Towards a Coherent Approach to Tertiary Education and Training: European Union Developments and an Irish case study.

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Introduction

• The intended aims of this presentation and the TDA Issue Paper are:
  – To endeavour to provide both descriptive and analytical data relevant to tertiary education policy developments within the European Union and Ireland
  – Present some tentative interpretations in relation to the emerging policy agenda and it’s possible direction and outcome.
  – Share experience and knowledge from the perspective of a practitioner engaged in the multi-level field of tertiary education and training.
  – Finally offer a space for future dialogue and collaboration opportunities between tertiary education & training staff and students from both Australia and Ireland.
Developing and transition economies face significant new trends in the global environment that affect not only the shape and mode of operation but also the very purpose of tertiary education systems. Among the most critical dimensions of change are the convergent impacts of globalization, the increasing importance of knowledge as a main driver of growth, and the information and communication revolution.

World Bank 2002

Tertiary level skills are vital for both social and economic sustainable development.

The global economy is changing rapidly, with emerging economies such as India and China growing dramatically, altering UK competitiveness. *Leitch Report UK (2006).* A swiftly rising number of American workers at every skill level are in direct competition with workers in every corner of the globe. *Tough Choices Tough Times USA (2005).*
The Euro was introduced in 1999, now over 300 million citizens from 16 EU member states use this currency.
The EU 27 population reached 499,794,855 on the 1/1/09.

Projected EU population growth to 521 million in 2035, thereafter to gradually decline to 506 million 2060.

Ageing population expected to continue, 17% over 65 years in 2008 to raise to 30% in 2060.

Graph shows population of EU 27 member states 2007

GDP per inhabitants in Purchasing Power Standards, 2007
Index where the average of the 27 EU-countries is 100


Snapshot of the wealth distribution of EU citizens, in terms of purchasing power.

Citizens in Luxembourg have 180% above the EU 27 average at 280%.

Citizens of Bulgaria have the lowest at 37% this is 66% below the EU average.
First quarter 2009 EU unemployment rate was 8.2%. Second quarter 2009 witnessed a significant rise of 0.7%, unemployment rate now stands at 8.9%.

EU 27, 21.5 million people unemployed July 2009,
Employment rates EU 27, 2008


Target set by EU Lisbon Strategy for 2010 is 70% of the eligible workforce (15-65 age cohort) to be in employment.

EU, Employment Growth -1.3% July 2009.
In the EU in 2007 over 19 million students participated in tertiary education (both university and non university studies)
Tertiary Education EU 27

It is estimated that within the EU 27 there are over 4000 institutes of higher education. Programmes are developed and delivered by over 1.5 million academic/teaching staff. The total tertiary education student population has increased by over 3 million students from 2000 to 2006, continued upward growth is expected.

Data source; Eurostat 2009, URL link http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/education/introduction
The EU Lisbon Strategy has set a target of 12.5% for 2010.
Key EU Education and Training Policy Initiatives

- **Bologna Declaration 1999**
  - Easily readable and comparable degrees,
  - Two main cycles,
  - System of credits,
  - Promote mobility,
  - Promote European co-operation in quality assurance,
  - Promote European dimension in higher education.

- **Lisbon Strategy 1999**
  - Increase the number of Mathematics, Science and Technology Graduates (MST) to 748,000,
  - Increase lifelong learning participation rates to 12.5%,
  - Reduce early school leavers to 10%,
  - Increase upper secondary level completions to 85%,
  - Reduce low achievers in reading to 15.5%.

- **European Qualifications Framework 2006**
  - It enables individuals to judge the value of their qualifications,
  - It is a prerequisite for transfer and accumulation of qualifications,
  - It improves employers ability to judge the relevance of qualifications,
  - It allows education and training providers to compare profiles and assists the development of quality assurance.
‘In the decade up to 2020 European higher education has a vital contribution to make in realising a Europe of knowledge that is highly creative and innovative. Faced with the challenge of an ageing population Europe can only succeed in this endeavour if it maximises the talents and capacities of all its citizens and fully engages in lifelong learning as well as in widening participation in higher education’. EU Ministers (2009) Communiqué, URL link http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/conference/documents/Leuven_Louvain-la-Neuve_Communiqu%C3%A9_April_2009.pdf

Towards a ‘European Higher Education Area’ (EHEA)

• 46 countries have signed up to the Bologna Process.
• Agreed three cycle programme structure (undergraduate, graduate, doctorate studies).
• Common credit system ECTS (1ECTS = 20 learning hours, 60 ECTS = 1 academic year undergraduate).
• Development of the Diploma Supplement (similar to a detailed examination transcript).
• Common guidelines and reference points for Quality Assurance.
• Increased students mobility (Erasmus report (2009) claims total students mobility for 2006-07 was 159,324)

The 2009 Communiqué included:

• Widen access to higher education (under represented groups and sectors)
• Lifelong learning, flexible learning pathways (distance, part time, work based)
• Employability, skills for careers (relevance to the world of work)
• Internationalisation, global competition for students and higher education services.

A European Research Area (ERA) is emerging in conjunction with the EHEA.
The EU set itself the overall ambition of achieving 5 benchmarks by 2010, on literacy, reduction of early school-leaving, upper secondary attainment, maths, science and technology graduates and participation in adult learning. Only the benchmark on mathematics, science and technology graduates is likely to be exceeded. Indeed, low performance in reading literacy, which was benchmarked to decline by 20% by 2010, has actually increased by more than 10% between 2000 and 2006 and has reached 24.1%.


The Lisbon Strategy aims to make the EU the most competitive economy by 2010, increased investment in education and training is perceived as the primary driver to achieving this aim.

Five new core indicators were added in 2007 (1) Language Skills, (2) Learning to Learn, (3) Teachers Professional Development, (4) Adults Skills, (5) Civic Skills.

The Lisbon Strategy has several cross-cutting items with Bologna and tertiary education in general these are; Quality Assurance, Employability, Graduate education, Lifelong learning, Access and Mobility.
European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

‘Using learning outcomes as a common reference point, the Framework will facilitate comparison and transfer of qualifications between countries, systems and institutions and will therefore be relevant to a wide range of users at European as well as at national level’. EU Commission (2008)


- The EQF was formally adopted in 2008.
- Metaframework to facilitate the translation of different qualifications systems in EU member states and internationally.
- Aid the readability and understanding of award types and values.
- The EQF has eight levels, three types of Descriptors (1) Knowledge, (2) Skills, (3)Competence, these are based on Learning outcomes and it is underpinned by Quality Assurance criteria.
- Bologna cycles and ECTS compatible with EQF levels;
  - EQF Level 6 (First cycle - Degree),
  - EQF Level 7 (Second cycle - Masters)
  - EQF Level 8 (Third cycle - Doctorate).
- Copenhagen Declaration (2002) ECVET could be compatible with levels 4,5 and 6?
EU funding programmes

• Some examples EU Lifelong Learning incentive programmes aimed at stimulating learner mobility and knowledge sharing.

Over two million young people have studied or pursued personal development in other European countries with support from EU-programmes:

- **Comenius:** School education (12,430 school partnerships in 2006)
- **Erasmus:** Higher education (target of 3 million students for 2012)
- **Leonardo da Vinci:** Vocational training (awards granted in 2008, Mobility 67,603, Projects 330)
- **Grundtvig:** Adult education (1,980 Partnerships and 51 Multilateral Projects in 2006)
- **Youth in Action:** Voluntary & non-formal education
EU Labour force skills needs

The projected skills profile for the EU 25 workforce shows a significant increase in the percentage of workers who will need high level qualifications (Tertiary, ISCED 5-6) a significant decrease in demand for workers with low level qualifications (Lower secondary, ISCED 0-2, 3c) and a moderate increase in the demand for Medium level qualification (Upper secondary, ISCED 2-3).

Ireland (Unstable weather)

DIT is located in the capital city Dublin, population of Dublin is just over ½ million
Population of the Republic of Ireland

For the first time this century the population of the Republic of Ireland went about 4 million in 2006. During the height of the so called ‘Celtic Tiger’ period (1999-2006) the population increased by over 0.45 million.

During the boom period of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ employment growth reached unprecedented levels, peaking during 2007 at 2.1 million.

The number of unemployed during the same period remained constant under 95,000, however things changed dramatically from 2007 onwards, 2008 witnessed a sharp rise in unemployment to 126,000.

The rate of unemployment in Ireland has significantly changed, remaining below 5% from 2000-2006, then marginally increasing to 6.4% in 2008. However there was an alarming increase of over 5.8% recorded up to June 2009 the Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rate now stands at 12.2%.

It is currently estimated (August 2009) that over 400,000 of the labour force are experiencing either partial for full unemployment.

Snapshot of the Irish Education System

The education system in Ireland comprises of three main levels:

- Primary education, compulsory (4-12 years of age)

- Second level, vocational education & Further education, compulsory to the end of the Minor cycle age 16, after this pupils can chose either to remain in education and training or move into the workforce (12-20+ years of age).

- Third level, higher education or tertiary (18-24+ years of age), state funded binary system (universities and IoTs) however under legalisation DIT brides the gap between these sectors. The advanced education and training components of the apprenticeship system are delivered by the IoTs and DIT.

Diagram Canning M. (2007, p25) URL link
National Framework of Qualifications

The National Framework of Qualification (NFQ) was launched in 2003 by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), the legal basis of both the NQAI and the NFQ is the Government of Ireland Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999.

NFQ recognises the following awarding authorities;

FETAC levels 1-6, DES levels 3-5, HETAC levels 6-10, DIT levels 6-10, Universities levels 7-10.

Types of Awards:
- Major,
- Minor,
- Special Purpose,
- Supplemental.

The National Craft Certificate (Apprenticeship Qualification) is a Level 6 Major Award, Higher Certificate, the awarding body is FETAC.

IoTs apply to HETAC for delegated authority to make awards. Private providers apply to HETAC to accredit their programmes.

For details on the NFQ see URL link http://www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/about_NFQ/framework_levelsAward_types.html
The binary system began to emerge in Ireland after the passing of the Vocational Education Act 1970, which enabled the establishment of Regional Technical Colleges (RTC’s). Successive national reports during the 1960’s identified the need for increased investment in education and training, and the provision of high level technical programmes. The RTC’s were formally recognised as a distinct sector under the RTC Act 1992, thereafter they were termed Institutes of Technology (IoT’s). However the The Dublin Institute of Technology became a hybrid higher education institute under the DIT Act 1992, the DIT was neither an IoT or a university, in 1998 DIT gained degree awarding power.

Total number of Persons in Full Time Third Level Education from 1966 to 2005, numbers for both Universities and Institutes of Technology y & DIT. Data sources CSO (2008), DES (2006) and HEA (2007).
Higher Education (Tertiary Level)

Public funded higher education institutes;
• 7 Universities, 4 Higher colleges, 12 Institutes of Technology and the Dublin Institute of Technology.

Private higher education providers;
• 8 colleges are members of HECA, variety of other specialised providers.

Student Enrolments 2007-08
University sector;
FT 87,033, PT 16,518.
IoTs and DIT,
FT 51,572, PT 15,909.
Total 171,032

DIT
FT 9961, PT 3594
*Apprentices 2650
*Other 4500

Apprenticeship

- New Standard Based Apprenticeship System (SBAS) introduced in 1994, consists of 7 Phases:
  - Phases 1, 3, 5 & 7 on-the-job,
  - Phase 2 training FAS,
  - Phases 4 & 6 IoT’s & DIT,
  - Average duration four years.
- FAS are the statutory body (registrations, communication, salary during training).
- IoT’s & DIT deliver education and training, national examinations, curriculum development and implementing Quality assurance.
- 25 designated apprenticeship trade areas.
- Award of National Craft Certificate Level 6 made by FETAC.
- DIT largest provider catering for 2000 – 3000 apprentices annually.
Future Skills

In order to move towards a knowledge based economy the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) report (2007) projected that there was a need for a significant shift upwards in the skills profile of the labour force. Forecasting that by 2020 the majority (48%) of the labour force would need a tertiary qualification and 45% of the labour force would need a level 4-5 qualification, the remaining 7% holding a Lower secondary qualification.

To realise this skills shift a national strategy for upskilling the labour force is necessary. This would include developing closer cooperation between education and training providers. Implementing initiatives on the recognition of formal and non formal education and training. Increase access and providing flexible pathways for leaner/workers.

Key Policy Initiatives

These are some of the major national policy reform documents that have a direct impact on tertiary education and training in Ireland:

**National Development Plan 2007-13 (Investment)**

**Strategy for Science Technology & Innovation 2006-13 (Investment)**

**Institutes of Technology Act 2006 (Reform)**

**Universities Act 1997 (Reform)**

**DIT Act 1992 and RTC Act 1992 (Restructure)**

**Life-long Learning: White Paper Adult Education 2000 (Strategy)**

**Towards 2016 National Partnership Agreement (Modernisation)**


**Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 (Reform)**
Tertiary Education Debate

  - ‘That the differentiation of mission between the university and the institute of technology sectors is preserved and that for the foreseeable future there be no further institutional transfers into the university sector;
  - Other recommendation included: new Tertiary Education Authority, Common Quality Assurance, Collaboration between IoTs and universities, Autonomy to manage programme development.
  - The OECD report supported the continuation of a binary tertiary system in Ireland.

- Skilbeck (2003, p6) Discussion Paper
  - ‘In place of the rigidities and dysfunctions of binary or bifurcated system of highly regulated institutions, what is proposed in its place is a series of moves, over time and through a wide array of specific arrangements, toward a more integrated tertiary system; a system, moreover, which recognizes the value of a variety of players, public and private, formal and informal’.
  - This paper strongly recommends the introduction of an ‘Integrated Tertiary Education System’. Further recommending that the DIT (and at a later stage WIT) gain university status, that the IoTs come under the remit of the HEA and were appropriate gain designated authority, that the diversity of mission be maintained and that linkages within the sector and industry be encouraged.
Tertiary education context 2009

- **One authority**
  - 2007 the universities, IoT’s, DIT come under the remit of the HEA.

- **Awards**
  - Universities and DIT are awarding authorities, IoT’s gain delegated awarding authority from HETAC.

- **NFQ**
  - Universities, IoT’s and DIT implement the framework, learning outcomes approach, and strategies for Access, Transfer and Progression.

- **Quality Assurance**
  - Universities & DIT quality reviewed by the EUA in 2005, IoT’s reviewed by HETAC 2008, common QA system emerging.

- **Governance and Autonomy**
  - IoT’s gain more independence to manage their own affairs and develop programmes.

- **Academic freedom**
  - In 2006 academic staff in the IoT’s and DIT gain academic freedom similar to the university staff.

- **Bologna**
  - Universities, IoT’s and DIT implement ECTS, move towards 3 cycle and engage in Erasmus.

- **Research**
  - IoT’s and DIT engage actively in research capacity building.
Latest Developments 2009

- Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) stimulating collaboration and encouraging cooperation between HEI’s.
- Labour Market Activation, fund for part time degree places, available to unemployed, 1500 at undergraduate, 1000 at postgraduate.
- Regional HEI’s considering formal functional administration mergers.
- Two Dublin based IoT’s (BIT, TIT) to merge with DIT.
- McCarthy Report recommends numerous cutbacks in the tertiary sector including the closure of one IoT and the merger of others.
- Student frees to be reinstated.
In conclusion

• Coherent tertiary system
  – Integrated evidence based policy framework (enterprise, innovation, creativity, training, research and education).
  – Formal communications platform (NFQ) which incorporates quality assurance, regulatory environment and governance.
  – Lifelong learning – Lifewide learning become the new socio-cultural norm (equity, recognition, access, transfer, progression).
  – Policies that facilitate the mission diversity of tertiary institutions.
  – Initiatives that actively encourage tertiary institutions to engage in strategic networking.
  – A strategy to stimulate capacity building initiatives in the tertiary sector.
  – An accountable funding model based on long-term sustainable outcomes and evidence of responsiveness to both social and economic needs at local, regional, national and international levels.
  – Collaboration between tertiary institutions in response to both the challenges and opportunities of internationalisation and globalisation.
Thank you

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