÁS, in a submission to the Green Paper team in November 1997, summarised the policy dilemma created by the IALS Report well:

Literacy and Numeracy are major problems in the adult population. The recent OECD Survey [IALS] on Literacy/Numeracy indicated that there are large numbers of adults who have literacy problems which prevent them from accessing training/education/work opportunities. The problem is greatest with long-term unemployed people. The present budget of £2.6m is estimated to only make provision for 1% of persons with literacy/numeracy problems. There is also a lack of personnel trained to provide literacy/numeracy training. (DES files, accessed under FOI)

The demand for action was so strong that literacy funding was increased almost five fold from its 1997 level in advance of the publication of the Green Paper (DES,1998b), and by the time the White Paper was published in 2000, funding was increased almost six fold (Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Science, 2006: 21).

This dramatic change in Government policy can be attributed to the fact that the seriousness of the Irish literacy problem had been definitively quantified by an independent, reputable, international organisation. The independent data eloquently made the case for action. The adult literacy policy equilibrium reflected in the *White Paper on Education* (Department of Education, 1995) was punctuated by the Survey results. The punctuation of the policy equilibrium influenced the formation of a policy advocacy coalition involving NALA, AONTAS, the FE Section of DES and the new Minister of State. That advocacy coalition had a major role in the development of the State's literacy policy.

The data also challenged the State's market-driven paradigm to develop Ireland as a knowledge economy articulated in the *White Paper on Human Resource Development* (Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1997: 35).

With the right policies and their effective implementation, Ireland can gain significantly in a world where the knowledge and skills of management and workers is the key determinant of the success of enterprises. This is because the acquisition of knowledge has always enjoyed a high priority for the people in Ireland.

The challenge to the State's project to become a knowledge economy, combined with the negative results of the IALS Report, placed adult literacy on the public policy agenda with the support of an advocacy coalition. The policy response by the State was facilitated by the appointment of a Minister of State for Adult Education and the decision to prepare a Green Paper. It was also helped, because the Community and Voluntary Pillar, was now involved in Social Partnership and viewed literacy as key to social inclusion. (CORI, 2005: 145-7).

Once literacy became a public policy priority, it had to be addressed and funded. Adult literacy policy was taken up with an almost religious fervour by every policy-making organ in the State because Ireland was embarrassed by the IALS results. Adult literacy proposals appeared in Partnership Agreements, National Development Plans, Programmes for Government and Green and White Papers. Critically, adult literacy attracted significant, though as argued here, inadequate funding through the 2000-2006 National Development Plan.

The only real issues after the publication of the IALS Report were the shape of the policy adopted, funding and implementation. Literacy policy was the responsibility of DES, and within DES, the Further Education Section. The Green Paper (DES, 1998b: 69-70), drawing on the IALS survey and a detailed submission by NALA in November 1997, recommended that there should be “a multi-faceted national Adult Literacy Programme in Ireland”. The Green Paper also widened the definition of literacy by including “self-esteem, self-confidence and self-image” as one of the objectives of such a programme (DES files - accessed under FOI).

The policy proposed in the White Paper (DES, 2000a) was influenced by NALA, a key member of the advocacy coalition, through its *Response to the Green Paper on Adult Education: Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning* (1999). Consequently, NALA was appointed as the executive agency to deliver the National Literacy Programme. A second NALA submission - *A Strategy for the Way Forward: The National Adult Literacy Agency's Response to the White Paper on Adult Education: Learning for Life* provided the framework for the National Adult Literacy Programme. The strategy adopted by NALA to respond to the literacy crisis while literacy was on the public policy agenda is an exemplar for national advocacy organisations who want to have policies implemented.

NALA's approach involved forming an advocacy coalition to get adult literacy on the national policy agenda, building good working relations with the Minister and officials in the relevant section of the lead Department and making high quality policy submissions at critical times (Harvey, 2002: 67). The NALA contribution to the National Adult Literacy Programme has been enormous.

The third part of the stages' model is implementation. There is a general view that the National Adult Literacy Programme is working, evidenced by the Government's

willingness to continue funding and the positive coverage of literacy issues in the media. However, as pointed out earlier, the Programme should be formally evaluated to measure implementation. It is disappointing then that the State seems to have set its face against such an evaluation until it is confident it will get a satisfactory result.

The evaluation issue arose again in 2005 in the context of an invitation from the OECD to participate in another literacy study and also the requirement for DES to provide evidence that its strategy was working to the lead Departments for the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and the National Development Plan. DES could not just act with impunity and needed the support or acquiescence of the Departments of the Taoiseach and Social Welfare to avoid/delay carrying out a survey.

Despite the political commitments to deal with the literacy problem and meet National Anti-Poverty Strategy performance targets, DES officials succeeded in avoiding an evaluation of the National Adult Literacy Programme which could be compared to the IALS Report (DES, 1997). It is an interesting example of how the bureaucracy can maintain a policy position despite political and administrative pressures from other Departments. As we saw, the civil servants' won' the day and succeeded in having the survey postponed for what they saw as good and valid reasons.

The downside of the DES action is that the State does not know the extent to which the National Adult Literacy Programme has succeeded. It appears, from the basic analysis above that approximately 194,900 of the 500,000 adults with literacy problems in 1997 benefited from the Programme. By using the time spent in tuition as a measure (those who spent six months or less availing of tuition were unlikely to become literate) it can be argued that approximately 104,000 actually become literate. By adding the second factor of those with "major difficulty with reading and writing" into the equation it is likely that the actual number of the original 500,00, who become literate as defined by the OECD in its IALS Report, is less than 104,00 (DETE, 2007: pp 197-8).

The importance of evaluating the literacy programme is recognised by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Adult Literacy in Ireland (2006: 25) when it recommends:

...an overarching evaluation of the National Adult Literacy Programme, 2000, in relation to policy objectives and targets which were set for the Programme during that period.

As discussed in Chapter Two, evaluation is an important dimension of policy making. The experience of the National Adult Literacy Strategy is compelling evidence of that importance.

There is no way of knowing how successful the National Adult Literacy Programme has been, and even more importantly, there is no convincing evidence to support the need for the significant budgetary increase to address the scale of the adult literacy problem in Ireland until an evaluation is carried out and valid comparisons can be made with the data in the IALS 1997 Report. In fact the evidence being presented by NALA and DES is that the present arrangements are satisfactory but need some tweaking.

## **4.7 From Euphoria to Despondency**

So far this Chapter has considered the Irish adult education policy process since 1997 through the four drivers of adult education policy that emerged from the research data:

- (i) the impact of the Irish public policy process on adult education policy;
- (ii) the impact of a silo approach to adult education policy by DES and DETE and the institutional rivalry for control of the adult education policy agenda;
- (iii) the management of adult education policy making by DES; and
- (iv) adult literacy policy.

This section examines the reaction of stakeholders in the education and community domains to the unfolding of the adult education policy process as revealed through these policy drivers. The euphoria that greeted the appointment of a Minister for State for Adult Education and his commitment to produce a Green and White Paper in 1997 has given way to despondency in the education and community domains of adult education. The change in mood is because the State failed to establish effective national and local adult education structures and to bring these two domains of adult education in from the margins. This section examines the evidence for the change of mood from euphoria to despondency to mirror failures in adult education policy since 1997.



#### **4.7.1 The Initial Euphoria**

Important adult education stakeholders such as NALA, CORI and TUI were enthused by the commencement of State planning for adult education and the appointment of a Minister for State. AONTAS welcomed the publication of the Green Paper by pointing out that it:

...particularly welcomes the recognition of adult education as a key component of personal, social and economic development, and its political role with regard to issues of social inclusion and disadvantage...AONTAS sees the timing of the Green Paper and indeed, the forthcoming White Paper, as an unprecedented opportunity to develop a coherent policy on adult education in the context of Lifelong Learning.

(AONTAS, 1999: 7)

NALA “welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the first Government White Paper on Adult Education in the history of the state” (NALA, 1999: 1), while CORI “is very pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this debate” because “Adult and Community Education are central to the mission and vision of the Education Commission” (CORI, 1999: i). Finally, TUI “warmly welcomes the Green Paper ‘Adult Education in an era of Lifelong Learning.’ Its publication represents the single most important event in adult education since the passing of the 1930 Vocational Education Act” (TUI, 1999: 3).

#### **4.7.2 The Changing Mood**

New public policy initiatives having a wide level of acceptance are given a honeymoon period by stakeholders in a policy sub-system. Inevitably, the honeymoon period gives way to a more realistic evaluation of the initiative following reflection and evaluation of how the initiatives are implemented. The changing perspective on adult education policy is reflected in the Editorial in the *Adult Learner* – *Adult Education: Where Are We Now* (2004: 7-8):

Then in 1997 the ‘Celtic tiger’ began to roar and the money began to flow....The publication of the White Paper on Adult Education seemed to mark a turning point....The period 1997 to 2002 was characterised by significant growth and development....Yet, when we look more closely we see a provision dominated by an economic imperative and a service driven by labour market demands. One wonders whether the kind of adult education we see emerging today can sustain a ‘Learning for Life’ as well as a ‘Learning for work’ agenda?

Fleming (2004) picks up the theme in the same edition of the *Adult Learner* when he argues that “lifelong learning needs to be reclaimed from the functional, the instrumental, the economic and the one dimensional to mean a right to learn all that it is possible to learn”. He points out that the most important task of the State in relation to adult education is “to implement the recommendations outlined in the White Paper especially the proposal to establish Local Adult Learning Boards.” It is possible that this article was written before there was certainty that the National Adult Learning Council was placed in suspended animation in June 2003.

Berni Brady, is more direct in the *2005 AONTAS Annual Report* (2006a: 5). She argues that:

2005 has also been a somewhat disappointing year for the adult education sector as a whole. Five years on from the optimistic launch of the White Paper in 2000 the sector has reached a plateau both in terms of resources being allocated to it and in terms of its development....The lack of development of co-ordinating structures for the sector has led to a huge gap in leadership and overall policy development, leading to a continuation of fragmented growth of the service.

Despite the apparent successes in literacy, the Back to Education Initiative and community education, the overall mood of some adult education stakeholders was changing to despondency. The mood change reflects policy failure by the State and the perceived dominance of the labour market paradigm over the social inclusion and transformative paradigms of the education and community education domains. As Kirby and Murphy (2008) argue, the competition state has become the central logic of all Government policy, including adult education policy. Of course, it is important to recognise that the adult education training domain is quite satisfied with the competition state paradigm (FÁS, 2007: Director General’s Summary)

The Irish economy continued to perform strongly in 2006 with the Central Bank estimating that GNP grew by 6.25% following on from similar growth in 2005. Boosted by the recent economic growth, the Irish labour market continued to perform extremely well.

### 4.7.3 *Despondency*

The suspension of the National Adult Learning Council within 18 months of its establishment, in June 2003, shocked stakeholders (Minutes of NALC 17/06/2002-17/06/2003; Brady: interview). Stakeholders became despondent because there was little or no consultation on the review (AONTAS, 2006a: 5) and DES has not made the findings of the report, completed in January 2004, available (*Interim Review of the Role and Functions of the National Adult Learning Council*. AONTAS (2006a: 5) captured the reason for the despondency accurately when its Director argued that:

The treatment of the National Adult Learning Council by the Department of Education and Science is viewed as both disrespectful and cynical. Despite numerous requests and representations no feedback was given to members of the Council about the findings of the review undertaken.

The despondency of stakeholders, while understandable, is somewhat misplaced. The initial enthusiasm, which I shared, was based on the appointment of the Minister of State, the preparation of the Green and White Papers and the eventual establishment of the National Adult Learning Council.

A deeper understanding of the Irish public policy process and the dysfunctional adult education institutional architecture revealed in this thesis would have tempered the initial enthusiasm and led to more realistic expectations. Understanding the Irish policy process and the institutional barriers to developing and implementing adult education policy through this study will help stakeholders move from despondency to a determination to insist that the Government puts proper adult education structures in place. Proper structures are an essential first step in the development of Irish adult education. Such an understanding will also encourage the State to evaluate the National Adult Literacy Programme and provide a sound basis for developing the literacy service.

Policy making is a complex multi-layered process. In Ireland the usual complexity is added to by the labyrinthine nature of the Irish public policy process. In adult education it is complicated by a dysfunctional institutional architecture. Adult education stakeholders were very optimistic when the first Minister of State for Adult Education was appointed and the publication of a Green and White Paper was announced. However, as we saw earlier in this Chapter, that very appointment was

problematic because the new Minister had responsibility for the education domain only, while his title included all three domains of adult education.

The mood of stakeholders changed because they didn't appreciate why adult education remained at the margins of both public policy and education policy despite the huge effort by policy makers and stakeholders since 1997. The frustration of some stakeholders was because they didn't fully appreciate the extent of the failure to reform the adult education institutional architecture, the impact of the rivalry between DES and DETE on the policy process and the failure of senior management in DES to manage the adult education policy process effectively. That frustration was given concrete expression in the *Adult Learner 2004* and in the 2005 Annual Report of AONTAS (2006: 5).

Stakeholders had of a sense of helplessness fuelled by an understanding at a deep level that the 1997 institutional architecture was not appropriate for a vibrant, effective, mainstream adult education system which met the social, community and economic needs of the Irish people. As Brady (2006: 5) argues "the lack of development of co-ordinating structures for the sector has led to a huge gap in leadership and overall policy development, leading to the continuation of the fragmented growth of the service".



# Chapter Five

## *The Future*

## 5.1 The Lessons Learned

The focus of this research was to identify lessons from the Irish adult education policy process since 1997 and apply them to the future development of adult education on these lessons. The lessons learned are:

- (i) the institutional architecture of a policy system is crucial;
- (ii) the capacity of a lead Department is important in the policy process;
- (iii) stakeholders in a policy sector need to understand the Irish policy process to operate effectively as part of the process;
- (iv) institutional rivalry can undermine policy making in cross-cutting policy areas; and
- (v) evaluation of the National Adult Literacy Programme is critical to the future development of adult literacy provision.

Each lesson is discussed in turn and the chapter concludes with recommendations.

### 5.1.1 *The Institutional Architecture of a Policy System is Crucial*

The Government failed to adequately address the dysfunctional institutional architecture of Irish adult education despite its intention to do so. The result was a weaker architecture created by inserting an 'overarching structure' [the Interdepartmental Steering Committee] above the National Adult Learning Council. The Interdepartmental Steering Committee was established in 2002 following the publication of the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b). The National Adult Learning Council was suspended in 2003 and abolished in 2008.

The outcome of the Government's attempts to reform the dysfunctional adult education institutional architecture was that the 1997 architecture largely remained intact. The only change was the establishment of the Interdepartmental Steering Committee to oversee an abolished National Adult Learning Council and the implementation of the recommendations of the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (DETE, 2002b).

The Government's failure occurred despite its intention to reform the structures, its recognition of the fragmented nature of adult education and the need to build a

coherent and integrated system. The weaknesses in the governance of adult education in 1997 (in place since 1990) was recognised by the National Education Convention (1994), White Paper on Education (1995), White Paper on Human Resource Development (1997), Green Paper (1998), White Paper (2000) and the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (2002).

The Government failed to establish an effective institutional architecture for adult education even though it succeeded in doing so for both qualifications and science policy (OECD, 2006 153-4; NDP 2007-2013:199; Department of the Taoiseach, 2006: 13-15). As Ó Foghlú (interview) observed, the Government made a decision on the institutional architecture before these policy process began, by deciding on the lead Department. However, in the case of adult education the Government opted for fudge and failed to decide on the lead Department.

A contributory factor to the Government failure to design a suitable institutional architecture for adult education was the inability of DES to recommend one in the White Paper (DES, 2000a). The failure of DES is directly attributable to senior management who sidelined adult education and did not allocate enough time and resources to develop proper structures or analyse the defective structures being proposed.

The key lesson learned is that the Government must pick a lead Department for 'cross cutting' issues which span the remit of more than one Government Department. The Government has the primary responsibility to put an appropriate institutional architecture in place for adult education. Policy sectors suffer in the absence proper structures as this study has shown and Wren (2003) and Brady (2006) have previously argued.

### **5.1.2 *The Capacity of a Lead Department Is Important***

DETE managed the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning efficiently. It did this through advance planning, allocating an adequate number of senior managers to the task, establishing clear lines of communication with the Top Management Group, making effective use of the Department's internal structures to devise and implement policy

and operating effectively with the Irish public policy process. As shown in Chapter 4, DES did not apply these strategies to adult education policy making.

Because DETE understood the Irish public policy process through its role as lead Department for human resource policy for the National Development Plans and European Social Fund and because it prioritised adult education more than DES, it was able to assume and maintain control of adult education policy from 1998 to 2007. However, even though DETE was efficient, it was not effective as discussed next.

The Taskforce on Lifelong Learning was essentially a strategy devised by DETE to regain control of adult education policy. The Taskforce process sucked valuable resources into revisiting policies already developed in the White Paper (DES, 2000a) and the National Employment Action Plan (DETE, 2000a). In particular during the first six months of 2000, DES staff preparing the White Paper, had to participate in and contribute to the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning. The Taskforce added little to adult education policy making, apart from highlighting statutory learning leave and the inequity of part-time fees at third level. The lasting legacy of the Taskforce was to further undermine the National Adult Learning Council and thus facilitate the continuation of existing dysfunctional adult education institutional architecture.

The DETE strategy undermined DES and further weakened the puny adult education sector. Furthermore, the strategy was not in the public interest, was contrary to the Government's public policy reform agenda and was a waste of human and financial resources. The actions of DETE could be explained by the proposition that it recognised the limited capacity of DES through its interactions with that Department and outlined in the Cromien Report (DES, 2000b) and decided to protect the training domain from a policy process led by a Department with limited capacity. However, no matter which way you look at it, DETE was efficient in the way it managed the adult education policy process but it was not effective because of the impact of its actions described in Chapter 4.

DES managed the Green and White Paper processes badly which reflects its weak capacity identified by Cromien (DES, 2000b). Significant aspects of its poor capacity included the lack of commitment by senior management to adult education, the fragmented organisation of adult education in DES, poor advance planning and



limited engagement by other sections of the Department in preparing the Green and White Papers.

It is fair to point out that DES had only partial control over the adult education policy process from 1997 to July 2000, while the Green and White Papers were being prepared and from 2000 on when control was gradually wrested by DETE. DES control in 1997-2000 was circumscribed by DETE on the issue of institutional architecture and the training domain of adult education policy. It was further circumscribed by the DETE role in managing the EHRDOP, the European Union Social Fund, the National Employment Action Plans and the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning.

When the White Paper (DES, 2000a) was published, control of adult education policy returned to DETE through the Task Force on Lifelong Learning, the Annual Employment Action Plans and annual reporting on the EHRDOP as part of the National Development Plan and the Partnership Agreements. DETE control of adult education policy was cemented through the Government decision to establish an overarching structure for adult education combined with the suspension of the National Adult Learning Council and the *EHRDOP 2000-2006 Mid-Term Evaluation* (Fitzpatrick, 2004).

The lack of capacity in DES was an important factor in the unworkable institutional architecture proposals in the White Paper (DES, 2000a), which led to the suspension of NALC in 2003. DES tried unsuccessfully to resist attempts by DETE to have the 'overarching structure' proposed in the Task Force Report (DETE, 2002b) established, by recommending that the Government 'identify' rather than 'establish' an overarching structure. The rationale provided by DES was that:

because the National Adult Learning Council has already been established and includes all the appropriate interests D/Ed and NALC believe they should be the body to carry out the co-ordination task. It would be very strange for the Report [Taskforce Report] to recommend another body within months of all interest groups having nominated Reps on the new Council. It would be better still if the Report recommended that the National Adult Learning Council carry out this task<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Observations on the draft Report of the Task Force 9 July 2002 by the Principal Officer FE Section, DES, obtained by FOI request.

Senior management of a stronger DES, with a commitment to adult education would have opposed this self-serving DETE proposal in the interest of the service and in the interest of good governance.

Another important lesson from the adult education policy process about departmental capacity is that any policy initiative needs the support of the Minister and the senior management team to succeed. Without such support the initiative is doomed because it will not attract adequate resources, get support in Social Partnership and NDP processes or stand up to rigorous external analysis and scrutiny by stakeholders and commentators.

An initiative will suffer during implementation without their support even if it gets through the decision making stage through the acquiescence of the Minister and senior management. Where a policy initiative does not have the necessary support, the Minister and the Department should provide the Government with an accurate evaluation of the situation at the start of the policy process and either get the support and resources or defer the initiative. The subterfuge of appearing to be doing something is a waste of precious resources. While it could be argued that such subterfuge is politically expedient in the short term, it will not result in any long term political benefit for the Government.

The lesson from the varying management capacities of DES and DETE and the institutional rivalry between them is that poor capacity in a Government Department undermines the policy process and leads to quick fix solutions that have detrimental effects for the policy sector and the state. Poor capacity also impacts on its ability to interact effectively with the core Departments (Finance and the Taoiseach) as well as with other Departments. Marginalised policy sectors in a low capacity Department suffer severely in policy making process as demonstrated by the experience of the education domain of adult education in DES.

The organisational capacity of a lead Department is an essential ingredient in policy making. However capacity is not sufficient as was demonstrated in the adult education policy process. DETE was organisationally effective, but used its capacity in its own interests, rather than for the overall development of adult education.

### **5.1.3 Stakeholders in a Policy Sector Need to Understand the Irish Policy Process**

The nature of the Irish public policy process during the life of a Coalition Government has an impact on policy making. Stakeholders, who operate within the parameters of the Irish public policy process and manage their resources properly can realise their policy objectives. Objectives can be realised irrespective of whether they are in the public interest or in their own interest. Harvey (2008, 7) argues:

In reality, one's ability to influence policy is dependant on other [other than the fact that 'any citizen can make a case to government for changes in policy'] factors— social class, status, money, recognition, knowing the policy-makers, understanding how the system works and communicating one's message in an articulate and effective manner.

It is difficult to understand and therefore participate effectively the Irish public policy process because it is complex and multi-layered. This reflects the number of institutions, actors and procedures involved as well as the way these institutions and actors network. Complexity is added to because the components of the policy processes operate in different time frames that are not synchronised.

It is difficult for non-governmental stakeholders to engage effectively with the various components (NDP, Social Partnership, National Reform Programme etc) of the policy process at the opportune time. Managing the complexity involves interacting appropriately with the components of the process in a timely manner. Invariably this involves appropriate staffing, long term planning and effective networking as we saw in Chapter Two when reviewing the operation of CORI.

Perhaps the most difficult part of managing the Irish policy process for stakeholders and policy makers is the range of planning cycles and sequences associated with different but interlinked processes as set out in Table 4:

Component of Irish Public Policy Process	Planning Cycle (Years)			
	1	3	5	7
National Development Plan				✓
Programme for Government			✓	
Social Partnership Agreements		✓		
Mid-term Evaluation of NDPs (year 3)		✓		
National Reform Programme (since 2005)		✓		
Green Paper/White Paper (est. preparation time)		✓		
National Employment Action Plans (1998 – 2005)	✓			
Annual Report NDP	✓			
Implementation Report of National Reform Programme	✓			
Annual Review of Social Partnership Agreements	✓			

*Table 4 Planning Cycle for the main components of the Irish public policy process*

The lesson is that stakeholders need to be conscious of these components of the Irish policy process and their sequencing. They need to manage their resources accordingly to maximise the chances of success of their own policy proposals, while at the same time ensuring their policy sector is managed properly and contributes to the welfare of the state.

#### **5.1.4 Institutional Rivalry Can Undermine Policy Making in Cross-cutting Policy Areas**

Government Departments will engage in a ‘turf war’ over a cross cutting policy area unless political decisions are made to decide on the lead Department and the appropriate structures to underpin service delivery.

The lead Department for a ‘cross-cutting’ policy initiative should establish an effective, sufficiently resourced project team to support the initiative. Other Government Departments with a stake in the initiative should be represented on the project team and ensure clear and effective communications channels with their own Top Management Group (Whelan *et al.*, 2003:127-135).

Much time and energy was wasted in the institutional rivalry for control of the adult education policy agenda between 1997 and 2007. Such rivalry is explained by public choice theory, which argues that “in the absence of the market mechanism, public representatives and bureaucrats pursue their own interests...rather than ‘the public interest’” (Boyle, 1995: 5). The institutional rivalry also reflects the approach to policy making favoured in this study, which sees combinations of interests and ideas battling for domination:

The evolutionary approach understands that the elements to policy systems continually interact over time. Combinations of ideas and interests constantly try to dominate decision making and to interact with institutions, patterns of interest groups and socio-economic processes which are slowly changing and evolving over time. The notion is that some ideas are successful in this context, but that change defines the nature of modern public policy.

(John, 1998: 195)

The institutional rivalry between DES and DETE involved maximising Departmental interests and a battle for hegemony between the central organising idea of the competition state promoted by DETE and the more developmental paradigm promoted by DES and stakeholders in the community education domain. The lesson from this research is that the institutional rivalry between DES and DETE contributed to policy failures in developing an appropriate adult education architecture and also led to a waste of resources through unnecessary duplication in policy making and diverting resources to protect ‘turf’. Implementing the ‘whole-of-government approach’ proposed by Whelan *et al.* (2003) would improve the management of cross-cutting issues in the Irish public service.

### **5.1.5 Evaluation of Policies Is a Critical Dimension of Policy Making**

Evaluation is an important feature of Irish public policy. National Development Plans have large scale mid-term evaluations by external consultants as well as evaluations before each Plan is prepared and after its completion. Aspects of the Plan are also evaluated. Formal reviews of the implementation of the Social Partnership agreements are built into the Partnership process.

The failure of DES to carry out an evaluation of the National Adult Literacy Programme is therefore surprising. The lesson is that large numbers of adults with literacy issues are not able to avail of literacy tuition partly because an evaluation

was not carried out and the existing policy was not radically changed. Even those who can avail of tuition are receiving totally inadequate provision by international standards. This is a grave injustice to adults who have already been failed by the education system and it flies against State rhetoric of social inclusion and equality.

A second consequence of DES failure is that the Department's ability to attract sufficient funds to solve the literacy problem is diminished because the State is operating on the basis that the existing level of provision is sufficient. The increase in funding required to make a significant impact on the numbers of adults with literacy issues, will not materialise without the evidence that could be provided by an evaluation of the Literacy Programme.

## **5.2 Applying the Lessons Learned**

The research has demonstrated serious failings in the Irish adult education policy making process since 1997 that have led to the continued existence of a dysfunctional adult educational architecture, the waste of state resources and the denial of social justice to adults with literacy issues.

The aim of this research was to identify the lessons learned from the adult education policy making process since 1997 and use them for the future development of the system. It is important that recommendations based on the lessons learned are taken on board by stakeholders and acted on quickly because of the serious nature of the failings identified. It can be argued that the current state of the public finances precludes the necessary reforms. That assumption misses the fundamental insight in this research. The most important steps in reforming adult education do not require more money. They simply require the effective use of existing or diminished resources.

### **5.2.1 Recommendations on Adult Education Policy**

The recommendations are to adult education policy makers and stakeholders and focus primarily on building an appropriate institutional architecture for the future development of adult education. Implementing the recommendations is a complex task which will demand political and administrative leadership and determination from a unified, informed and well resourced national stakeholder organisation. Failure to implement the recommendations will mean that adult education remains at the margins of Irish public policy.

#### **5.2.1.1 *Decide on a Lead Department***

The Government should decide on a lead Department for adult education policy. This is essential to facilitate coherent planning and draw together the three domains into a cohesive policy sector. Nominating a lead department will allow resources to be concentrated on developing the sector rather than on institutional rivalry at departmental, national agency, sub-national, community and institutional levels.

It is worth noting that the combined resources of the three domains of adult education are substantial. These resources include those of FÁS, Teagasc, Skillnets, the training arm of Tourism Ireland, the employment support services of the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the training programmes of Coillte, BIM, LEADER, initiatives by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and DETE as well as the education domain programmes of DES. The National Development Plan 2000-2006 committed €14.2 billion to the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme (DETE, 2000a: 15). Allowing for the 17 percent of the budget which is committed to education infrastructure and expenditure of approximately €2.5 billion on direct early childhood, primary, post-primary and third level education, this represents a budget of approximately €9.2 billion (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004: Table 2.1 p 11) for adult education.

Nominating a lead Department has already worked in addressing cross-cutting policy issues involving DES and DETE in the case of both qualifications and science technology and innovation policy (Ó Foghlú: interview). Comparing the experience of policy making in these two cross cutting policy areas demonstrates that the designation of a lead Department can lead to positive outcomes. Where the Government did not nominate a lead Department for adult education, resources were used to pursue or defend institutional agendas.

Nominating a lead Department is not sufficient to manage cross cutting issues. The recommendations to Government by Whelan *et al.* (2003: 125-135) in this regard are relevant and should be taken into account in managing adult education into the future. These recommendations are:

- analyse and choose between competing issues;
- concentrate resources on effective execution;
- involve both the political and administrative systems;
- enable the political system to lead and support cross-cutting processes;
- adapt institutional structures and processes;
- adapt behaviour across departments and agencies; and
- develop robust evaluation systems.



#### *5.2.1.2 Develop an Appropriate Institutional Architecture for Adult Education*

The lead Department should have the role of developing an appropriate institutional architecture for adult education. The outcome of the additional research recommended in the next section should inform the process. This study has revealed the impact of a dysfunctional architecture on adult education policy since 1997. The failure of the Government to address the issue properly meant that the future development of adult education will continue to be hampered until the issue is addressed. Therefore it is a high priority for all adult education stakeholders. It also demands leadership from the political and administrative systems.

#### *5.2.1.3 Restructure the Organisation of Adult Education in DES*

The organisation of adult education within DES should be restructured to bring the staffing, financing and infrastructural planning functions for adult education within the remit of a unitary adult education section. The current title of the Further Education Section is restrictive and precludes responsibility for adult education in third-level and does not include infrastructural planning. The establishment of an Adult Education Section in DES should be based on the outcome of the research recommended in the next section. This recommendation, coupled with recognition by senior management of the importance of adult education, will enable DES and the education domain to contribute effectively to the future development of adult education.

#### *5.2.1.4 Establish a Common Stakeholder Platform*

The final recommendation is to non-government stakeholders. Stakeholders from the three domains of adult education should form a common platform to ensure the recommendations for the future development of adult education and the research programme to support that development are implemented and evaluated. One of the key functions of the Stakeholder Platform will be to develop an understanding of the dynamic nature of the Irish public policy process, to educate stakeholders on the process and to use the process effectively for the benefit of adult education.

The Cinderella status of adult education is the result of fragmentation in every aspect of the service including the organisation of stakeholder interest groups. Forming a common stakeholder platform is a two stage process. The first is to develop a common platform within each of the three domains. The task could be facilitated by AONTAS, which has representation from each adult education domain. The second

stage involves bringing the domain interest groups together into a single national adult education advocacy body, which could be a reformed AONTAS. AONTAS and the nominated lead Department will then have a critical role in developing a common adult education platform. Such a process is complex and will take time, good will and financial resources.

## **5.2.2 Recommendations for Further Research into the Adult Education and Public Policy Processes**

There are also a number of aspects of adult education and Irish policy that merit further research to support the recommendations including the institutional architecture, the organisation of adult education in DES, an independent evaluation of the National Adult Literacy Programme and the Irish public policy process. The first area of research is the institutional architecture for adult education.

### *5.2.2.1 Research into an Institutional Architecture for Adult Education*

The priority is to research the institutional architecture for adult education to fulfil one of the aims of the White Paper (DES, 2000a: 27) to “propose a comprehensive structural framework at national and local level for the support and development of adult education”. This is the priority because an appropriate institutional architecture is an essential (though not sufficient) part of future Irish adult education policy.

The terms of reference should concentrate on a number of issues raised in this study:

- (i) an agreed definition of adult education for the Irish State. This is much more complex than it might appear at first glance;
- (ii) an accurate description of the institutional architecture of adult education in 2009;
- (iii) an analysis of the legal and organisational basis of the existing architecture;
- (iv) a description and analysis of all formal and informal adult education programmes by domain delivered in Ireland in 2009, including the philosophy and content of each programme as well as programme delivery, access, accreditation and progression, similarity to programmes in other domains, delivery mechanisms, programme funding and learner

support. The research should also develop national data on numbers of adult education participants by course, programme and attendance hours; and

- (v) propose an appropriate institutional architecture for adult education in the light of an agreed definition, current legislation, the nature of the adult education service now and in the future and the recommendations in the *OECD Review of the Irish Public Service* (OECD, 2008) as well as the taskforce established to implement the OECD recommendations.

#### 5.2.2.2 *Further Research into the Organisation of Adult Education in DES*

Another research priority is a study of the organisation of the education domain of adult education within DES. The education domain will continue to suffer from fragmentation fatigue unless the organisation, coherence and staffing of adult education within DES is addressed. As this study argues, adult education policy, is the responsibility of four different sections of the Department, while the Inspectorate only concerns itself with inspections of Youthreach, despite the fact that the Education Act (1998) provides for inspecting all adult education within the remit of the Minister for Education and Science (DES, 2000a, 162-3). This research could form part of the research of the institutional architecture for adult education.

#### 5.2.2.3 *Evaluate the National Adult Literacy Programme*

It is essential that DES commissions an independent, external evaluation of the implementation of the National Adult Literacy Programme as recommended in the *Fourth Report of the Joint Committee on Education and Science: Adult Literacy in Ireland* (2006: 25).

An overarching evaluation of the National Adult Literacy Programme 2000-2006, [should] be carried out in relation to the policy objectives and targets which were set out for the Programme during that period.

The evaluation is necessary because less than half the adults with literacy problems identified by IALS, have benefited from tuition. It is also important because DES, as the study has shown, was aware that the programme could not deliver an adequate service to tackle the adult literacy problem. The original financial allocation for literacy was diluted by the decision of DES not to provide a separate budget to VECs for providing ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). Finally, an evaluation of the National Adult Literacy Programme is important because it can contribute to the mid-term review of the current NDP and possibly lead to realistic

funding for adult literacy. It is critical that the evaluation allows for comparisons with the data in the 1997 IALS Report.

#### 5.2.2.4 *Research into the Architecture of the Irish Public Policy Process*

The structure and organisation of the Irish public policy process is also an important area for further research because of the way it impacts on adult education policy making. Much research has been carried out in recent years by the Institute of Public Administration on particular aspects of Irish public policy. However, there has been no research that I am aware of, into the overall organisation and structure of the Irish process and the relationships between the components of the process. Such research is necessary because components of the process have developed in ad hoc ways as a response to external forces and internal problems.

For example, the National Development Planning process was the State's response to demands by the EU for costed, structured and cohesive plans, prepared in accordance with EU guidelines, in order to attract structural funding. The National Employment Action Plans and their successor the National Reform Programme are also prepared at the behest of the EU, while Social Partnership Agreements developed out of the catastrophic state of the Government's finances in the mid 1980s.

Research into the Irish policy process should focus on a number of issues. The first is the timing and sequencing of the components of the process, which the OECD (2008: pp 257-8) identified as important. The second is the relative importance and weighting of the various components of the Irish policy process and how they relate to Government White Papers and other major policy documents.

This issue arises because of the way DETE used the Social Partnership and the National Development processes to advance its agenda for control of adult education policy making. It also arises out of the fact that, at the end of 1999, the White Paper process, the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*, and the *National Development Plan 2000-2006* as well as its *Employment and Human Resource Development Operational Programme 2000-2006* were being completed at the same time.

The evidence from this research is that a significant amount of common material is contained in these documents and the battle for control of adult education policy was fought through these processes happening around the same time. Consequently,

the research should examine the dynamics between these separate components of the Irish public policy planning process in a number of policy areas other than adult education.

Research into a protocol to ensure that the efforts of the political system, public servants and stakeholders are not wasted in institutional rivalry or duplication of effort in policy making is also needed. The experience in adult education policy making demonstrates that the policy process could have led to a much better outcome had the energy and resources that went into servicing the components of the Irish policy process and maintaining institutional rivalry been devoted to rectifying the dysfunctional institutional architecture of the adult education sector and to securing adequate funding to tackle the literacy problem.

A study of the role of Green Papers and White Papers in the Irish public policy process and their efficacy as policy mechanisms also merits research. The research should examine the relevance of green papers and white papers in a policy process that has developed many new components since 1987. It could be argued, for example, that the analysis prepared by the National Economic and Social Council in advance of each Social Partnership Agreement performs the function of a Green Paper and the actual Social Partnership Agreement performs the function of a White Paper.

At an operational level, one of the surprising facts discovered during the research is that there does not appear to be any blueprint for preparing Green and White papers (Ó Foghlú: interview). Such research is complementary to that on the overall Irish public policy framework.

### 5.3 Conclusion

Adult education in Ireland remains fragmented, despite 10 years of active policy making and the receipt of significant resources. The continuing fragmentation remains because the Government did not decide on a lead Department before the formal policy making process recommenced in 1997 and fudged decisions on institutional reform in 2000 and 2002. The Government in fact made a bad situation worse by appointing a Minister of State with a remit for part of adult education in the first place, by authorising parallel DES-led and DETE-led policy making vehicles [the White Paper, the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning] and by failing to subject institutional architectural proposals from both Departments to a proper analysis for political expediency.

This study identified lessons from the adult education planning process since 1997. The challenge for the Government and stakeholders is to learn from the mistakes and apply the lessons to radically overhaul the system in the next five years. The research community must also rise to the challenge of providing evidence to support the future development of adult education. Adult education advocacy bodies and coalitions should put aside narrow sectional interests to become the champions of adult education policy into the future through the Stakeholder Platform.

Irish adult education can use the considerable resources identified in this study for the social and economic benefit of learners, communities and the State by operating within a sound adult education architecture created by the State and basing future policy on the theoretical underpinning of the White Paper (DES, 2000a).

In conclusion the State has to move beyond sectoral subterfuge to collective leadership. The State also has to move beyond rhetoric to an integrated, coherent, cohesive adult education service. The nomination of a lead Department for adult education is a critical first step. Deciding on an institutional architecture is the second. Unless these steps are taken everything else will be in vain.

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## **Appendix A 1 FOI request-DES 2006**

### **A. *The Green Paper on Adult Education (1999)***

- (i) Written Submissions of all the organisations listed in Appendix 2 to the White Paper (2000) – pp 206-212;
- (ii) Copy of Oral Submissions received as per Appendix 3-pp 213-216. Note that there are organizations that only made an oral submission; and
- (iii) Commentaries, submissions, information, data, analysis, advice, responses provided by the following sections of DES at any time during the entire process:
  - Universities /Colleges Section, Post-primary Administration
  - Post-primary Teachers' Section, The Inspectorate
  - Statistics, Social Inclusion
  - ESF Section, MAC
  - Minister's Office, Minister of State's Office.

### **B. *The Consultative Process on the Green Paper***

- (i) Copies of advertisements placed in national and regional newspapers inviting submissions on the Green Paper and notice of the Regional meetings;
- (ii) Briefing documents for DES staff attending the Regional meetings; and
- (iii) Report(s) on the Regional meetings and the National Meeting held in Dublin Castle.

### **C. *Other Information on the Green Paper***

- (i) Submissions received from organisations and bodies before the Green Paper was published;
- (ii) Minutes of the MAC meeting approving submission of Green Paper to Cabinet;
- (iii) Report on oral submissions on the Green Paper.

**D. White Paper 2000**

- (i) Minutes of meetings with managerial bodies on the White Paper structural proposals in the period January 2000 to the end of June 2000;
- (ii) Copies of representation/proposals other than the formal written submissions or oral presentations made by the following organizations, in respect of the White Paper:
  - IBEC, ASTI
  - JMB, ACCS
  - FÁS, Teagasc and
  - CERT, NRB.
- (iii) Minutes of meeting of MAC in Oct/Nov 1999 attended by representatives of the Green Paper Team to present a report to MAC on the Green Paper and on the consultative process. The meeting sought to get direction from MAC on issues that had arisen. The meeting was attended by MI Martin, the Minister for Education and Science;
- (iv) Copies of all documentation submitted by the FE Section to MAC in relation to the Green and White Papers;
- (v) Responses of all Government Departments to the draft of the White Paper circulated for comment, before preparation of the Memorandum for Government;
- (vi) The Memorandum for Government on the White Paper; and
- (vii) Copy of the formal Government decision on the White Paper.

**E. Organisational Structures and Arrangement in FE within DES**

- (i) Staffing of Adult Education Unit by name and grade on the date Willie O' Dea took up office as Minister for State;

- (ii) Programmes managed by unit on that date;
- (iii) Staffing of ESF section by name and grade on the same date;
- (iv) Adult education programmes managed by that section on that date;
- (v) Date of the establishment of the Further Education Section by the amalgamation of the Adult Education and ESF sections; and
- (vi) Memorandum/letter/instrument approving the re-organization.

**F. Implementation of White Paper**

- (i) Establishment of NALC:
  - Minute of relevant MAC Meeting;
  - Memorandum/decision to establish NALC;
  - Letter of approval from Finance;
  - Views of two DES Ministers written or noted on NALC File;
  - Consultations around the membership of NALC and the appointment process;
  - Terms of reference of NALC/ Memorandum approving them, correspondence on the terms;
  - Decision/letter appointing Jack O' Brien as consultant to NALC;
  - Correspondence with Finance on the budget of NALC and the salary of the proposed Director/CEO;
  - Memo/letter/instrument instructing a review of NALC;
  - Minutes of NALC meetings;
  - Minutes of the NALC meeting which approved the review; and
  - The Report of the Review by Breda Naughton.
- (ii) Appointment of Community Education Facilitators (CEFs)
  - Minute of relevant MAC Meeting;
  - Memo/letter/instrument approving their appointment;
  - Letter of approval from Finance;
  - Memo etc. appointing AONTAS to provide the CEF Support Service;

- Data on costs, staffing number of learners benefiting annually by VEC, and nationally;
- Annual Report of AONTAS on the CEF Support Service;
- Minutes of meetings of Support Service Management Committee; and
- Any internal report or evaluation of the CEF scheme.

(iii) BTEI

- Minute of relevant MAC Meeting;
- Memo etc. approving the establishment of BTEI;
- Letter of approval from Finance;
- Memo etc approving the appointment of national BTEI Co-ordinators;
- Allocation per annum by VEC and community group;
- Report each year by Application Evaluation Committee; and
- Annual Report of National Co-ordinators.

(iv) Adult Literacy Initiative

- Memo etc. approving the establishment of the Initiative;
- Minute of relevant MAC meeting;
- Memo etc. approving the appointment of NALA as National Co-ordinators;
- Annual Report of National Co-ordinators on the Initiative and on all other work carried out by NALA on behalf of DES;
- Annual budget for the Initiative;
- Annual Data on numbers of learners and staffing by VEC each year since 1997; and
- Minutes of National Adult Literacy Advisory Group Meetings established in 2002.

**G. VTOS/Youthreach**

- (i) Annual Reports by National Co-ordinators;

**H. Childcare**

- (i) Memo etc. reducing child care places in VECs; and
- (ii) Budget/out turn annually for childcare in VECs from 1997-2007.

**I. Adult Guidance**

- (i) Memo etc. approving the Adult Guidance Initiative;
- (ii) Basis for decision to roll it out in three phases;
- (iii) Report of Evaluation Committee recommending the approval of applications for each of the three phases;
- (iv) Annual Report by NEPS on the Initiative 2000-2005; and
- (v) Annual Budget /out-turn by VEC 2000-2005.



**J. Self Funded Adult Education – Appointment of Directors of Adult Education**

- (i) Information requested on the appointment of Directors by category of Director, and by sector from 2001/02 to 2005/06. The sectors are VEC, Voluntary Secondary and ACCS.

**K. Co-ordination Support Services**

- (i) Copy of report by Mary Kett on the co-ordination of the Support Services for Adult Education.

**L. Budgets/Staffing/Numbers/Data/Stats FE**

- (i) Numbers of students in each year by adult education programmes managed by the FE Section including self-funded courses;
- (ii) Numbers of full time staff by programme and category each year from 1997-2005;
- (iii) Annual budget for FE 1997-2005; and
- (iv) Annual amount of EU funding by programme from 1997-2005.

**M. Links of FE Unit(s) with other Bodies, Departments/Institutions on Policy Matters**

- (i) FE submissions to the following as separate or part of DES submission:
  - NDP 2000-2006 and 2007-2013;
  - Annual Employment Action Plans 1998-2006;
  - White Paper on Human Resource Development (1997);
  - Report of the European Year of Lifelong Learning, NAPS 1997 to 2006;
  - Task Force on Lifelong Learning; Priorities of Irish EU Presidency; and
  - Vocational Education Amendment Act (2001).

## **Appendix A2: FOI Request to DES 1/12/2006**

- Document A – Outstanding Documents and
- Document B - Request for Additional Documents

### **Document A – Outstanding Documents**

#### **A. *The Green Paper on Adult Education (1999)***

- Copies of written submissions on the Green Paper. Arising out of an earlier discussion I have checked and found that the submissions are not in Maynooth. I asked you to check with Helen Keogh. I note that in respect of my offer to search the store in Tullamore, you are proposing to charge a fee for forklift hire.

#### **B. *The Consultative Process on the Green Paper***

- Completed.

#### **C. *Other Information on the Green Paper***

- Minutes of MAC/TMG meeting approving submission of Green Paper to cabinet.

#### **D. *White Paper 2000***

- Copy of formal government decision on White Paper on Adult Education.

#### **E. *Organisational Structures and Arrangement in FE within DES***

- Programmes managed by the Adult Education Unit when Willie O' Dea took up office in 1997 (I understand Des O' Loughlin has the information).

#### **F. *Implementation of White Paper***

- (i) Minutes of all MAC/TMG where NALC was discussed including submissions by the FE Section to those meetings.
- (ii) Appointment of Community Education Facilitators :
  - Minute of relevant MAC/TMG Meeting;
  - Memo/letter/instrument approving their appointment;

- Letter of approval from Finance;
- Memo etc. appointing AONTAS to provide CEF Support Service;
- Data on Costs/ staffing/ numbers of learners benefiting annually by VEC and Nationally;
- Annual Reports by AONTAS on CEF Support Service; and
- Any internal Report or Evaluation of CEF Support Service.

(iii) BTEI:

- Minute of relevant MAC/TMG meetings where BTEI was discussed;
- Report each year of Funding Application Evaluation committee; and
- Annual Reports by national co-ordinators.

(iv) Adult Literacy Initiative:

- Memo of relevant MAC/TMG meeting where initiative was approved;
- Memo etc. appointing NALA as co-ordinator for the programme;
- Annual Report of National Co-ordinator on the initiative and all other work carried out by NALA on behalf of DES;
- Annual budget for initiative since it was introduced;
- Annual data on numbers of learners and staffing by VEC each year since 1997; and
- Minutes of National Adult Literacy Advisory Groups meetings established in 2002.

**G. VTOS/Youthreach**

- Completed.

**H. Childcare**

- Completed.

**I. Adult Guidance**

- Completed.

**J. Self Funded Adult Education – Appointment of Directors of Adult Education**

- Information on the appointment of Directors by category of Director and by sector from 2000/2001 to 2005/2006. The sectors are VEC, Voluntary Secondary and Community/ Comprehensive.

**K. Co-ordination Support Services**

- Copy of report by Berni Judge on the co-ordination of the Support Services for Adult Education (incorrect name given in original request).

**L. Budgets/Staffing/Numbers/Data/Stats FE**

- (i) Numbers of students in each year by adult education programmes managed by the FE Section including Self- funded courses;
- (ii) Numbers of full time staff by programme and category each year from 1997-2006;
- (iii) Annual budget for FE 1997-2006; and
- (iv) Annual amount of EU funding by programme from 1997-2006.

**M. Links of FE Unit(s) with other Bodies, Departments/Institutions on Policy Matters**

FE submissions to the following as separate or part of DES submission:

- NDP 2000-2006 and 2007-2013;
- Annual Employment Action Plans 1998-2004;
- White Paper on Human Resource Development (1997);
- Report of the European Year of Lifelong Learning;
- NAPS 1997 to 2006;
- Task Force on Lifelong Learning;
- Priorities of Irish EU Presidency; and
- Vocational Education Amendment Act (2001).

## **Document B - Additional Documents Requested**

- Minutes TMG/MAC 18/5/2000 and all other meetings where the White Paper on Adult Education was discussed following the TMG meeting of 11/11/1999;
- Minutes/ memo internal senior management meeting 25/05/00 ( DOL - Note Bk. 8);
- Memo by C. Connolly, Inspector (DOL: 8);
- Document prepared by Margaret Kelly on part-time options 20/09/00;
- Implementation schedule for White Paper, which was an attachment to the e/mail sent by Des O' Loughlin to Connie Larkin and Rhona Mc Sweeney on August 24th at 5.50 pm;
- AEOA document presented at meeting in Dept. on 16/05/02 (DOL: 12);
- Document on NALC priorities 5/11/02 (DOL: 12);
- Briefing document for meeting between Minister and NALC 5/11/02 (DOL: 12);
- Document referred to by Des O' Loughlin for February meeting of NALC referred to on notes of meeting 28/03/03 (DOL :13);
- FE Section business plans 2004, 2005, 2006;
- Document prepared by Helen Keogh/D Stokes/G. Griffin on support services of 31/08/04 (DOL: 14);
- Memo prepared by P. Gildea for meeting with TMG/Mac on FE Building programme (DOL: 14);

- Minutes on MAC discussion on Memo on Capital programme;
- Tabular statement circulated by Dave Barry(DETE) dated 27/07/04 on the implementation of the Taskforce Report on Life Long Learning (DOL :14);
- NALA/AONTAS business plans as requested at meeting of 3/12/04 (DOL: 14);
- Minutes/agendas of all Lifelong Learning Steering Group meetings involving DES/DETE/ Taoiseach / Finance;
- Terms of reference of CEF Steering Group 8/5/05 (DOL: 13);
- The Fitzpatrick Report;
- Document presented by Mary Kett and Inez Bailey to a meeting of the IALS committee 10/2/05 (DOL: 15);
- Internal Document on achieving NAPS targets (DOL: 15);
- Paper prepared by Tom Healy following meeting of 10/2/05 (DOL: 15);
- Paper on disability and adult education considered at meeting of 24/02/05;
- Organisational chart of FE Section;
- Discussion document on BTEI prepared by Mary Kett (2005 or 2006);
- The draft AEGI Evaluation Report submitted by NCGE to FE Section in 2006-11-30; and
- Report by Ger Melia on industry links (2006).

## Appendix A3 FOI DES - Jan 2008

- Response of DES to Draft National Employment Action Plans/National Reform Programmes – 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007;
- Presentation by DES to Bi-lateral Meeting with EU Commission on the National Reform Programme 1/07/2005;
- TMG/MAC Minutes (relevant section only);
- Consideration of IALS Report – possibly June, July, August 1997;
- Consideration of appointment of John Coolahan/Tom Collins as advisors for Green Paper on AE – possibly November 1997;
- Consideration of DES response to 1999 Draft NEAP – possibly FEB/ March 1999;
- Consideration of Memo for Government on Green Paper on Adult Education – possibly October/November 1998;
- Consideration of consultative process on Green Paper on AE – possibly Feb/Mar 1999;
- Consideration(s) of Memo for Government on White Paper on AE – possibly May, June, July 2000;
- Consideration of Phase 1 Report on the Implementation of Cromien and the Phase 1 Report itself;
- Approval/agreement for a number of adult education initiatives including NALC, BTEI, Community Education Facilitators etc possibly late December 01 or early Jan.02;

- Consideration of Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning - possibly September/October 2002 - taken at Cabinet 22/10/2002;
- Consideration of Cabinet decision to establish a steering committee to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning - possibly November 2002;
- Consideration of Terms and Conditions for appointment of a CEO for NALC – possibly Dec. 02 or Jan/Feb 03;
- Presentation by Pauline Gildea, PO on NALC and Lifelong Learning - week of Oct. 30th 2003;
- Consideration of Report from Central Policy Unit on NALC – possibly Jan/Feb/Mar 04;
- Consideration of proposal to integrate FE Support Services – possibly May/June/July05;
- Consideration of proposal from FE section to involve other Government Departments in Literacy Strategy; and
- Consideration of proposals from FE section for capital funding of FE projects possibly September- Dec 04.

***Inspectorate***

- Memo prepared by C. Connolly on Adult and Continuing Education dated 3/3/2000.

***International Section***

- Draft Chapter on White Paper on Adult Education entitled 'Co-operation with Northern Ireland.



### ***Social Inclusion Unit***

- Minutes of Standing Committee on Social Inclusion from 7/09/01 to date.

### ***FE Section***

- Briefing document for Minister of State for her meeting with NALC;
- Terms of reference of NALC review (not included in CPU report Jan 04);
- List of those consulted interviewed during NALC Review (see Par 1. 0 of Report);
- Representations, Memos on the Statutory Instrument for the establishment of NALC;
- Report of Working Group on the establishment of BTEI - WG included Helen Keogh, Dermot Stokes and Ger Griffin possibly 2000 or 2001;
- Business Plan for FE Section 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007;
- Copy of NALA and AONTAS Business Plans for 04 to 07 inclusive;
- Copy of e-mail, including attachments, by Margaret Kelly to P. Gildea, Pat Burke and Paul Kelly on 30/01/03 (see DOL Note Book 13 meeting 24/03/2003);
- Memorandum prepared for Minister on PLC review group (see Des O' Loughlin's Note Books 13);
- Paper prepared for TMG on the involvement of other Depts. in Literacy strategy;
- 'Report to Cabinet Sub Committee on Social Inclusion presented by Des O' Loughlin at meeting of Task Force on Lifelong Learning Sub-Group on Situational, Institutional and other Barriers held on 6/9/2000;
- Department's observations on Draft Report of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning – possibly July/August/ September 2002;

- Annual BTEI Proposal for Funding to Finance 2002/2008 and Finance's letters of approval;
- Briefing Note for Minister of State for meeting with the Tánaiste and Inez Bailey on 23/06/04;
- Scoping paper prepared by DES on 'Tackling Educational Disadvantage - Literacy and Numeracy and Early School Leavers , Objective 4 Sustaining Progress' and other papers prepared in the same context on AE issues in Sustaining Progress; and
- Document circulated by Pauline Gildea, PO to Joint Committee on Education for its meeting on 27/01/2.

## Appendix A 4 FOI Request DETE: 2006

### A. *Green Paper on Education 1998 and White Paper on Education 2000*

- The names/functions and grade of DETE staff involved in the Green and White Paper processes from January 1998 to July 2000;
- All submissions from DETE sent to DES on both the Green and White Papers;
- Copy of text/briefing note used by DETE in its oral presentation on the Green Paper that DETE might prefer a National Learning Council rather than the proposal contained in the Green Paper;
- An outline of the process/strategy adopted by DETE and FÁS arising out of its formal involvement in the White Paper process from December 1999 onwards;
- The basis/rationale for the DETE decision not to make a written submission on the Green Paper on Adult Education issued in November 1998;
- Briefing documents/memoranda/notes/minutes of the meeting between DES/DETE officials held on 16/12/1999. The meeting (from DES records) was attended by Eoin Ó Domhnaill;
- Minutes/memo/note/report of White Paper Team attended by Pat Houlihan;
- Minutes etc. held by DETE of White Paper Team meetings of 18/1/00 attended by those listed above; and
- Minutes etc of any other meetings of White Paper Team held between 18/1/00 and 1/08/00;

### B. *Taskforce Report on Lifelong Learning - 2002*

- A description of the strategy/approach adopted by DETE to manage the preparation of the *Taskforce Report* including the terms of reference and contractual document with consultants employed to assist in the preparation of the Report. Also the reporting mechanisms to the TMG within DETE and to the Department of Finance;
- Names and grades of DETE staff involved in the process;

- Copies of all submissions received during the process and a minute/record of meetings held with interest groups, agencies and other Government Departments;
- Minutes/memos/notes of all meetings of the *Taskforce* and its subcommittees;
- Reflection paper prepared by Ned Costello (Chairperson) mentioned at the meeting of 31/03/06;
- Written responses to the *Reflection Paper* requested at the meeting of 31/3/00;
- Copy of relevant section of minutes of TMG re progress of Taskforce (2002) and decisions on important issues including the meeting where the document was approved for publication;
- Copy of the relevant section of TMG minutes on The White Paper in Education;
- Inputs by the Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment and the Minister for Labour Affairs or their representatives to the Taskforce process;
- Comments from other Government Departments on the Draft Taskforce Report; and
- All correspondence/memos/communications in relation to the Taskforce.

**C. *National Employment Action Plans 2000 and 2005***

- The Process/handbook/guide/template etc used by DETE in preparing NEAPS in 2000 and 2005;
- All documents considered and prepared as well as specific research carried out in relation to NEAP 2000 and 2005; and
- Submissions received from the education sector on NEAP 2000 and 2005.

**D. General**

- Submissions by NALA on its application for funding in respect of Workforce Literacy; and
- Minutes of meetings with NALA on WPL and letter of approval for funding.

## **Appendix A5: FOI DETE 2008**

### **A. *TMG***

- TMG meetings in Jan/Feb/Mar/Apr/May 1999 – minutes and documents relating NEAP 1999;
- Minutes and documentation of TMG meeting held possibly in December 1999 or January 2000 authorising the establishment of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning, which met for the first time in February 2000; and
- Minutes and documentation of the TMG meeting, which considered the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning and the Cabinet decision on the adoption of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning were these matters were discussed. The Cabinet decision was taken on 22/10/2002.

### **B. *Employment and Training Strategy Unit***

- Status Reports on the implementation of the recommendations of the Taskforce on Lifelong learning 2003-2008; and
- Two attachments to an e-mail sent by David Barry to Pat Houlihan, Barry O' Brien and Ned Costello: subject Re: LLL Task Force on 09/07/2002 at 13:58. The attachments are:
  - (i) The attachment forwarded by Ned Costello on 09/07/02 at 12: 02 to Sean O' Gorman, David Barry, Pat Houlihan and the attachment from Margaret Kelly entitled 'TFRPT June MK&NC amen'
  - (ii) Minutes of all meetings of the Inter-Departmental/NALC Steering Committee. The first meeting was held on 28/03/03. The Committee is still extant.

## Appendix A6 FOI Dept of Taoiseach 12/02/08

- (i) Relevant part of the minutes of meetings on the following partnership agreements where aspects of adult education, training and lifelong learning were discussed/agreed:
- Partnership 2000 – 1996;
  - Programme for Prosperity and Fairness – 2000;
  - Sustaining Progress – 2003; and
  - Towards 2016 – 2006.
- (ii) Formal progress reports and minute of the discussion on lifelong learning/adult education/training presented by DES and DETE to Partnership Monitoring Committees during the period 1996-2008. An example is the reports presented by DES and DETE to the Monitoring Committee on 25/09/2003;
- (iii) Presentation by Dave Barry DETE to Sustaining Progress Plenary on 14/10/2003 and minute of the discussion;
- (iv) Relevant parts of minutes of mid term reviews of the following Partnership Agreements:
- Partnership 2000 – 1996;
  - Programme for Prosperity and Fairness – 2000;
  - Sustaining Progress – 2003;
  - Towards 2016 – 2006; and
- (v) Response by the Department of the Taoiseach to Memo from DETE on the establishment of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning 13/01/2000.

## Appendix A 7 Final FOI to D/Taoiseach

Muckross,  
Tyone,  
Nenagh,  
Co. Tipperary

29/02/08

Reference FOI/2008/1294

Lisa:

Thank you for your letter of 25/02/08. Following consideration of the cost I wish to narrow the request down further to the following:

- (i) Relevant part of the minutes of the Steering Group and Plenary meetings of PPF 2000 where aspects of adult education, training and lifelong learning were agreed/ discussed.
- (ii) Minute of Monitoring Committee of 25/09/2003 where reports presented by DES/DETE to Monitoring Committee were discussed and a copy of the reports.
- (iii) Report presented by Dave Barry, DETE to Sustaining Progress Plenary on 14/10/2003 and a minute of the discussion.
- (iv) Minutes of the Steering Group for the Mid-term Review of PPF where Adult Education /training actions were discussed.
- (v) Official Response by Dept. of the Taoiseach to Memo from DETE on establishment of Task Force on Lifelong Learning.

Yours faithfully,  
Luke Murtagh



## **Appendix A 8 FOI D/Finance 12/02/08**

- (i) Observations on the White Paper on Adult Education – Summer 2000;
- (ii) Observations on the Report of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning – September/October/November 2002;
- (iii) Correspondence from DES on the establishment of a Further Education Support Unit – 2001/2002; and
- (iv) Annual Operational Programme on Human Resource Development Report 2000-2008.

## Appendix A 9 Final Request D/ Finance 20/03/08

Muckross,  
Tyone,  
Nenagh,  
Co. Tipperary

20/03/08

Dear Emer,

Further to our latest conversation I wish to amend my FOI as follows:

- The final observation of the DETE policy section and the definitive observations of the Department of Finance on the White Paper on Adult Education published in July 2000;
- The final observations of the education policy section and the definitive final observations on the Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, which was published in October 2002; and
- The letter of sanction from the Department of Finance for a further education support unit in the Department of Education and Science in around November 2001.

Yours faithfully,

Luke Murtagh.

## **Appendix B (1) Biographical Note: Willie O’Dea**

Willie O’Dea, TD was the first Minister of State with responsibility for adult education and served as Minister from 1997-2002. He oversaw the publication of the Green and White Papers and the first phase of the implementation of the White Paper including the establishment of NALC. .

The interview (Appendix B 2) explored the political dimension of putting adult education on the policy agenda; his role in the process and his relationships with other policy-making elites. The interview also focussed on his views on adult education, his ideology and the implementation of The White Paper.

## **Appendix B (2) Aide Memoire Questions: Willie O’ Dea**

- What was your reaction when you were informed by the Taoiseach you were to be appointed Minister of State with responsibility for adult education?
- Why did you decide to publish a Green Paper/White Paper?
- Do you remember a meeting with Des O’ Loughlin where you told him you wanted to take a major policy initiative in adult education?
- You have been a cabinet minister and a junior minister. In the role of junior minister you are dependent on your relationship with your senior minister. What was your relationship with MI. Martin on the Green Paper/White Paper?
- Martin Cullen is quoted as saying in Katie Hannon’s book *The Naked Politician* (2004: 159) “if you want a really major change of agenda, if there are key things you want to do that is not a safe and tried and well tested path, you have to fight your corner”. Can you comment on this in relation to the Green Paper/White Paper?

- MI D. O' Higgins is quoted in Katie Hannon's book as saying – “but at the very top there is resistance to change”. Was that the situation in relation to the Green Paper/White Paper?
- Seamus Brennan is quoted in the same book as saying “you have to put in the hours and a minister can't lose control of policy”. What are your views?
- What was your view of the decision to get support from John Coolahan and Tom Collins for the GP/WP process?
- Who in your view were the most important players in the process?
- John Bruton, in the Hannon book is quoted as saying – His vast experience didn't save him from being drawn into ridiculous jealousies between Departments where rivalries over disputed territories curdled into institutionalized obstruction.
- How would you characterize the relations between DES and DETE during the GP/WP process?
- What role did your advisors play in the process?
- There was an important meeting in November 1999 where the outcome of the consultation process on the Green paper was considered and the issues arising debated. That meeting involved MAC, the FE section, John Coolahan/Tom Collins and MI Martin and gave a policy steer on how these issues should be dealt with in the WP. Why didn't you attend that meeting? What involvement did you have in the preparation for the meeting? Were you briefed on the outcome?
- There was to be a second meeting a week later which you were to attend but was postponed because of the funeral of a close family member of an official in DES. The postponed meeting never took place why?

- I understand there was a long wait for the White Paper to be reached on the cabinet agenda on the day it was approved. Without breaking cabinet confidentiality did the White Paper have a difficult passage through the cabinet?
- Did the Independent Group [of TDs], which was supporting the Government, have any comments on or interest in the White Paper?
- What are your memories of the launch and your feelings about the project at that time?
- What are your views on the National Adult Learning Council and the Local Adult Learning Board proposed in the WP?
- What role did AONTAS and NALA play in the process?

### **White Paper Implementation**

- I think you were in office for two years after the publication of the White Paper. How did you set about implementing the White Paper proposals?
- One of your last acts before you left office was to establish NALC. Why did you decide to establish NALC just before you left office? Was there resistance from officials? Why did you appoint Noel Whelan as chair?
- There were two ideologies underpinning the WP - a market ideology and a communitarian ideology - what is your own ideology?

## **Appendix C (1) Biographical Note: Síle de Valera**

Síle de Valera TD was Minister of State at DES with responsibility for adult education from 2002-2006. She had political responsibility for the implementation of the White Paper. The interview explored the political dimension of continuing with the implementation of the White Paper, including the failure to establish The National Adult Learning Council on a statutory basis and to establish the Local Adult Learning Boards. The interview also explored her ideology, views on adult education, a time table and priorities for implementing The White Paper.

## **Appendix C (2) Aide Memoire Questions: Síle de Valera**

- What were your feelings on being appointed Minister for State for Adult Education?
  
- What were the key issues facing you when you were appointed?
  
- What targets did you set yourself as Minister?
  
- What are your views on how the implementation of the White Paper has progressed?
  
- How important is the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* in policy terms for you as minister?
  
- What are your views on the re-establishment of NALC and the LALBs?
  
- What are your views on the future organisation of support services within the remit of your Department?
  
- How do you see the roles of the following organisations in the adult and further education sectors - AONTAS, NALA, IVEA?

- What are your views on the capping of PLC numbers and the reduction of Childcare provision within the sector?
- What are our views on the role of DETE and DFSA in the sector? How can the relationships between the main departments involved in adult and further education provision be managed in the interests of learners?
- How should the competing ideologies of the market and human potential be managed in adult and further education policy?
- What are your ambitions for the remainder of your term of office?
- How would you evaluate your contribution to the development of adult and further education during your term of office?

## **Appendix D (1) Biographical Note: Margaret Kelly**

Margaret Kelly was PO in the FE section DES from 1999-2002<sup>59</sup> (FE Section of DES and was responsible for the development, publication, and implementation of the Green and White Papers). Margaret Kelly and Willie O' Dea were key players in the policy making process. As noted already they were the first Minister and PO with direct responsibility for adult education in the history of the state.

## **Appendix D (2) Aide Memoire Questions: Margaret Kelly**

- Q1 When were you appointed as Acting PO/PO for adult education? Who made the decision to establish the FE section and why was the decision made?
- Q2 When you were appointed PO was the preparation of the GP already underway:
- (a) What did you know about the process before you were appointed?
  - (b) What stage of development was the GP at?
  - (c) What challenges did you face?
- Q3 A key dimension of the WP was to get responses to the GP and draw on those responses in preparing the WP:
- (a) Who prepared the consultation strategy?
  - (b) What was that strategy?
  - (c) You received 146 written submissions - were you satisfied with the response?
  - (d) How did you decide on whom to invite to make oral submissions?
  - (e) How were the oral submissions structured in terms of time?
  - (f) Who heard the submissions?
  - (g) Did any written/oral submissions strike you as important/effective?
  - (h) How did you feel about the Regional Seminars in terms of their value/success/participation/outstanding contributions?
  - (i) Who managed the process?

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<sup>59</sup> She had been an Acting PO in the Section from May 1998.



- Q4 How was the interface with key departments managed?
- (a) At what level was the interface?
  - (b) What were the key issues/sticking points?
  - (c) How in particular was the relationship with Finance managed? Who was the key person?
  - (d) How did adult education policy get into the National Plan?
- Q5 Who was the responsible Assistant Secretary?
- (a) What was his level of involvement?
  - (b) Did MAC consider drafts of the Paper – was there feedback?
- Q6 What was your own personal contribution to both papers?
- Q7 From my research I have identified the following as key contributors/influencers: Margaret Kelly, Helen Keogh, Berni Brady, Inez Bailey, Anne Ryan, Tom Collins and John Coolahan. Have I left anybody out – could you comment on each contribution to the process<sup>60</sup>?
- Q8 How important was the impact of the *IALS Report* - what impact did it have?
- Q9 You have referred to SMI in your presentations [to stakeholders] – how conscious were you of it in preparing the WP?
- Q10 In my view there were three distinct philosophies underpinning the WP human capital, human resource and communitarianism. How did they impact on the process, who was championing each philosophy?

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<sup>60</sup> Because there were no minutes of the meetings of the Green Paper and White Paper teams I had difficulty in establishing the membership of the teams. DOL referred to those present who contributed and used initials or Christian names only.

Q11 What sort of challenges faced you in terms of structures at national and local levels?

(a) What were the issues?

(b) What sort of compromise was arrived at to allow the WP to be accepted?

Q12 What influences had The EU/OECD/Council of Europe/UNESCO on the process?

Explore *Cromien Report*, refugees/asylum seekers, structures and Management Information System.

## **Appendix E (1) Biographical Note: Pauline Gildea**

Pauline Gildea was Principal Officer in the FE section DES from 2002 to 2005 and had responsibility for the second phase of implementing the White Paper. Prior to becoming Principal Officer she was Assistant Principal in the ESF Section of DES.

## **Appendix E (2) Aide Memoire Questions: P Gildea, Des O' Loughlin, Peter Kelly**

- Q1 You inherited the White Paper – what is your analysis of it?
- Q2 Why was NALC suspended? What did the internal report on NALC conclude? What is your analysis of that Report?
- Q3 An initial thesis I have is that, as presently constituted, both NALC and LALB are unworkable because the relationships with the key Government Departments are not addressed. What is your view?
- Q4 How is adult education policy currently being made?
- Q5 What is your view on the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning*?
- Q6 (a) What parts of the White Paper do you see being implemented?  
(b) What parts not being implemented?  
(c) How do you see policy in adult education developing?
- Q7 What is your view on structures (a) at present (b) in the future?
- Q8 Who/what are the key influencers on policy?
- Q9 What impact do international organizations like EU/OECD/Council of Europe /UNESCO had?

Q10 What preparations are in place for the next National Plan?

Q11 What steps need to be taken to mainstream adult education in Ireland?

## **Appendix F (1) Biographical Note: Des O' Loughlin**

Des O'Loughlin has been Assistant Principal Officer in the FE section of DES from 1995 to 2008. In effect he was PO from 1995 until mid 1998. He was able to observe the adult education policy making process over the ten year period of the research. The interview with him was complementary to those with Margaret Kelly and Pauline Gildea. I explored the following issues with him in a group interview consisting of himself, Pauline Gildea and Peter Kelly (another APO in the FE section). I subsequently interviewed him on his own.

## **Appendix F (2) Aide Memoire: Interview Des O' Loughlin**

- Q1 (a) How long are you in the FE section?  
(b) Why was an FE section established in 1997?  
(c) What impact did having a Section, a PO and a Minister have on policy development?
- Q2 Whose idea was it to publish a Green Paper/White Paper? How did it happen?
- Q3 How much of the work on the GP had been done before Margaret Kelly started [as PO]? How was that work managed?
- Q4 You attended the Hamburg [UNESCO, 1997] Conference on adult education – did that have any impact on policy?
- Q5 What was your role before Margaret Kelly was appointed, after her appointment and after Pauline Gildea's appointment?
- Q6 What were relations with other Government Departments like during the process and since 2000?
- Q7 What is your view on the White Paper in general and on structures at national and local levels?

Q8 Who or which organisations exerted influence on the process?

Q9 I have a thesis that there were competing philosophies at work during the policy development process – human capital and human potential – what is your view?

## **Appendix G (1) Biographical Note: Helen Keogh**

Helen Keogh is the national co-ordinator of the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme since 1991 and was the Irish National Co-ordinator of the Grundtvig NETA project-*What are we doing in adult education?* (2003). She was a member of the Green Paper and White Paper teams and has an international reputation as an adult education policy maker. The interview took place over two days.

## **Appendix G (2) Aide Memoire: Interview Helen Keogh**

### ***Day 1***

- Q1 What was your role in the development of the GP/WP?
- Q2 What has been your role in the implementation of WP?
- Q3 What influence has the EU/OECD/UN/Council of Europe had on the WP currently [refer to article in the *Adult Learner*]?
- Q4 I have a thesis that a network of key influencers including Margaret Kelly, B Brady, A. Ryan, I. Bailey, Tom Collins and J. Coolahan and yourself had a key role in developing the WP. What is your view?
- Q5 Why was so little attention paid to structures, apart from the membership and terms of reference of the NALC and LALB?
- Q6 What is your overall analysis of the WP?
- Q7 What were the crunch issues in the policy development process?
- Q8 How do you feel the WP has been implemented since 2000?
- Q9 What do you think of the Task Force Report on Lifelong Learning?

- Q10 What steps do you see need to be taken to mainstream adult education?
- Q11 Is there any other comment you wish to make?
- Q12 Did Willie O' Dea have much of a role in the process? Did he lose interest after the publication of the WP? To your knowledge, did Ml. Martin play much of a role?
- Q13 What were the roles of Margaret Kelly and P. Gildea?
- Q14 From your knowledge of the process what was the influence of advocacy bodies and stakeholders (a) during the policy development process (b) during implementation? The bodies in question are: AONTAS / NALA/ DETE/ DFSA/ Finance/ FAS, CERT/ Teagasc/CORI / management bodies and unions.
- Q15 What is your view of the contribution of Tom Collins and John Coolahan?
- Q16 What did you think of the Consultative Forum held in Dublin Castle?

## **Day 2**

- Q17 From your knowledge and involvement in adult education internationally what is your view of how we went about the task compared to other countries? Are there any models of good policy development?
- Q18 You have referred to the need for integration/co-ordination of service delivery in the *NETA Report* and in your article in the *Adult Learner*. How can this integration and co-ordination be brought about?
- Q19 How can the DES/DETE dichotomy be dealt with?
- Q20 What is your view of LALB/NALC?



Q21 Do you remember inspectors attending meetings of the planning group?

Q22 Were you aware of a meeting with NALA on the WP?

Q23 What is the significance of adult guidance?

Q24 How important is the Lisbon Agenda?

## **Appendix H (1) Biographical Note: Noel Whelan**

Noel Whelan was a former Assistant Secretary General in the Department of Economic Planning and Development, Vice President External Affairs University of Limerick and the first Chairperson of The National Adult Learning Board (NALC). NALC was an implementation structure proposed in the White Paper.

## **Appendix H (2) Aide Memoire Questions: Noel Whelan**

Q1 What has been your experience as Chairperson of NALC in implementing the WP?

Q2 Why, in your view, was NALC suspended?

Q3 Did a change of Minister of State and PO have any impact on NALC?

Q4 How well did NALC operate in its eighteen months of existence?

Q5 As an experienced public servant in Ireland and the EU, what is your analysis of the WP?

Q6 I have a thesis that the proposed structures at national level could not work because, while there was much lip service to co-operation and co-ordination, there was no serious effort in the WP to address the internal structural issues in DES and the turf war between DES and DETE in particular. What is your view of the structural analysis in the WP?

(a) How do you see an overarching, co-ordinating structure referred to in the *Annual Report 2002/2003 of the National Adult Learning Council* working?

Q7 Do you see NALC being re-established and if so will its role and functions be changed?

Q8 Do you agree with the proposals in the WP for the establishment of the LALBS?

Q9 Three competing philosophies – human capital, human resource and humanitarianism underpin the WP - what is your view?

Q10 How can adult education be mainstreamed?

## **Appendix I (1) Biographical Note: Ned Costello**

Ned Costello was a Principal Officer in the Labour Services Unit of DETE and Chairperson of The Steering Committee of the Task Force for Lifelong Learning. He subsequently became an Assistant Secretary General in DETE with responsibility for Science, Technology and Intellectual Property. In 2006 he was appointed Chief Executive of the Irish Universities Association. When I reviewed the files in DETE on the *Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* it became obvious that he was an important figure in the process. I was impressed by a *Reflection Paper* (2000) he prepared for the members of the Taskforce Steering Committee to kick-start the policy development process. His promotion as Assistant Secretary in DETE meant that he could provide an insight into DETE thinking on adult education policy and public policy generally.

## **Appendix I (2) Aide Memoire Interview: Ned Costello**

### ***Task Force on Lifelong Learning (a) Process:***

- Q1 What was the overall approach to major policy initiatives such as the TF, NEAPs and the WP on HR in 1997 in DETE?
- Q2 (a) How do those in DETE, charged with managing a policy initiative, relate to the Top Management Group, the relevant Assistant Secretary, the relevant Minister of State and the Minister during the policy development and implementation process?
- (b) How did DETE manage its relationship with its relevant executive agencies during the TF process and in particular its relationship with FÁS?
- Q3 How do you manage the interface with the NDP, the Partnership process, NAPS and other major government policy strategies?
- Q4 Why did DETE decide to start the process in February 2000 when the *WP on Adult Education* was almost finished?

- Q5 How did you decide the membership of the Taskforce having regard to the terms of reference?
- Q6 The approach adopted by DETE could be described in policy terms as an elitist approach to policy-making i.e. a small number of powerful individuals decided on lifelong learning policy on behalf of the population? What is your view?
- Q7 From a review of the files there is clear evidence of very careful planning and record- keeping during the process. How did that contribute to the successful outcome?
- Q8 Why did you decide to prepare a *Reflections Paper*? How did you set about preparing it? Did you clear the paper internally? Was the preparation of the paper a successful strategy?
- Q9 How did you manage the dynamics of the DETE secretariat to the TF?
- Q10 What were the dynamics in the TF itself? Were there any members who made singularly important contributions to the work of the TF?
- Q11 Why did the TF not succeed in resolving the part-time tuition fees and paid learning leave issues?
- Q12 Why did the work of the TF continue for almost two and a half years when its original time frame was six months?
- Q13 How did you manage the relationship with DES during the work of the TF and during the implementation of the recommendations.

### ***Task Force on Lifelong Learning (b) Implementation***

- Q1 How did you feel about the Government decision of October 22nd 2002 in relation to structures?
- Q2 Is the file briefing note on the TF Report a reasonable summary of the state of play?
- Q3 How did DETE decide on its implementation strategy? What implementation strategy did it adopt?
- Q4 Why was it necessary for DETE as a Department to prepare a response to the TF? Where was the response prepared?
- Q5 Who was responsible, within DETE, for implementation?
- Q6 How do you feel about progress on the implementation of the TF Report?
- Q7 At this remove what is your overall evaluation of the TF Report and its implementation?

### ***DETE and the WP on Adult Education***

- Q1 Why did DETE or FÁS not participate in the GP process?
- Q2 The Tánaiste, in her response to the GP, expressed concern on the structures issue at both national and local level? Would you share these concerns?
- Q3 DETE didn't get an invitation to participate in the WP process until December 1999 when the Paper was almost ready? What is your view?
- (a) DETE did not appear to have made a very strong case on its oral presentation at the consultative process on the GP. Is that a fair comment?

Q4 (a) At a meeting with DES officials on 16/12/1997 DETE officials pointed out that the WP was 'untimely' because DETE intended to convene a broadly based TF on which DES was represented. Did this represent the DETE position?

(b) Was there a missed opportunity here for an integrated approach to adult education (as defined in the GP and subsequently in the TF Report)?

Q5 Pat Houlihan represented DETE in the few WP meetings held. What was your view of the WP process and the issues that concerned DETE in responding to the various draft of the WP?

### ***Relationship between DETE and DES around Adult Education Policy***

Q1 I am coming to the view that there was a twin track approach to policy in adult ed. between the two Departments, certainly from 1997 to 2002 (the October 2002 Gov. Decision on structures). What is your view?

Q2 A number of commentators on education have commented on the turf wars between the two Departments. You felt it necessary yourself to deny such tensions in a memo on the PPF plenary held on 25/01/01 around the issue of access to LLL. What is your view?

Q3 What is the current state of the relationship between the two Departments?

### ***NALC***

Q1 What is your view of the NALC debacle?

Q2 What contribution did DETE make to NALC?

Q3 Why did it fail?

Q4 How should co-ordination between providers and policy makers in adult education be achieved in the future, now that NALC has failed?

### ***Third Level***

- Q1 Why, in your view, did the HE sector participate so poorly in GP/WP process and so fully in the TF process?
  
- Q2 What role can HE play in the future development of AE? What structure is needed to facilitate HE involvement in AE?

### ***General***

- Q1 How do you see AE developing in the future?
  
- Q2 What impact is the NQF having?
  
- Q3 Are there any areas which are important and which I have not asked you about?



## **Appendix J (1) Biographical Note: Seán Ó Foghlú**

Seán Ó Foghlú joined DES as a graduate in 1992. Much of his time was spent on policy matters including providing advice on the White Paper in Education, the Qualifications legislation and the establishment of the National Qualifications Authority. He moved from DES to the HEA in 2000 and was appointed CEO of the National Qualification Authority in 2002. Ó Foghlú's role in the Green / White Papers on Adult Education was to provide advice on managing the consultative process following the publication of the Green Paper in 1998. He was a member of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning. Initially, Ó Foghlú represented the HEA and then the National Qualifications Authority on the Task Force. In 2008 he was appointed Assistant Secretary General in DES.

I interviewed him because of his involvement in the adult education policy processes in DES and DETE, his role as CEO of the National Qualifications Authority where his remit included all adult education and also his role as a member of the Task Force (TF). When I examined the Task Force files it was clear that he was a key player in the TF.

## **Appendix J (2) Aide Memoire Interview: Seán Ó Foghlú**

- Q1 Tell me about you career to date?
- Q2. Is there or was there a set of guidelines or accepted practice in the preparation of a Green Paper/White Paper or other major public policy documents in the Irish Public service?
- Q3 What is your view on the use of external academic/technical advice in public policy- making?
- Q4 What is the role of the responsible Section in a policy-making process - the Section that actually manages the process?
- Q5 What is the role of the responsible A. Sec?
- Q6 What is the role of TMG in the responsible Dept.?

- Q7 Now the political dimension? How does that feed into the process?
- Q8 What is the impact then of the NDP and the partnership process on policy-making in Ireland?
- Q9 I notice that the fees issue - the part-time fees issue and paid learning leave issue - were really kicked into the partnership process when they couldn't be resolved [in the TF]. What is your view?
- Q10 What is the role of the EU in the process?
- Q11 Looking at the National Employment Action Plans – they were determined by the EU - each country had to do that - had to prepare an action plan. What impact has that had or is it just a paper exercise?
- Q12 Looking at public policy making in education in general – the different approaches that you saw in the Green and White Papers in Adult Ed and in the TF and NQAI - they were three areas that you were involved in – could you comment?
- Q13 Was there a twin-track approach adopted by DETE and DES in public policy-making in AE from 1997 until the decision by Government to establish a Steering Committee to oversee the implementation of the TF process? That is a thesis I have.
- Q14 Now O'Sullivan (2005) talks about the mercantile paradigm of public policy that has taken over from a theocratic paradigm and others claim that there are communitarian and radical paradigms at work. What paradigms do you believe were at work in the three policy processes mentioned earlier?
- Q15 Let's move on then to the Taskforce. These are specific questions that arise out of things that struck me in the minutes of the Taskforce meetings. Why did you raise the issue of overlap between the WP on AE and the work of the Taskforce at an early meeting of the Taskforce – I think it was the first meeting.

- Q16 You raised the question at the first meeting [of the Taskforce] of FÁS representation as a training provider and the non-representation of third level providers – Why?
- Q17 You claimed the mapping of part-time third level provision was a mammoth task. Why was this?
- Q18 At the second meeting of the Taskforce you mentioned a major curricular review - what were you referring to or do you remember?
- Q19 At the third meeting Mary Kelly from the Community and Voluntary Pillar claimed that the universities are falling abysmally behind their targets. Many of the responses to the GP on AE were very critical of the role of Univ. in AE. What's your view? This is one of the things that really struck me when I read the submissions on the GP on AE - they were very critical of the Univ. sector.
- Q20 Your comment on the first draft of the Taskforce report stressed the importance of strategic planning and identified the need for an overarching structure – why?
- Q21 You indicated a need for a change in thinking in relation to fulltime and part time learners. What was your reason?
- Q23 What is your view on the way the Taskforce dealt with the issue of paid learning leave and part-time fees?
- Q24 How did you see your role in the Taskforce?
- Q25 Why did NALC fail?
- Q26 Do you think did the Minister rushed to get it set up before he left office?
- Q27 But also would it be true to say that the major players didn't engage in the process at the time of the wrapping up of the WP?

- Q28 Why did you attend only seven meetings out of the 12 held?
- Q29 Why, in your view, did NALC focus almost exclusively on technical issues?
- Q30 Was it appropriate, in your view, for NALC to discuss its own establishment order?
- Q31 Did senior management in DETE/DES give significant attention to the relationship between NALC and the Interdepartmental Steering Committee established after the publication of the Task Force Report.
- Q32 Should NALC be re-established?
- Q33 Should LALBs be established?
- Q34 How important is the backing of legislation in the public policy area?
- Q35 How do you see the issue of an overarching structure at national level for adult education being resolved?
- Q36 How do you see the question of local co-ordinating structures being dealt with?
- Q37 Has the emphasis on second chance adult education impacted negatively on the development of an overall adult education system in Ireland?
- Q38 In the state-funded sector in the adult education area, people are dealt with in terms of disadvantage rather than in terms of their educational needs. What is your view?
- Q40 Why has so little attention being paid to curriculum development in AE in Ireland?
- Q41 What role can NQAI play?
- Q42 What are the challenges and opportunities for the future?

Q43 What are the lessons for public policy in the processes used in the education system?

## **Appendix K (1) Biographical Note: Berni Brady**

Berni Brady has been Director of AONTAS, since the early 1990s and has represented adult education on many public bodies. She is recognised as an important player in adult education. The interview was continued on a second day.

## **Appendix K (2) Aide Memoire - Questions: Berni Brady**

### ***Day 1***

- Q1 AONTAS has been one of the key drivers in bringing about the publication of the Green and White Papers. How did AONTAS succeed in being such an influential player in the adult education field generally and in the GP/WP process?
- Q2 (a) What parts of AONTAS policy were translated into the reality of the GP/WP?  
(b) Was there any part of AONTAS policy which wasn't contained in the WP?
- Q3 How important was your work with the NOW/WENDI and STANCE projects in shaping your thinking and influencing policy?
- Q4 What was your own personal role in the process?
- Q5 Policy networks made up of elite policy makers can have a decisive effect on public policy. My thesis is that a policy network involving Margaret Kelly, Helen Keogh, Inez Bailey, Anne Ryan, Tom Collins and John Coolahan and yourself had an important role in the development of the GP/WP. What is your view?
- Q6 What were the key sticking points in the development of the White Paper?
- Q7 What is your view of NALC/LALB?
- Q8 What sort of experience did you have on NALC? Why was it suspended? Will it be re-established?

## **Day 2**

- Q9 What is the AONTAS strategy for LALBs?
- Q10 How can adult education be mainstreamed?
- Q11 How do you think the implementation of the WP has gone?
- Q12 I have a thesis that there were competing philosophies at play in the development of the WP – human capital, human resource and communitarian. What is your view?
- Q13 AONTAS has responsibility for providing training for BTEI. How do you feel BTEI has been implemented?
- Q14 How would you characterise the AONTAS relationship with the following organizations – IVEA, NALA, ACCS, JMB?
- Q15 How do you compare the way we in Ireland approach the policy process and the way it is approached from abroad?
- Q16 How do you see the future of adult education in Ireland?

## **Appendix L (1) John Coolahan: Biographical Note**

John Coolahan was Professor of Education in the National University Maynooth and provided policy advice to DES since the early 1990s. He is also an OECD education expert and has a national and international reputation as an educator.

## **Appendix L (2) Aide Memoire Questions: John Coolahan**

- Q1 What was your role in the GP/WP process?
- Q2 The National Education Convention identified adult education as an aspect of Irish education that was seriously underdeveloped. What, in your view, was the stimulus to action?
- Q3 How would you compare the process in the GP/WP on adult education with that used on the GP/WP on education?
- Q4 In my view the structural issues were not tackled in the process except in outlining the terms of reference and membership of NALC and the LALBs. Would you agree/disagree with this analysis?
- Q5 A second thesis I have is that little attention was given to policy implementation at the strategic level though much attention was given to the detailed implementation of certain programmes such as BTEI and literacy. What is your view?
- Q6 Another thesis is that policy was influenced by a network of elite policy makers. That network included Tom Collins, Margaret Kelly, Berni Brady, Helen Keogh and Inez Bailey and yourself. What is your view?
- Q7 A fourth thesis is that there were three competing philosophies underpinning the process – human capital, human resource and communitarianism. What is your view?



- Q8 How would you evaluate the impact of various stakeholders in the process? :
- AONTAS/NALA
  - FAS/TEAGASC/CERT
  - FETAC/HEA/NCCA
  - TUI/ASTI
  - DETE/DFSA/FINACE
  - CHIU/CORI
- Q9 What impact, if any did, thinkers like Foucault, Habermas, Dewey, Rawls, Sandel have on the process?
- Q10 Who were the key Irish influencers in the process?
- Q 11 What influence did EU/OECD/Council of Europe/UNESCO have on the process?
- Q12 From your work with OECD how do you compare the proposals and the implementation of the proposals with the situation in other OECD countries you have studied/visited?
- Q13 What steps need to be taken to mainstream adult education in Ireland?
- Q14 What strategies could be used to get a co-ordinated response from the various Government Departments and the delivery agencies of these departments?
- Q15 How was policy made in adult education in Ireland?
- Q16 Are there any articles, publications of your own that would be useful in the research?

## **Appendix M (1) Biographical Note: Tom Collins**

Tom Collins was Director of the Maynooth Adult Education Centre (MACE) which collaborated with John Coolahan in advising DES on The Green and White Papers in adult education. As the policy process developed Collins became a key advisor to DES. Collins was Director of Dundalk Institute of Technology and is currently Professor of Education in NUIM. He is recognized as a social commentator and an educator.

## **Appendix M (2) Aide Memoire Questions: Tom Collins**

- Q1 What was your own role in the development of the GP/WP?
- Q2 What were the operational details of how you carried out that role:
- How often were meetings held and who attended?
  - How were contentious issues dealt with?
  - What influences external to the group meetings were at play?
  - How was work allocated?
  - Who wrote the various chapters in the GP/WP?
  - How were the three underpinning philosophies(human capital, human resource and communitarian) dealt with
  - What impact did the arrival of Margaret Kelly have on the process?
- Q3 What was your role in the consultation process in the GP?
- Q4 Why were structural issues not dealt with beyond looking at the terms of reference of NALC and LALBs?
- Q5 Why did the WP not address implementation issues in a strategic way (there was great detail around some areas such as BTEI and adult literacy but no overall strategy)?
- Q6 What impact did SMI and the New Public Management movement have on your work?

- Q7 What impact did EU/OECD/Council of Europe/UNESCO have on the process?
- Q8 How do you evaluate the WP four years after its publication?
- Q9 What is your view on the way it has been implemented?
- Q10 Policy networks can, in certain circumstances, have an impact on how policy is developed. In the case of the GP/WP I believe such a network existed involving Margaret Kelly, Anne Ryan, Berni Brady, Helen Keogh, J. Coolahan and yourself. What is your view?
- Q11 How would you evaluate the impact of the following players on the policy process:
- AONTAS/NALA
  - FAS/TEAGASC/CERT
  - FETAC/HEA/NCCA
  - TUI/ASTI
  - DETE/DFSA/FINANCE
  - CHIU/CORI
- Q 12 What steps need to be taken to mainstream adult education?
- Q 13 Who were the key influencers on the process?
- Q14 You were a member of NALC – how has it operated?

## **Appendix N (1) Anne Ryan: Biographical Note**

Anne Ryan is Professor of Adult Education in NUIM and supports education initiatives in Bangladesh. She is a respected adult educator, was a member of the White Paper Adult Education team in 2000 and worked closely with Tom Collins during the entire White Paper/Green Paper process.

## **Appendix N (2) Aide Memoire Questions: Anne Ryan**

- Q1 How did you become involved in the 'writing team', for the White Paper?
- Q2 How many 'writing team' meetings did you attend? What is your memory of these meetings? Did any of the meetings stand out?
- Q3 There is some uncertainty about the attendance at some of these meetings - do you remember any of the following attending-
- Torlach O Connor-DES Inspector
  - John Reddington-advisor to Willie O' Dea
  - Peter McDonagh-advisor to MI Martin
  - Mary Dunne DES statistician
  - Pat Hoolihan-representative DETE
  - Representative Third level Section DES
  - Representative Inspectorate
  - Representative FÁS?
- Q4 Do you agree that the other members of the team were:
- Jack O Brien, Chair
  - Paddy Shiels, Pat Dowling, M Kelly-Principal Officers
  - Rhona Mc Sweeney, Des O Loughlin-DES Officials
  - John Coolahan, Tom Collins, yourself?
- Q5 How were the meetings conducted ie were they formal or informal/was there an agenda/minutes circulated in advance? How were issues resolved? Was there much tic-tacking between DES and NUIM before meetings?

- Q6 How was the process handled within NUIM between meetings and as a result of meetings? How was the draft [sections, chapters, Green Paper or White Paper] for DES meetings agreed? What involvement did other staff members in the Centre for Adult and Community Education have in the process? Was there much difference between the final draft sent by NUIM and the WP as published?
- Q7 There appears to have been internal tensions within DES because of a lack of participation in the process by the Third Level Section and some unhelpful feedback from an Inspector who prepared a response for the Inspectorate - were you aware or were you made aware of this? John Coolahan, in desperation, is alleged to have said – “Does the third level section of DES have a policy?
- Q8 How do you evaluate the contribution of the following to the GP/WP process:
- Margaret Kelly
  - Des O’ Loughlin
  - Rhona Mc Sweeney
  - Helen Keogh
  - Tom Collins
  - John Coolihan
  - Peter Mc Donagh
  - Joe Reddington
  - Torlach O’ Connor
  - Any other person from the earlier list
- Q9 Do you remember a workshop on community education organized in NUIM as part of the process attended by Berni Brady? If so do you remember how the day was organized and what was the outcome?
- Q10 I understand that a conference on disadvantage/social inclusion was held in NUIM as part of the process. Do you remember it? If so how was the day organized and what was the outcome?
- Q11 What is your view on the contribution of AONTAS, NALA, CORI and IVEA to the process?

- Q12 Did NUIM consult with individuals as part of its research?
- Q13 Were you involved in analysing the responses to the Green Paper? If so what responses struck you as significant or important?
- Q14 Did you participate in the Road Show; the Conference at Dublin Castle; the oral hearings? Were any contributions significant or important?
- Q15 There are competing philosophies in the WP a human capital philosophy; a human resource philosophy and a subset of the human resource philosophy-communitarianism. How do you think the WP resolved the question of competing philosophies?
- Q16 How do you evaluate your own contribution to the WP?
- Q17 What influence, in your view, did the EU/OECD have on the process?
- Q18 What influence did thinkers like Dewey, Freire, Habermas, Foucault and Etzioni have on the process?
- Q19 What is your overall evaluation of the WP?
- Q20 What are your views on the implementation of the WP?
- Q21 What are your views on how adult education should be mainstreamed?

## **Appendix O (1) Biographical Note: Bríd Connolly**

Bríd Connolly is a lecturer in adult education in NUIM. She was an officer of AONTAS from 1999-2008, has a particular interest in community education and has written extensively on adult education policy. She was a board member of the Journal *Lifelong Learning in Europe* and the European Association for Education of Adults.

## **Appendix O (2) Aide Memoire Questions: Bríd Connolly**

### ***Maynooth's Role***

- Q1 What role (formal/informal) did you have in the development of the Green Paper /White Paper?
- Q2 Did you take part in a one day workshop in NUIM on the GP/WP? If you did, what was its structure, what issues emerged and what was the outcome?
- Q3 Did you take part in a session in your own Department on the GP/WP? If you did, what was its structure, what issues emerged and what was the outcome?
- Q4 Did you have any one to one sessions on the GP/WP with either Anne [Ryan] or Tom [Collins]? If so what was the issue discussed, what was your input and what was the outcome?
- Q5 How did the rest of the staff in the Department feel about the Department's involvement in the GP/WP process?

### ***AONTAS Role***

- Q1 When did you first become an officer of AONTAS? What was your role as an Officer?
- Q2 What involvement did you have as an officer of AONTAS in the GP/WP process?

- Q3 Were you involved in preparing the AONTAS response to the GP?
- Q4 Did you take part in the consultative process on the GP? What was that involvement?
- Q5 What involvement did you have as an officer of AONTAS in the implementation of the WP?
- Q6 How would you characterise the role of AONTAS in the process?

***Academic Perspective***

- Q1 What is your overall assessment as an academic of the WP?
- Q2 What is your assessment of the implementation of the WP?
- Q3 What is your analysis of how the structural issue at national and local levels is dealt with in the White Paper?
- Q4 The WP has two main competing philosophies-a human capital philosophy and a human resource philosophy with a strong emphasis on communitarianism. Do you agree/disagree with this assertion? How do you feel the philosophies are dealt with in the WP?
- Q5 What influence did the EU/OECD have on the process during the policy development or policy implementation stage?
- Q6 What influence if any did Freire, Dewey, Habermas, Foucault and Etzioni have on the process?
- Q7 How do you mainstream adult education in Ireland?



## Appendix P- Chronological Order of Des O Loughlin's Diaries

Book Number	Date
<b>Book 1</b>	01/11/1995 - 22/07/1996
<b>Book 2</b>	06/09/1996 - 29/05/1997
<b>Book 3</b>	06/06/1997 - 17/12/1997
<b>Book 4</b>	18/12/1997 - 07/04/1998
<b>Book 5</b>	18/04/1998 - 30/08/1999
<b>Book 6</b>	01/09/1999 - 29/06/1999
<b>Book 7</b>	01/07/1999 - 17/09/1999
<b>Book 8</b>	23/09/1999 - 06/06/2000
<b>Book 9</b>	09/06/2000 - 01/12/2000
<b>Book 10</b>	12/01/2001 - 22/08/2001
<b>Book 11</b>	07/09/2001 - 13/02/2002
<b>Book 12</b>	28/03/2002 - 12/02/2003
<b>Book 13</b>	17/02/2003 - 16/12/2003
<b>Book 14</b>	05/01/2004 - 03/12/2004
<b>Book 15</b>	10/12/2004 - 31/08/2005
<b>Book 16</b>	01/09/2005 - 28/02/2006
<b>Book 17</b>	01/03/2006- 20/06/2006

## **Appendix Q: Documents Accessed in the DES**

- Submissions prepared by Assistant Secretary General on adult education in the Green Paper on Education 1992 and the White Paper on Education (2005);
- CORI – ‘Towards an Agenda for a Debate on Adult and Community Education’;
- Letter sent by Patricia Curtin, Acting Director, Programme Development FÁS, in relation to the Green Paper 26/11/1997;
- The National Adult Literacy Agency Response to the Green Paper on Adult Education: Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning, June 1999;
- Letter sent by APO to PO requesting external assistance in preparing Green Paper, November 1997;
- Internal Memorandum on the “Structural Defects in the Adult Education System” 7/4/1998 which “attempts to represent the views of the administrative Adult Education section and the Inspectorate and the voluntary organisations AONTAS and NALA;
- Observations by DETE on the draft Green Paper November 13, 1998;
- Memorandum for Government: Green Paper “Adult Education in an era of Lifelong Learning” including Appendix containing Ministerial Observations dated 16 November 1998;
- Response of D/Education and Science to Employment Action Plan Draft 1999;
- Minutes of Meeting of White Paper Group and TMG [Top Management Group] re White Paper on Adult Education – Thursday 11/11/1999;
- Letter May 2000 from PO Employment and Training Strategy Unit DETE to PO Further Education Section with observations on the draft White Paper on Adult education;

- Briefing note for Minister of State for Cabinet Meeting at which White Paper is discussed 17 July 2000;
- Draft Memorandum for the Government: Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education 13/07/2000;
- Minutes of TMG Minutes where the Cromien Report was considered 13/06/2000-17/12/2002;
- The National Adult Literacy A Strategy for the Way Forward: The National Adult Literacy Agency's Response to the White Paper on Adult Education: Learning for Life May 2001;
- Minutes of Meetings 12 meetings of NALC: 28/03/2002-17/06/2003;
- Document for Minister of State on literacy issues prepared by NALA as discussed at meeting of 17/05/06;
- Central Policy Unit Interim Review of the Role and Functions of the National Adult Learning Council: (2004);
- DES Responses to National Reform Programme 2006/2007;
- Minutes of Standing Committee on Social Inclusion meetings 7/01/2001-6/02/03;
- Business plans for FE Section 2002-2007;
- DES Observation on the Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning 2002.
- Briefing note for the Minister of State for meeting with the Tánaiste and Inez Bailey on 23/06/04 and
- Presentation by Pauline Gildea, Principal Officer to Joint Oireachtas Committee 27 January 2007.

***Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment***

- ICTU response to Ireland's 2002 National Employment Action Plan 2002;
- Annotated draft of Taskforce Report 9/07/2002;
- Memo 05/12/03 to Taoiseach's Department on the establishment of the "Overarching Steering Committee";
- File on the Taskforce for Lifelong Learning with the exception of the Memorandum for Government. The file includes the minutes of Taskforce meetings;
- File on the National Employment Action Plans; and
- Status Reports on Recommendations of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning for presentation to Steering Committee.

***Department of the Taoiseach***

- Presentation to a Plenary Session of the Social Partners by John Walsh, Pat Nolan, Ned Costello and Frank Doherty to of Partnership 2000 on Enterprise Jobs and Small Business: April 27, 1999 including statement "we are seeking to frame an Irish Strategy for Lifelong Learning.

***Department of Finance***

- Observations by DETE Vote Section of D/Finance on The Department of Education White Paper.

## Appendix R Extracts from *Towards 2016 on Adult Education*

The following adult education goals are listed for various stages of the life cycle (p.49).

### ***People of Working Age:***

This section of *Towards 2016* sets out a vision for people of working age.

- *Every person of working age would have access to lifelong learning, a sense of personal security in a changing work environment and an opportunity to balance work and family life commitments consistent with business needs;*
- *Every person of working age on welfare will have access to supports towards progression and inclusion, access to quality work and learning opportunities, encouraging a greater degree of self-reliance and self-sufficiency;*
- *Every person, irrespective of background or gender, would enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination;*
- *Every person of working age should be encouraged and supported to participate fully in social, civic and economic life (p 49).*

To achieve this vision a number of priority actions are listed. Under the heading of 'employability' actions to be prioritised (p 50 emphasis added) include:

- *Increasing participation in Lifelong Learning in particular among the workforce categorised as low-skilled/low paid by enhancing opportunities to access education and training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognized qualifications and progression to higher level qualifications to equip all individuals with the skills, capacity and potential to participate fully in the knowledge-based society and progress to better quality jobs;*
- *Focusing on helping adults from disadvantaged communities, including those in rural areas, to acquire basic literacy, numeracy and IT skills and tackling barriers/ disincentives to lifelong learning. The parties will work to ensure that*

*life-long learning provision is flexible and addresses the various needs of learners;*

- *Providing additional supports for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, students with disabilities and mature students to enhance access to further and higher education;*
- *Providing targeted support for employees participating in part-time courses at third level (see Section 7.9 in Part II);*
- *Formulating a National Skills Strategy which will put in place a strategic framework for the implementation of skills and training strategy into the medium term. This strategy will recognize the respective roles of the public, and private sectors with the emphasis of the former on where the market fails, including the low-skilled;*
- *FÁS will continue to review the curricula, assessment process and delivery mechanisms for apprenticeships and continue to progress additional occupations towards formal apprenticeship training and qualification;*
- ***Prioritising adult literacy in the area of adult education.*** *The annual student cohort availing of the general national literacy service delivered by the Vocational Education Committees will be significantly increased by the provision of an extra 7,000 places by 2009. There will be a particular focus on increasing the number of migrants receiving an English language service (ESOL). Having regard to developments generally in adult literacy and its expanding role, the family literacy project under DEIS, the implementation plan of the national adult literacy advisory group published by NALA and the role of the VECs, consideration will be given to the appropriate support structures in this area;*
- ***Guidance/counselling*** *will be provided to literacy and language learners and the needs of migrants will be considered in the context of the Educational Equality Initiative. Measures will also be adopted to monitor and evaluate progress in this area;*

- *A **Family Literacy Project** will also be put in place under the DEIS initiative;*
- ***The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)** will be expanded by 2,000 places by 2009. The BTEI (part-time) will continue to be built on existing provision under the **adult literacy services, community education, Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training Programmes, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) and Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses**: Measures will also be adopted to monitor and evaluate progress in this area; and*
- *Having regard to developments in the **PLC sector**, including the Mclver report, concrete prioritised proposals in relation to PLC provision and focused in particular on the larger PLC providers will be prepared and will be the subject of further negotiations between management and unions. The level of resources for the PLC sector will be determined in the light of resources generally and the implications for other areas of education. The union side will engage positively in relation to commitments on future working arrangements and developments in the sector. Student numbers will be subject to audit on an ongoing basis. The scope for rationalisation of provision will also be examined having due regard to ensuring appropriate provision on a geographic basis and the necessary critical mass for delivery of a quality education service.*

The next aspect of provision for adults of working age is facilitation of access to employment (p 51 emphasis added). The recommendations involve an integrated approach across the following relevant programmes:

- ***The National Employment Service and the Local Employment Services;***
- ***The National Employment Action Plan, the High Supports Process, the Bridging/Foundation Programme, the Pathways to Employment processes;***
- ***The Social and Family Support Service;** and*
- *Other new and existing training and employment programmes.*

*These processes and programmes will explore the use of innovative approaches and will increasingly focus on the long-term unemployed, the unemployed who are 16-24 years old, people who have completed the NEAP process but who remain unemployed and those furthest from the labour market, including certain women workers and people with disabilities.*

*The parties agree that the actions to be considered as a priority over a three-year period will include:*

- Applying the National Employment Action Plan referral process earlier than the current 6 months;*
  - Extending the National Employment Action Plan referral process to other groups such as lone parents and those with disabilities, with due regard to the special needs of those groups. The NEAP will be operated in a supportive and positive manner working in an inclusive way with the customer;*
  - Introducing an active case management service for social welfare customers of working age, including collaboration to ensure that customers, agencies and service providers in this area engage actively with each other. This will place activation on a level with service delivery and control as a central part of the core business of the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Changes will be implemented in a positive and supportive manner;*
  - Following the consultation process on the Government's Discussion Paper on Lone Parents, proposals will be brought forward aimed at supporting lone parents into employment. This will address supports such as access to childcare, flexible training and education programmes and positive opportunities for customers, and;*
- 
- Funding for the **Community Services Programme** which targets, in particular, people with disabilities, Travellers, lone parents and people seeking to move from part-time CE to full-time work will be further increased, building on the additional investment in 2006. In this context, there will be consultation with the social partners in relation to its development and targeting. The programme will be kept under review to enhance its effectiveness and ensure that it is co-ordinated appropriately with other relevant programmes.*



Under the priority action '**Caring Responsibilities**' one of the actions was to *progress issues associated with training for carers (p.54);*

Under the heading of '**Equality/Equal Opportunities**' the proposed *National Women's Strategy* there will be a focus on *encouraging women to advance to the higher levels within their chosen careers through training....(p.55);*

Under the heading of '**Young Adults**' the adult education focus is on *measures in the area of further and higher education to enhance participation from those from disadvantaged backgrounds...and increased training for the low skilled in employment...(p.56);* and

Under the heading of '**Older People**' the vision includes *access to good quality services in the community including education (p. 60).*

The adult education actions to promote education and employment opportunities for older people include (p. 64):

- *Targeted adult and community education opportunities;*
- *Using their experiences in Family Literacy;*
- *Training and upskilling workers in the 55-64 category;*
- *Providing FÁS training and advisory services for older people; and*
- *Help with access to and skills in IT.*

Under the heading of '**People with Disabilities**' the vision includes *access to education, employment and training...and to be able to maximise their potential (P. 66).* Priority actions include implementation of the Disability Act 2005 and the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004 (p. 67) and extending the NEAP FÁS referral process and the provision of the FÁS services in accordance with the Disability Act. (p 68).

Under the heading of '**Workplace Learning**' and '**Upskilling**' Programme the approach involves:

- *The parties are also agreed on the need for a subsequent review of the workplace learning and upskilling offerings available, especially from the point of view of user friendliness/modularisation; the provision of generic,*

*transferable as well as sector specific skills; future skills requirements; geographical accessibility; cost; and means of activation;*

- *They are also agreed on the need to examine in particular the availability of workplace learning (including in relation to basic skills) and upskilling to lower skilled and vulnerable workers, including in manufacturing, as well as to workers from overseas. They are agreed on the need to put in place measures to ensure renewed focus for State provision and to ensure more targeted schemes, with a view to maximising the use of resources. In addition, the involvement of employer and trade union representatives in the activation of workplace learning and upskilling will be of particular importance and*
- *The overall objective will be to ensure that the institutional framework and provision for the development of skills across the economy matches anticipated requirements; provides a co-ordinated, user-friendly and easily accessible system of workplace learning and upskilling; and is geared to employability and competitiveness (p. 87).*

In addition to reviewing workplace learning and upskilling programmes Towards 2016 proposes a number of workplace initiatives:

- *the development of a targeted guidance, learning and training programme, particularly accessible to the manufacturing sector, to include coaching and mentoring for workers in vulnerable employments where appropriate;*
- *the introduction of measures for the promotion of take up of apprenticeships by older workers;*
- *the mainstreaming of the Knowledge Economy Skills Passport (KESP), focusing on computer literacy, science and technology fundamentals, basic business skills and innovation and entrepreneurship;*
- *the Skillnets programme will be expanded and will provide more flexible means of delivery and will also include pilot initiatives to focus on those with lower skill-sets;*

- *increased financial support will be provided for the existing pilot trade union-led learning network under the FÁS **One-Step-Up** programme which engages trade union representatives in the workplace as part of the learning activation process, particularly among the lower skilled, to pursue education and training;*
- *the allocation for the **Workplace Basic Education Fund**, aimed at increasing numeracy and literacy skills in the workplace, will be increased; and*
- *A targeted fund will be put in place to alleviate the fees in public institutions for part-time courses at third level by those at work who have not previously pursued a third level qualification (p.88).*

Under the heading of '**Partnership at the Workplace**' the following was agreed:

Partnership at the Workplace:

- *The parties are committed to the further development of partnership structures in local authorities under the auspices of the Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group (LANPAG) and the adult education initiative, **Return to Learning**, will be further augmented and developed as part of the commitment to life-long learning (p 135).*

## Appendix S: Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme of the 2000-2006

Table 1 in Chapter 4 provided a summary of the planned expenditure in the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme of the 2000-2006 National Development Plan (EHRDOP) under six priorities. Tables 1-7 in Appendix S ranks the ten measures with the highest expenditure and provides detail of the expenditure by measure and sub-measure. The data is taken from the 2000-2006 EHRDOP Mid-term Evaluation (Fitzpatrick and Associates: 2004) and the Tables are organised according to the six priorities of the 2000-2006 EHRDOP (DETE, 2000 a). The priorities are based on the European Guidelines for the preparation of National Employment Action Plans. Expenditure on mainstream primary, post primary and third level programmes is not used in Tables 2-7 because it is not relevant to the research.

To assist the reader and to give an appreciation of the scale of the expenditure and the expenditure priorities of the Irish State Table 1 shows the top 10 measures by expenditure and the percentage of the overall EHRDOP budget allocated to each measure.

No.	Measure	Amount € million	Percentage
1	Education Infrastructure	2,435.42	17.12%
2	Active Measures for Long-term Unemployed	2,018.39	14.19%
3	MLT/HLTBS	1,581.93	11.12%
4	Employment Support Services	1,526.58	10.73%
5	BTEI	1,183.01	8.82%
6	Apprenticeship/Traineeship	967.54	6.80%
7	National Employment Service	875.24	6.15%
8	In-company Training	641.88	4.50%
9	Social Economy	331.86	2.33%
10	Youthreach/Travellers	324.67	2.28%

*Table 1 – The ten highest measures in the EHRDOP 2000-2006 by level of expenditure*

Source: Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and Human Resources Development Complement; cited in Fitzpatrick (2004: 11).

The single biggest expenditure is on the educational infrastructure measure which accounts for 17.12 percent of the budget. I have included it because the measure provided for capital funding of Further Education. However, there was minimal or no such expenditure on Further Education capital projects. Education measures in the top ten also include the Middle-Level Technician and Higher Technical Business Skills Measure, which are also outside the scope of this study. I included them in this Table to offer an insight into the priority given by DES to adult education. The other adult education measures in the education domain, which attracted significant levels of funding, include BTEI, and provision for Youthreach and Traveller education.

The top ten measures by expenditure level reflect a significant commitment by the State in supporting people to get into employment. The second biggest budget line in the EHRDOP is for Active Measures for the Long Term Unemployed at €2.018 billion or 14 percent of the budget. When you include the Employment Support Service (ranked fourth) and the National Employment Service (ranked seventh), employment support measures account for almost one third of the EHRDOP budget.

The other training domain measures in the top ten include Apprenticeship Training by FÁS, ranked sixth and In Company Training by FÁS ranked eighth. Two of the top ten ranked measures have a community education dimension. They are the Social Economy measure and the Active Measures for the Long Term Unemployed and the Socially Excluded.

Details of the adult education measures and sub-measures are provided in six Tables. The 'Employability' Priority' measures, which attract 54 percent of the funding, are presented in two tables. The Entrepreneurship and Adaptability measures and sub-measures, which account for 28.2 percent of the budget, are outlined in three tables and the Equality, Infrastructure and Technical Assistance priorities are combined in a single table.

Table 2 (Appendix S) provides data on General and Sectoral Training measures and sub-measures under the Employability Priority. Table 3 covers the Education Domain and Support measures under the Employability Priority in EHRDOP, while Table 4 details the General Training measures /sub-measures under the Entrepreneurship and Adaptability Priorities. Table 5 is concerned with sectoral training measures under the Entrepreneurship and Adaptability Priorities. Education, Community Education measures and sub-measures of the

Entrepreneurship and Adaptability Priorities are shown in Table 6, while Table 7 provides information on Education, Community Education and Training measures and sub measures of the Entrepreneurship and Adaptability Priorities in EHRDOP 2000 -2006.

The Tables categorise the measures and sub-measures by domain, lead Department and implementation body. The initial financial allocation is given as well as the impact of the Mid-term Evaluation on the allocation. The recommendations in the Mid-term Evaluation funding indicate whether the funding should be increased (↑), reduced (↓) or remain the same (↔).

An analysis of the reasons for the increases and reductions in the budget as a result of the recommendations in the Mid-term Evaluation to the Monitoring Committee, reveals a number of factors at play including (i) the continuing, reducing or increasing relevance of the measure (ii) the quality of the financial forecasts (iii) The cost per person availing of the measure increasing (iv) the level of activity, (v) whether the programme started on time or not and (vi) policy change. There were a number of significant increases and decreases in funding recommended. The largest increases are:

- National Employment Service (increased by €96 million);
- Vocational Training Pathways to Employment for People with Disabilities (increased by €63.2 million);
- Apprenticeship/Traineeship FÁS (increased by €53 million);
- Apprenticeship DES (increased by €34.5million); and
- National Adult Literacy Strategy (increased by €24.5 million).

The main reductions are:

- Employment Support Services (reduced by €411.3 million);
- Action Programme for the Unemployed (reduced by €141 million);
- Early School Leavers Progression (reduced by €50 million).

Two important points emerge from the recommendations in the *Mid Term Evaluation* First *The Mid Term Evaluation* is a policy instrument. Secondly, the evaluation is also capable of directly addressing fundamental, structural and organisational problems as well as making recommendations to remedy fundamental flaws in a measure/sub-measure. For example, the evaluator recommended that the

Community Employment measure be fundamentally restructured into three separate schemes – a labour market scheme, a mainstream element and a community development aspect (p 245). The recommendation was implemented in 2006 (DETE, 2007). The lesson for those wishing to influence adult education policy is that the mid-term evaluation process can bring about policy changes through the Monitoring Committee and it is important for adult education stakeholders to engage with it.

*The Mid-Term Evaluation* (Fitzpatrick, 2004) recommended an increase in nine of the Employability measures, a reduction in three and no change in another three as shown in Tables 2 and 3. In the case of measures under the Entrepreneurship and Adaptability measures shown in Tables 4 to 6 five will be increased, six reduced and seven remain the same. The recommendations for Equality, Infrastructure and Technical Assistance priorities outlined in Table 7 two will be increased, two reduced and three remain the same.

Having explained the purpose of Appendix S, provided information on the top ten measures by levels of expenditure as well as giving information on the Mid-term Evaluation of the EHRDOP, the next section will present and briefly discuss Tables 2 to 7 which categorize and provide information on the adult education measures in the EHRDOP 2000-2006 and the impact of the Mid-term Evaluation on each measure.

Table 2 below outlines measures/sub-measures in general and sectoral training under the 'employability priority. Six of the seven measures/sub-measures, come under the remit of DETE, and are delivered by FÁS. The 'educational' dimension of apprenticeship comes under the remit of DES. The total expenditure by FÁS on these measures is almost €2.9 billion. The biggest single measure is Apprenticeship/Traineeship at €968 million followed by €875 million in respect of FÁS programmes for those referred from the live unemployment register. The level of expenditure on sectoral training is quite small by comparison.

General & Sectoral Training Measures/Sub-Measures under the Employability Priority in EHDOP 2000 - 2006					
Domain	Policy area	Lead Dept.	Implementation Body	Budget €000	Midterm Review – Budget Allocation
Training General	Action Programme for the Unemployed	DETE	FÁS	875	↓
	National Employment Services	DETE	FÁS	275	↑
	Early School Leavers Progression	DETE	FÁS	313	↓
	Skills Training Unemployed & Redundant Workers	DETE	FÁS	182	↑
	Apprenticeship/Traineeship	DETE	FÁS	968	↑
	Apprenticeship	DES	DES	120	↑
	Vocational Training & Pathways to Employment - Disabilities	DETE	FÁS	241	↑
Training Sectoral	Tourism – School Leavers	TTC	CERT	50	↔
	Tourism-Sectoral Entry Training	DES	DES	89	↑
	Agriculture	A/Food	Teagasc	82	↔

Table 2 General and Sectoral Training Measures/Sub-Measures under the Employability Priority in EHRDOP 2000-2006

Source: Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and Human Resources Development Complement; cited in Fitzpatrick (2004: 11).



Education Domain and Support Measures/Sub-Measures under the Employability Priority in EHRDOP 2000-2006					
Domain	Policy area	Lead Dept.	Implementation Body	Budget €000	Midterm Review – Budget Allocation
Education	Third Level Access	DES	DES	129	↑
	Youthreach/Travellers	DES	DES	325	↑
	Integrate Ireland Language & Training	DES	DES	5	↑
Training & Education	Employment Support Service	DSFA	DSFA	1,527	↓
Training General & Community	Active Measures for LTU & Socially Excluded	DETE	FÁS	2,018	↔

Table 3 Education Domain and Support Measures/Sub-Measures under the Employability Priority in EHRDOP: 2000-2006.

Source: Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and Human Resources Development Complement; cited in Fitzpatrick (2004: 11)

The education and support measures/sub-measures under the 'Employability' priority involve DES, DETE and DFSA and are shown in Table 3. The total budget under these headings is just over €4 billion of which slightly less than half a billion Euro is allocated to measures in the education domain. The Active Measures for the Long term Unemployed and Socially Excluded is the second biggest measure in the EHRDOP and accounts for just over 14 percent of the budget. Its main focus is on the Community Employment scheme. The third largest measure in the Operational Programme is the Employment Support Service and includes the 'Back to Work' Allowance and the 'Back to Education' allowance as well as the provision of advice to unemployed people by the DFSA.

Table 4 outlines general training measures/sub- under the 'Entrepreneurship' and 'Adaptability' priorities. According to the *Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2000-2006*, (DETE 2000 a: 63), the objectives of the Entrepreneurship Priority are:

- "To support sustainable productivity and competition improvements in existing business, and SMEs in particular, by improving education and training levels and to intensify policy measures to that end;
- To more fully exploit the employment or income-generating potential of the Social Economy initiatives in regard to disadvantaged individuals or groups at local level".

The objectives of the 'Adaptability Priority' (DETE, 2000a: 64) are:

- "to support a skills-trained and adaptable workforce by facilitating people in the wider economy and in specific sectors to adapt their skills to changing labour market requirements through further training, re-skilling and lifelong learning;
- to enhance the quality of labour supply and ease of adaptability through continued investment in education and training and in particular through developing a strategic and flexible framework for lifelong learning;
- to enhance the quality of the labour supply and ease of adaptability by developing and deploying an improved framework of certification and qualifications".

The total expenditure on these programmes is €321 million. An analysis of the descriptors reveals that the two in-company training programme are broadly similar.

The main difference appears to be the measure delivered by FÁS focuses on SME's (Fitzpatrick and Associates (2004, iv).

Interestingly, according to the measure descriptor Lifelong Learning delivered by FÁS, is similar to the self-funded adult education courses delivered in the education domain. This means that the FÁS courses are funded while those in the education domain are not.

General Training Measures/Sub-Measures under the Entrepreneurship and Adaptability Priorities in EHRDOP 2000-2006					
Domain	Policy area	Lead Dept.	Implementation Body	Budget €000	Midterm Review – Budget Allocation
Training General	In-Company Training	DETE	FÁS	147	↑
	In-Company Training	DETE	EI	147	↓
	In-Company Training (new Measure recommended)	DETE	DETE	32.6	↑
	Lifelong Learning (general training)	DETE	FÁS	16	↑
	Training for Trainers	DETE	FÁS	10	↓

Table 4 - General Training Measures/Sub-Measures under the Entrepreneurship and Adaptability Priorities in EHRDOP 2000-2006.

Source: Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and Human Resources Development Complement; cited in Fitzpatrick (2004: 11)

Sectoral Training Measures/Sub-Measures under the Entrepreneurship and Adaptability Priorities in EHRDOP 2000-2006					
Domain	Policy area	Lead Dept.	Implementation Body	Budget €000	Midterm Review – Budget Allocation
Training Sectoral	Cultural, Gaeltacht etc.	AHG <sup>61</sup> & Islands	Udarás na Gaeltacht	31	↔
	Seafood	MNR <sup>62</sup>	BIM	14	↓
	Forestry	MNR	Coillte	17	↔
	Equine Institute	AGFRD <sup>63</sup>	AGFRD	2	↔
	Agriculture	AGFRD	Teagasc	8	↔
	Tourism	TSR <sup>64</sup>	CERT	24	↑
	Tourism Education	DES	DES	21	↓
Training General & Sectoral	Quality Assurance (including Training for Trainers)	DETE	FÁS	31	↔

Table 5 Sectoral Training Measures under the Entrepreneurship and Adaptability Priorities in EHRDOP 2000-2006

Source: Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and Human Resources Development Complement; cited in Fitzpatrick (2004: 11)

<sup>61</sup> Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands,

<sup>62</sup> Marine and Natural Resources

<sup>63</sup> Agriculture Food and Rural Development

<sup>64</sup> Tourism Sport and Recreation

Table 5 provides data on Sectoral Training Measures under the Entrepreneurship and Adaptability priorities. The combined expenditure under these measures is €148 million, which is about one percent of total EHRDOP funding. The measures are in the training domain and are part of the remit of six Government Departments and eight implementation bodies. The nature of provision for sectoral training encapsulates the fragmented nature of Irish adult education and the extent of duplication within adult education domains.

Education, Community Education and Measures/ Sub-Measures of the Entrepreneurship and Adaptability Priorities in EHRDOP 2000-2006					
Domain	Policy area	Lead Dept.	Implementation Body	Budget €000	Midterm Review – Budget Allocation
Community	Social Economy Programme	DETE	FÁS	332	↔
	Social Economy – Local Social Capital	DETE	FÁS	17	↓
Education	Lifelong Learning – BTEI (10% of funding is for the community)	DES	DES	1,183	↑
	Lifelong Learning – National Adult Literacy Strategy	DES	DES	101	↑
	Lifelong Learning – Further Education Support Service	DES	DES	49	↓
All	Quality Assurance/ Certification/ National Qualification Framework	DES	NQAI	14	↔

Table 6 - Education, Community Education Measures/Sub-Measures of the Entrepreneurship and Adaptability Priorities in EHRDOP 2000 -2006

Source: Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and Human Resources Development Complement; cited in Fitzpatrick (2004: 11)

Table 6 deals with education, community education and training measures/sub-measures of the Entrepreneurship and Adaptability Priorities and accounts for expenditure of almost €1.7 billion. These measures are delivered in the community and education domains, with the exception of quality assurance and certification measures, which covers all domains.

The Back to Education initiative, one of the innovative and significant policy proposals in the White Paper (DES, 2000 a), attracts the fourth biggest budget in the EHRDOP and accounts for over eight percent of the total budget. The reason for the recommendation to increase BTEI expenditure is technical because the measure was late starting.

The National Adult Literacy measure, on the other hand is allocated a budget of just €101 million, though it is the number one priority in the White Paper (DES, 2000a). The high priority given to the National Adult Literacy Programme is not reflected in the fact that it is ranked 20<sup>th</sup> in the ERDHOP budget out of 51 measures and 11<sup>th</sup> in the EHDROP education measures. The data from the tables offers an interesting insight into State funding priorities for adult education. The State and the education system were shocked by the results of the International Adult Literacy Survey in 1997, which showed that approximately 500,000 adults had literacy issues. The first real opportunity to engage in broad long-term planning for adult literacy after the publication of the Report, was the 2000-2003 Social Partnership Agreement *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Gov. of Ireland: 2000) and the *National Development Plan 2000-2006* (Gov. of Ireland: 1999 b). The total allocation for adult literacy in the National Development Plan was €101. The proposed expenditure on tourism measures (excluding full time third level courses) was over 75 percent greater at €187 million. This situation begs the question was adult literacy really a priority for the State. It also begs the question did the low funding 1997 base for literacy and the marginal nature of adult education, lower the expectations of DES in seeking the National Development Plan funding needed to tackle the literacy problem? Finally, it is interesting that DES ranked it as eleventh in terms of its funding priorities. While the literacy budget was increased following the Mid-term Review the amount of the increase could have been much bigger had some of the reallocated €602.3 million as indicated above, been used.



Table 7 is concerned with Measures and sub-measures under the Equality, Infrastructure and Technical Assistance Priorities. The total; expenditure under these priorities is €2.531 billion.

The most significant expenditure is on infrastructure measures where a total of almost €2.5 billion is allocated to primary, post primary, third-level and adult education (FE). A very small amount, if any, was spent on adult education infrastructure. I am aware of this because, in my role as CEO, I was trying to secure capital funding for the development of St Sheelan's in Templemore as a Further Education College following the decision to stop providing second level education in 2000. The VEC failed to get capital funding for the College as the funding applications were sent from the Building Unit to the Further Education Section of DES and from the FE Section to the Building Unit. This research has revealed the reason why DES policy was that Further Education projects were not being funded by the Department (DOL 1-17, FE Business Plans, 2002: 10).

While there is a commitment in the White Paper (DES, 2000a) to spend €10million on capital funding, the bland nature of the section on capital funding (DES: 2000 a: 81-2) does not indicate a real commitment. At a meeting with the AEOs Association on 6/02/2001, the Principal Officer of the Further Education Section pointed out that the €10 million funding promised in the White Paper (2000a) had not been received. She said that the Building Unit would take account of Further Education needs in the face of resistance from the Department of Finance (DOL: 10). Files in the Section show that a case was prepared for capital funding and a meeting sought with the Top Management Group to discuss it. An FOI request for the minutes of the Top Management Group meeting, where this case was discussed, was not granted because it appears the matter was not discussed (Appendix A3). It is noteworthy that provision for capital funding for Further Education in the Operational Programme is included in the overall Education provision (Table 7)

On the other hand, there was a discrete capital allocation for funding the development of training infrastructure. A concrete example of FÁS 'Training Infrastructure' fund in action was its use to fund a Community Training Workshop in Nenagh, Co Tipperary. The fate of the VEC and CTW applications for capital funding in Tipperary reveals the impact of the silo approach to capital funding. The silo approach is also reflects the very differing priorities of DETE and DES in respect of adult education.

Measures/Sub-Measures under the Equality, Infrastructure and Technical Assistance Priorities in EHRDOP 2000-2006					
Domain	Policy area	Lead Dept.	Implementation Body	Budget €000	Midterm Review – Budget Allocation
Education	Educational Disadvantage	DES	DES	6	↓
	Equality Opportunities: Promotion & Monitoring Education	DES	DES	9	↔
	Education Infrastructure including Further Education	DES	DES	2,435	↔
Training General	Training Infrastructure – FÁS	DETE	FÁS	72	↔
	Training for Trainers – FÁS	DETE	FÁS	10	↓
All	Technical Assistance – Equality Studies	JELR	Equality Authority	2	↑
	Technical Assistance- OP	DETE	DETE	7	↑

Table 7 Measures/Sub-Measures under the Equality, Infrastructure and Technical Assistance Priorities in EHRDOP 2000-2006.

Source: Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and Human Resources Development Complement; cited in Fitzpatrick (2004: 11).