

# etbi

Education and Training Boards Ireland

SUMMER  
2016

## Characteristic Spirit and ETB Schools

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Arts in Education Charter  
from 2003 to 2016 –  
**Where to Now?**

Capturing the Wider  
Benefits of Learning

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**etbi**

Education and Training  
Boards Ireland  
*Bord Oideachais agus  
Oiliúna Éireann*

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Due to pressure on space, some contributions have been deferred for inclusion in a later issue.

# Editorial

In early June 2016, Minister Bruton briefed the media on his views regarding the divestment of some Catholic primary schools and his plans to increase the number of multi-denominational schools to 400 within the next 15 years through increased acceleration of divestment of church-run schools and the establishment of new primary schools.

Interestingly, Mr Bruton commented that community national schools had a lot of merit for meeting diverse parental demands. Mr Bruton regarded the community national schools under the patronage of the ETBs as a flexible model that would appeal to Ireland's increasingly diverse population.

ETBI has welcomed Mr Bruton's statements, as we have welcomed the increased media focus on the community national schools, notwithstanding the unprecedented attacks by vested interest groups. It is certainly ironic that those who have preached for plurality of patronage models at primary level have shown themselves to be so intolerant of patronage models other than their own.

The ETBs have a long tradition of responding to community needs, and it is through and by their dynamism and innovation over the decades (previously as VECs) that much of the education and training sector has grown. The Institutes of Technology (formerly Regional Technical Colleges) were established by the VECs. Likewise, the VECs demonstrated unique foresight and initiative through their involvement in establishing community colleges and community schools. More recently, the transfer of training centres from FÁS/SOLAS to the ETBs renewed that tradition of service and innovation.

The time, and opportunity, has now arrived for ETBs to replicate their ethos of innovation and initiative, and tradition of community service, as they expand the number of community national schools, providing a very attractive alternative patronage option for parents at local level.

Much of the hyped comment in the media centred on the 'segregation' of children for belief-specific teaching in community national schools, but did not generally mention that belief-specific teaching happens only for a four-week period throughout the entire school year.

"The diverse and versatile learning environment in the community national school is built on an ethos of respect, mutual understanding, an appreciation of inter-belief dialogue and a regard for each child's unique beliefs."

To be clear, the community national schools respond to the needs of their parents and local belief communities. They can provide, as far as is possible, in-school belief-specific teaching at the request of, and in consultation with, parents and the local belief communities.

As community national schools use the term 'multi-denominational' to describe themselves, they are committing to engaging, in a meaningful way, with the religious/belief aspect of each child's identity. This is primarily supported by the *Goodness Me, Goodness You!* programme, which has been developed as a multi-belief programme and is followed by all children in community national schools.

The diverse and versatile learning environment in the community national school is built on an ethos of respect, mutual understanding, an appreciation of inter-belief dialogue and a regard for each child's unique beliefs. Being rooted in the local community and seeking to reflect those community needs is a core value of ETBs, and that is why the community national school model is such a good fit for ETB patronage. The future is challenging in terms of diversity, and for some the challenge will be to practice as well as preach tolerance and mutual understanding. Societal diversity can in future be reflected in school patronage diversity.

**Michael Moriarty, General Secretary**

# A Tribute to the late Joe McDonagh, RIP

By Patrick J Gilmore, President of ETBI



The late Joe McDonagh, RIP

News of Joe McDonagh's death spread quickly in the late hours of Friday 20<sup>th</sup> and early on Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2016, which led to a great outpouring of grief and sadness, not just in his own community but throughout Co Galway, across the nation and among the GAA diaspora overseas.

In 1980, after 57 years of waiting, Joe Connolly, Galway Captain, lifted the Liam McCarthy Cup and Joe's singing of 'The West's Awake' will remain part of the annals of GAA history and folklore for years and years to come.

Since Joe's passing, many column inches have been written about his enormous contribution to the GAA and the GAA family, as a hurler, footballer, administrator, GAA President and his role as Chairman of the Overseas Committee, supporting young Irish exiles abroad from Ballinderreen to Boston, Carna to California, Cortoon to Chicago, Abu Dhabi to Australia. For these young people, Joe was a symbol of hope, of home and belonging.

In many of the newspaper columns following his passing, he was referred to as a legend and an icon. The GAA President, Aogán Ó Feargháil, in his

eulogy at Joe's funeral, referenced Joe's four loves – his family, the GAA, the Irish Language and education. It was as an educationalist I got to know Joe McDonagh best of all.

Ceapadh Seosamh ina Thimire Gaeilge do Choiste Ghairmoideachais Contae agus Cathrach na Gaillimhe ó 1994 go 2004. D'oibrigh sé go dian ag cur chun cinn teanga agus cultúr na Gaeilge sa chontae, sa chathair agus sa Ghaeltacht. Bhí grá faoi leith aige don teanga, don chultúr agus do mhuintir na Gaeltachta.

Tháinig muintir Sheosaimh ó Charna í gcroí lár na Gaeltachta agus tagann muintir McDonncha le chéile ar an séú lá déag de mhí Iúil gach bliain chun féasta Naomh MacDara a cheiliúradh. Bhíodh Seosamh ina 'fear an tí' ar an ócáid seo i gcónaí.

Joe was appointed CEO of Co Galway VEC in 2006 and I served as his Chairperson from 2007 to 2013. During that period, I got to know Joe as a consummate professional and as a true and loyal friend. During his watch, Co Galway VEC grew and prospered and his lasting legacy will be the establishment and opening of Coláiste Bhaile Chláir in 2013. When Co Galway VEC was

appointed a Patron of the college in July 2012, Joe was faced with a situation of having no site, no building, no Board of Management, no Principal and no students. Using every leadership skill in his armoury and with the support of his Senior Management team, he had the school up and running in September 2013, with 162 first-years, and three years later, in 2016, it has a population of approximately 600 students.

It was an experience to observe Joe in full flow at a VEC meeting. Members marvelled at the depth of knowledge of his brief, at the seamless manner he could transition from Irish to English and vice versa, at the respect he had for every person who sat around the table, both members and staff.

At the commencement of each meeting, votes of sympathy would be passed to bereaved families who had recently lost a loved one. But for Joe the vote of sympathy did not end there. Later that week, in the quiet of the evening and night, Joe would sit down and write a personal letter to each bereaved family. These letters expressed words of extraordinary compassion, sympathy, comfort and support, acknowledging the loss and grief being felt by a husband, wife, partner or family. The receipt of this letter was very uplifting for those who received it.

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President Obama referenced that the qualities of an outstanding leader are integrity, character, good judgement and an ability to communicate. Joe was blessed with all four. Joe was an outstanding orator and linguist. It was



his ability to communicate, the final quality referenced by Obama, which caused me some headaches because on many occasions I had to speak before or after Joe and that was some challenge. Joe had many more qualities – hard work, energy, commitment, dedication; and when it came to determining what was the working day, Joe had an extraordinary ability to confuse day and night, weekdays and weekends.

Joe was an inspirational leader who had the capacity to grow other leaders around him. Joe always put the emphasis on the team and as a result, he enjoyed the support and respect of his staff and this was evident from the tears they shed for him on the days of his funeral.

Over the years, I became a close personal friend of Joe, he was friendly, warm, and his lovely smile was all-embracing. Going to a match with Joe and his family was an experience. From the time you arrived in the car park until

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you sat in the stand, you would hear the constant refrain: "How are you, Joe?"

Joe broke bread with Presidents, Taoisigh, Bishops, CEOs, Principals, Caretakers and Cleaners and he treated all with the same dignity and respect. He had a photographic memory and once he met somebody, he never forgot his or her face or name.

The Education and Training Boards Act 2013 amalgamated the 33 VECs into 16 ETBs. This development led to Joe's redeployment as Chief Executive of Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB. In similar circumstances, others might say I will punch in the time until I retire. Not Joe. He embraced MSLETB as if his life depended on it. Don't take my word for

it, ask Mary Madden, MSLETB Education Officer, or Cllr Mary Bohan, Board member. Mentioning Mary Bohan, how she loved going to IVEA Conferences and getting Joe to sing 'The West's Awake' and 'Galway Bay', together with Cllr John Hogan singing 'The Galtee Mountain Boy', and Frank Curley 'A Little Bit More'.

Joe retired on 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2015 and was diagnosed with his illness a few short weeks later. It was a special privilege for me, together with colleague Seán Duffy (former Education Officer, Co Galway VEC) to have stayed in daily touch with him during his illness. We will forever cherish those breakfasts we had with him in the Huntsman in Galway City.

Joe never allowed his illness to determine who Joe McDonagh was. He continued to go to meetings, wrote letters, most especially to the many people who had sent him good wishes during his illness, made telephone calls and went to matches. During this period, he spoke glowingly of the love, kindness and support he got from his wife Peig and his family.

Joe left us on 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2016. He had left a legacy which will last for generations and that legacy is best described by the Latin poet, Horace: '*Exegi monumentum aere perennius*' (I have raised a monument more permanent than bronze).

On behalf of ETBI General Secretary Michael Moriarty, his staff, ETBI Board and the wider ETBI family, we offer our sincerest sympathies to his wife Peig, son Eoin, daughters Muireann and Eilís, sister Eilish, daughter-in-law Gayle and grandchildren.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.



Image by Eamonn O'Boyle (eamonnboyle.com)

The late Joe McDonagh with ETBI President Pat Gilmore (l) and ETBI General Secretary Michael Moriarty (r) on the occasion of his retirement



# ARTS

## in Education

### Charter from 2003 to 2016 – Where to Now?

*The following is an extract from a speech given by Professor John Coolahan, Chair of the Arts in Education Charter Implementation Group, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, 2016, at the first Arts-in-Education Portal National Day, (<http://artsineducation.ie/en/home>), which took place at IMMA (Irish Museum of Modern Art) and was attended by artists, educators and administrators.*

**T**ogether, and with many others who cannot be here today, we are creators and shapers of historical change. What is afoot in the last number of years is the forging of a national culture change, whereby a new era is opening up for the universal

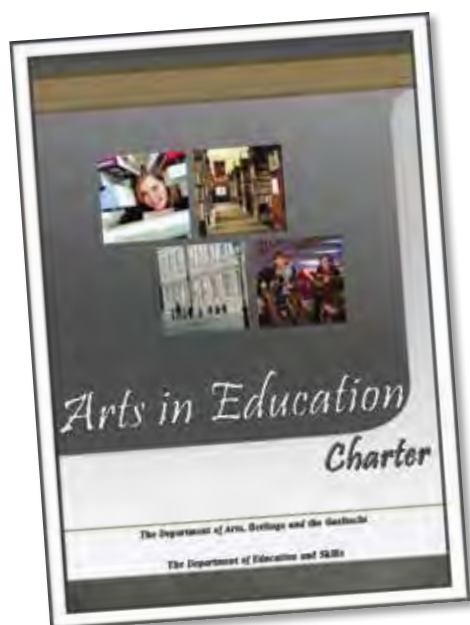
integration of the arts as a core dimension of young Irish people's holistic education. About a million of our citizens are attending state-supported schools in Ireland. They are at formative, impressionable and inquiring stages of their development. Their curiosity, inventiveness, creativity, imagination and aesthetic development need to be fostered through engagement with the arts, as receivers and as practitioners, both in-and-out of school. In the policy-makers' expressed desire that the education system nurture creative, imaginative, innovative citizens for 21<sup>st</sup> century society, it is unwise to emphasise the so-called STEM subjects at the expense of the Arts and Humanities.



Professor John Coolahan, Chair of the Arts in Education Charter Implementation Group

Experience of and in the arts is central to the holistic development of contemporary citizens, and has a vital role in fostering the characteristics just mentioned.

The establishment of the Arts in Education Charter, in 2003, by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Department of Education and Skills, in association with the Arts Council, was a landmark event in the shaping of the culture change to which one has referred. The Charter set out 19 objectives. In furthering these objectives, the



Implementation Group for the Charter wishes to record its appreciation of the widespread goodwill, co-operation and support it has experienced from organisations and stakeholders in the arts and education arenas. This co-operation is indicated by the voluntary engagement of expert personnel from a wide range of arts and education agencies on advisory committees for the Arts Portal, for the Artists-Teachers CPD activities, and for planning for the Arts Rich Schools initiative. The Implementation Group, as well as promoting the Charter's objectives, acts as a stimulating, facilitating and supportive agency, working in partnership with stakeholder agencies.

In the past, arts in education suffered from fragmentation and compartmentalisation as well as under-resourcing. A key feature of the new era is the extent of co-operation, collaboration, networking, and partnership which is becoming operative.

Noteworthy examples of fresh forms of collaboration between relevant agencies is the establishment in 2015 of Encountering the Arts in Education (ETAI) as an organisation of over thirty agencies. The National Cultural Institutions' Education, Community

and Outreach (ECO) grouping, set up in 2004, is now re-energised with a new Policy Framework document agreed in 2015. The Association of Teacher and Education Centres of Ireland (ATECI), involving thirty regional centres, has established a network for arts partnerships, co-operating with each other and with many arts partners, including the Implementation Group.

There is also evidence of renewed energy and activity in the many children's arts organisations throughout the country. These agencies have built up important experience and expertise in arts-in-education and provide a valuable national asset which deserves more public recognition and support. The work of these agencies, as well as a variety of other arts activities and events nationwide, are in the process of being identified and mapped to improve communication and access, and will be incorporated in the Portal in due course.

Ireland's first Arts in Education Portal, the key national digital recourse for arts in education in Ireland, was launched, in May 2015. Already, it is proving to be a great success. Since its launch up to the end of March 2016, there have been 18,145 visitors (per session) with 43,295 page views, an average of nearly 4,000 page views per month. In the context of social media and the Portal, there are 757 on Twitter, 620 on Facebook, and 468 subscribers to the Newsletter. There have been 1,796 video plays to date. As a new agency on the scene, these figures betoken a very high level of engagement by interested parties in the years ahead. The Portal allows for two-way involvement, as contributors and receivers, with a key focus on quality. Plans for the next three-year period for the Arts in

Education Portal are now being put in place, drawing on the experience and expertise of the Editorial Advisory Committee of distinguished personnel.

A major new development is the more focussed attention on helping artists and teachers to develop their understanding, expertise and creative pitch for arts in education work for children at different age levels. The ARK Cultural Centre for Children, as well as other established agencies, have been promoting this work and providing opportunities for artists to work with and for children of different ages, and to work with teachers. A further major initiative in this regard was the initiation in 2014 by the Charter Group of a pioneering programme of joint artist-teacher collaboration in continuing professional development. The scheme, "Exploring Teacher-Artist Partnership as a Model of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Supporting and Enhancing Arts Education," commenced in the Summer of 2014 when six Lead Teacher-Artist pairs engaged in a five-day residential personal and professional development programme.

During the period September 2014 to January 2015, six in-school arts projects took place in six primary schools across Ireland. A total of 20 hours' duration was allocated to each project; six of those hours were allocated for ongoing project planning. The projects were in a variety of art forms: visual art (2), dance, drama, music and literature (language arts).

Research was integral to this teacher-artist partnership initiative from its inception. The learning presented in the Research Report conducted during Phases 1 and 2 and based

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on the experience of the teacher-artist partnerships examined was intended to inform the design of future partnership initiatives and to contribute to the development and sustainability of each partnership in schools. In the Summer of 2016, this training programme on Teacher-Artist partnership as a model of CPD for enhancing and supporting Arts Education in our school communities will engage 21 teachers and 21 artists in collaborative learning processes. The training will be extended further in the autumn when the teacher-artist pairs, who have participated in the Train-the-Trainers programme, will be facilitated to undertake a residency programme in respective teachers' schools. Today's programme features a presentation on the CPD model "Creative Building" by one of the Lead Teacher-Artist pairs supported by other colleague facilitators.

It is intended that each Education Centre will have the capacity to implement this model locally and regionally into the future through strategic planning involving collaboration and co-operation with the various art organisations, educational institutions and school communities.

Higher Education Institutions, particularly colleges of education, have been extending their offerings of arts-in-education courses and experience for student teachers. The provision of a set of artists-in-residency bursaries, by the Arts Council, for such institutions has been a major input to this work. It is also relevant to note, in this context,

that the Arts Council is reviewing the Artists-Schools Guidelines of 2006, in consultation with partners, to bring them more into harmony with current circumstances and facilities.

The Arts Council has a very distinguished record in supporting arts organisations in their work for young people. Significantly, in its new Strategy 2016-25, Objective 8 is focussed on arts for children and young people, per se. Under this objective the Council commits itself to help "achieve the full implementation of the Arts in Education Charter." One considers that the following commitments by the Council will significantly influence the emerging culture change, to which we have referred. I will quote a few of these commitments, as I do not think that they have got the public attention that they deserve:

- "We will invest in artists, arts organisation and key programmes dedicated to developing high quality work in arts-in-education and youth arts, and we will support the provision of excellent arts experience for young people in the public domain.
- "We will make provision for children and young people a key focus of our relationship with local government.
- "We will incorporate our commitment to young people into the mainstream of our decision-making and, where appropriate, into our funding agreements with arts organisations. (P.26)."

Hopefully, the existing range of arts organisations providing for young people will be the beneficiaries of this Arts Council Strategy.

It is also the case that the Educational Community Outreach (ECO) sectors of the National Cultural Institutions, despite experiencing financial cutbacks, have been making available a wide-range of imaginative and high quality

arts and cultural experiences to children and young people. Operating on the lines of best international practice, the great artistic and cultural reservoirs of these cultural institutions have been opened up to young citizens in exciting and engaging ways. The co-operative efforts of the expert personnel involved betoken major contributions to arts in education in the years ahead, when, hopefully, they can be resourced at a more satisfactory level.

A further emerging trend which, as it evolves, will make a major contribution to rooting arts in education at local and regional level as normative provision, is the Local Arts Education Partnerships (LAEPs). Cavan-Monaghan LAEP has been a very successful pioneer in this arena, but other local authorities are planning initiatives along these lines. The impact of co-operative efforts by the statutory agencies, the local authorities and the ETBs, in conjunction with the regional education centres and other agencies, has the potential to re-shape the landscape of arts in education provision in Ireland to the great benefit of young people throughout the country.

A major facilitating factor for the arts-in-education culture change is the availability and general distribution of a variety of new technologies. They open up unprecedented opportunities for incorporating arts in education as a normal and regular feature of educational experience, in and out of school. This is the first generation when it has been generally feasible to draw universally on this remarkable resource. The Arts in Education Portal, which we are celebrating today, is a good example of this. I again wish to record the Implementation Group's thanks to those able and willing to draw up and utilise the resource. Ms. Katie Sweeney, her Editorial Team and Kids Own deserve our warm thanks for this contribution to our cultural and educational experience.



# Junior Cycle: Considerations for School Leaders



By Paddy Flood, Deputy Director (School Leadership), Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT)

Over this past school year, the ETB sector has embraced many of the reforms of Junior Cycle. Whole School CPD has been provided in the majority of schools in the sector and the planning process for implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) has been established. Teachers of English have availed of CPD and in recent weeks have broken new ground through their preparation of students for Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs). These teachers have further extended their own sense of professionalism through the collaborative approach adopted at Subject Learning and Assessment Review Meetings (SLARs) which have been held across the country. Many have reported that initial apprehensions have not materialised and that the CBAs have, on balance, added a new and rich dimension to teaching and learning. Teachers particularly welcomed the opportunity afforded through SLAR meetings to work with colleagues to discuss student learning. Teachers of Science and Business Studies have also been introduced to the new specifications which will commence in September.

Just as schools are developing their Junior Cycle provision in a purposeful and scaffolded manner, the system has continued to produce further specifications, resources and clarifications. NCCA has been particularly busy providing draft specifications for Modern Foreign Languages and Visual Art with further draft specifications for Gaeilge

forthcoming. Draft guidelines on Well-being outline the proposed purpose and content of a school's well-being programme. Once finalised, these guidelines will support schools as they plan a well-being programme that is specific to the school's own context and student cohort. Further draft guidelines on reporting provide a new lens with which we can view the quantity and quality of feedback available to students and parents.

Many issues around Junior Cycle provision were clarified in March in [Circular 24/2016](#). In particular, school leaders have been given clarity in terms of how the programme for Junior Cycle for all students might be planned. Together with the Well-being guidelines from NCCA, the following facts influence programme planning and timetabling considerations.



- From September 2017, all lessons will be for a minimum of 40 minutes in duration. In effect schools planning their timetable will have a maximum of 42 class periods in the week. Schools have freedom to extend beyond 40 minutes with some schools moving to 60 minute class periods. Such changes require planning and collaboration to ensure that the optimum period length is achieved for the school and that the changes that are taking place support quality teaching and learning opportunities.
- Students commencing their Junior Cycle from September 2017, will study a maximum of 10 subjects for certification. Students may study up to four short courses (two short courses will, in effect, be the equivalent of one subject when calculating the maximum number of subjects and short courses that a student studies for certification and reporting on their Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement).
- The Draft Guidelines on Well-being indicate that students entering first year in 2017 will study a minimum of 300 hours over 3 years in the area of Well-being. Of this a minimum of 140 hours will be dedicated to PE, with a minimum of 70 hours each for CSPE and SPHE. These guidelines outline several possibilities as to how the 300 hours can be compiled. The time devoted to Well-being will rise to 400 hours by 2020.
- The minimum time to be allocated to the study of subjects across the three years of Junior Cycle is 200 hours with a minimum of 240 hours over three years for English, Gaeilge and Mathematics. 100 hours is to be allocated to short courses.
- These facts, together with other aspects of the framework pose many questions for schools to consider when planning their Junior Cycle provision. In particular, the following issues are to be considered:

## Support Available:

Over recent months the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) support service has piloted supports for school leaders on curriculum planning and timetabling. A one-day programme is available to all school leaders from September 2016. This workshop will seek to support school leaders in leading the planning of each school's Junior Cycle programme. It will specifically focus on:

- Mediating all curriculum and policy documents that influence programme planning and timetabling.
- Providing a planning context for changes to timetables from September 2017 to 2020.
- Identifying ways in which schools can meet the requirements of the Guidelines on Well-being.
- Providing each participant with an interactive digital planning tool that will be of use to school leaders, teachers and management bodies when exploring the time implications of possible Junior Cycle programmes.
- What are the planning and timetabling implications of both 40-minute and 60-minute class periods and what further implication do these models have for students and teachers?

All school leaders will be invited to attend this programme at a local venue in Autumn 2016. The invitation will be issued by JCT from Monaghan Education Centre.

- Does our proposed Junior Cycle programme present students with access to the 24 Statements of Learning? Does the programme reflect the principles of the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015)?
- What are the distinctive needs of our student population? How many subjects/short courses should students be offered for certification and reporting?
- Will our Junior Cycle curriculum be capable of providing all students with a sufficiently wide range of subject choices having regard to their aptitudes, interests and career ambitions?
- Influenced by the number of subjects/short courses that students study, decisions will have to be made on how much time the school can allocate on the timetable for each subject and short course. Schools have considerable autonomy in deciding time allocations above the minimum specified.
- How do we ensure that students with special educational needs, including those studying for Level 2 Learning Programmes are accommodated on the school timetable?
- How does our Junior Cycle provision ultimately influence what happens at Senior Cycle?
- What is the role of Guidance for all students in our Junior Cycle programme?
- Does the school have the teaching capacity to deliver the proposed programme for Junior Cycle? For example, in introducing a short course a school would need to give consideration to how the course could be provided in the event of the teacher teaching it in the first instance being no longer available.
- What practical steps can school leaders take to manage professional time for teachers and management support hours?

# Characteristic Spirit and ETB schools

By Dr Mags Liddy, Dr Joanne O'Flaherty, Dr Orla McCormack

**T**his article reports on the findings of a research project which centres on the exploration and expression of the characteristic spirit of ETB schools as publicly-managed post-primary schools within the Irish education system. The research was carried out in eighteen ETB schools in Ireland throughout 2013-16 and was led by a research team based at the Department of Education and Professional Studies, University of Limerick. A publicly-managed school, as defined for the purposes of this research, is a school where the role of patron and the

accountability regarding characteristic spirit resides with a public body. The research project described generally herein aims to support Education and Training Board Ireland (ETBI) and the six participating Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in exploring and expressing their characteristic spirit. ETBs involved in the Research Project include: Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB; Cork ETB; Galway and Roscommon ETB;

Kerry ETB; Louth and Meath ETB; and Limerick and Clare ETB.

A central policy document offering an understanding of 'characteristic spirit' is the 1998 Education Act, Section 15(2)(b):

The characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school,



and at all times act in accordance with any Act of the Oireachtas or instrument made thereunder, deed, charter, articles of management or other such instrument relating to the establishment or operation of the school.

Building on this definition, Fischer, in her paper entitled “Ethos vs Ethics or the Hierarchy of Rights and Values in Schools – the Irish Case”, suggests that the concept reflects the ‘lived reality of the values of the school’ (2010, p. 4). She advocates that the practice of characteristic spirit should be seen in the everyday life of each school, centring on ethics, human rights or civic morality.

Each of the six ETBs was asked to volunteer three schools to participate in the study. Of the participating eighteen schools, seven were designated community colleges and eleven were non-designated participating schools. ETB schools are of two kinds, ‘partnership schools’ and schools under the sole aegis of the ETB. Partnership schools for which the ETB is patron are formally referred to as ‘Designated Community Colleges’. Designated Community Colleges have co-trustees, historically of a religious denomination (numbering approximately 56 of all ETB schools with ‘Designated’ status). In recent times, designated community colleges have been developed with the ETB and Educate Together. Schools under the sole aegis of the ETB are formally referred to as ‘Non-designated’ Community Colleges.

This study began with an intensive exploration of characteristic spirit in each of these schools. The data-collection process conducted by the research team utilised a mixed-methods approach with the administration of surveys, followed by interviews and focus groups. Triangulation of data themes was ensured through a review of school documentation such as Whole School Evaluation Reports

and subject evaluations available online. Six-hundred and ninety-seven students aged 12-16 years with a mean age of 13.75 years completed a student survey across the eighteen participating ETB schools. Of the student respondents, 48.2% were female (n=336) and 51.6% were male (n=360). One hundred and twenty-six teachers from ETB schools completed a teacher survey, 81.6% of respondents were female (n=102) and 18.4% were male, (n=23). Of the 126 responding, the majority of respondents were teachers (77%, n=97), followed by Assistant Principals (12%, n =15) and a number of other roles were identified including Guidance Counsellor, SEN Coordinator, Chaplain and Home School Liaison Coordinator.

In addition, qualitative data-collection methods were utilised in each of the 18 schools. The research team met with second-year students to conduct focus groups and held a number of semi-structured interviews with key school personnel (such as school Principals, year heads, guidance counsellors and interested teachers). Also ETB Education Officers and ETBI staff were interviewed. The focus groups and interviews explored participants’ understanding of characteristic spirit, the values they perceived to underpin the characteristic spirit of their school, and how they believe/perceive characteristic spirit is evident within the life of the school. Finally, any issues or challenges they experienced in articulating the characteristic spirit of their schools were also explored.

## Teachers’ Understanding of Characteristic Spirit

The teachers were asked to indicate their level of understanding of characteristic spirit in the survey. The scale ran from 1 (excellent), 2 (good), 3 (average), 4 (poor), 5 (no understanding).

Table 1 displays a wide range of response and level of understanding of the term ‘characteristic spirit’, with the majority of teacher respondents reporting a good to average understanding. The concept of characteristic spirit is new to the ETB sector as it did not apply prior to the Education Act. This is underscored by the absence of a policy statement of characteristic spirit underpinning the ETB sector generally. A number of ETB staff explored possible reasons for participants’ reported low levels of understanding and uncertainty around what the concept of characteristic spirit means and entails. For example, it was suggested that the concept ‘was never defined...it was defined by what it wasn’t. For example, it wasn’t a Catholic school traditionally, so it wasn’t something. It was never actually looked at to say what it was’ (ETB Staff 2). One school respondent stated:

What is the characteristic spirit?  
That’s the million-dollar question. Honestly, I gave this some thought before you came in [to interview me]. The fact that I can’t succinctly say what the characteristic spirit is, is disappointing for me (Key Personnel, School 14).

Table 1: Teachers’ stated level of understanding of characteristic spirit

Level of understanding	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	9	7.1%
Good	35	27.8%
Average	47	38.2%
Poor	21	17.1%
No Understanding	11	8.9%



It was also suggested that other sectors and educational patrons have a clearer understanding of what their collective characteristic spirit is, which the ETB sector currently lacks: 'Other school types have a very obvious philosophy of education ... To me, the ETBs don't have that' (Key Personnel, School 12). There was a feeling, amongst a small number of participants, that the concept of characteristic spirit is school-based rather than sector-wide and that it may not be feasible or desirable to articulate the concept in relation to the entire sector. 'Characteristic spirit to me is school-specific firstly, it's the ethos of the school...I wouldn't identify characteristic spirit with an ETB at all. I would relate that purely to the ethos of this school' (Key Personnel, School 12).

### Understanding Characteristic Spirit through Values

Participants frequently articulated the characteristic spirit of their school in terms of the core values that they believed underpinned their school. For example:

If I were asked to think of one word that would sum it up, it is respect – that is central to everything. Respect for learning, respect for other people's opportunity to learn, fair play, decency, courtesy, they all fit into the same thing. Respect for other people's points of view, respect for people's wishes, respect for people's goals (Key Personnel, School 2).

Also participants related the concept of characteristic spirit to school atmosphere, and relationships:

The characteristic spirit...has got to do with relationships – with the mission and vision of the school...I think it has got to do with a number of things. It's not just a simple concept (ETB Staff 3).

The full research report explicates the named values in more detail and

includes iteration of the following: care and respect, equality and inclusion, well-being, and acceptance of others. With regard to equality in ETB schools, both students and teachers were asked in the survey about equal treatment.

Of the student respondents, 65% of students generally agreed with the statement, 'In this school all students are treated equally':

Table 2: 'In this school all students are treated equally'

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	197	28.3
Agree	252	36.3
Unsure	113	16.3
Disagree	99	14.2
Strongly disagree	34	4.9
Total	695	100
Missing	2	

When asked to respond to 'In my practice I treat students equally', 95% of teachers also generally agreed with the statement (M=1.53).

Table 3: teacher responses to 'In my practice I treat students equally'

Equality	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	65	54.2%
Agree	49	40.8%
Unsure	5	4.2%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	1	0.8%
Missing	6	

This emphasis on values echoes Fischer's definition of characteristic spirit as the 'lived reality of the values of the school' (2010, p.4). One participant added,

A characteristic spirit is a motion thing, it's a living thing – you can't box it into 40 minutes on a Monday morning (Key Personnel, School 15).

This way of reading and understanding characteristic spirit highlights the relational and contextual nature of characteristic spirit.

### Conclusion

The overall research project aims to

explore and express the characteristic spirit of ETB schools; this article provides a brief insight into the data gathered regarding the characteristic spirit of ETB schools during 2013-16. One finding highlighted above demonstrates a hesitancy about the concept of characteristic spirit amongst many of the research participants, as many found it a difficult concept to speak about and define. This finding is perhaps to be expected as the concept of characteristic spirit did not apply to ETB schools prior to the Education Act (1998) and since then a definitive policy statement has not been developed and explicitly articulated across the sector. This finding clearly

highlights a recommendation for action, specifically focussed on increasing teachers' levels of understanding of the concept of characteristic spirit which can be also extended to schools, staff and students.

On the other hand, this research describes and elaborates on the lived reality (Fischer, 2010) of ETB schools, highlighting particular embedded values within the sector. O'Brien (2008, p. 171) suggests that respect, care, relationships, love and emotions need to become 'part of the vocabulary of second-level' schools. Such values are reflected in those expressed by participants in this study, and a review of all findings presents examples of how values are lived out, 'expressed' in schools, as well as highlighting the relational nature of a concept based on

social interactions particularly between teachers and students. The current dilemma around the characteristic spirit of ETB schools is best understood with reference to the wider Irish historical, legislative and education contexts and the increasingly pluralist and secular nature of Irish society. The Education Act, itself the outcome of considerable consultation and consensus-seeking, licenses and challenges the ETB sector to define and establish its own characteristic spirit. However, this raises interesting questions for the ETB sector: can or should the ETB devise a national policy on characteristic spirit that enables and reflects the 'lived reality of individual schools'? Can or should such values as interpersonal relationships, care and respect be captured within a sector-wide policy? It is important that appropriate structures

are put in place to enable and facilitate dialogue pertaining to these complex and sometimes contentious issues.

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Government of Ireland. (1998). Education Act. Dublin: Stationery Office.

O'Brien, M. (2008). *Well-being and post-primary schools*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

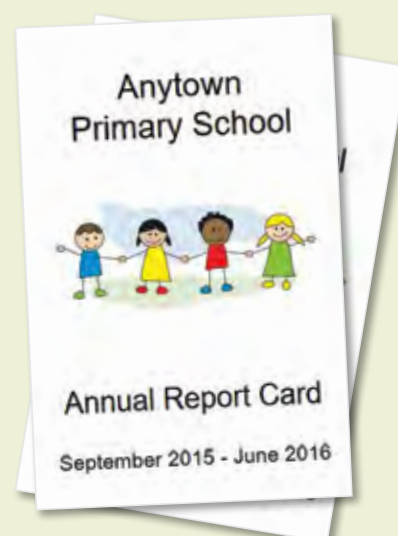
# NCCA Encourages Second-Level Schools to Make Full Use of Education Passport

By John Halbert, Director, Curriculum and Assessment, at NCCA

In accordance with the provisions of Section 7.8 of [DES Circular 0056/2011](#), all schools should use the Education Passport materials developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) when sharing information about sixth class children's learning.

Following enrolment of new first year students to a school, the first important step of the Education Passport transfer process is for **post-primary principals** to send an **Information Request form** to the primary school. This form can be found at [www.ncca.ie/transfer](http://www.ncca.ie/transfer).

In preparation for incoming first year students to the schools and to ensure a timely transfer of the students' Education Passports, it might be helpful for primary and post-primary principals, as well as parents, to download NCCA's new [interactive poster](#) from the NCCA website, which outlines the transfer process. This poster sets down the steps involved in the transfer process and responsibilities, as well as a suggested timeframe. On the website there is also a guide for interpreting sixth class report cards as well as further support materials and updated FAQs for post-primary schools.



# Capturing the Wider Benefits of Learning Pilot Programme in Co Clare

By Breda O'Driscoll, Community Education Coordinator in Co Clare

"Capturing The Wider Benefits of Learning Assessment Tool/Methodology (CWBL)" developed by Limerick City ETB, was piloted in 55 programmes delivered across Co Clare Community Education Service in 2015. This methodology/tool was developed for use by tutors and facilitators and focuses on two elements of community education. The first is that of engaging learners in establishing the learning outcomes they wish to achieve (non-certified courses in this instance) through participation on the course, and measuring the extent to which those outcomes have been achieved on completion of the course. The second element of the tool engages learners in reflecting on the wider benefits for participation on the course in four key areas of personal development, health and well-being, family and community, and future plans for further education and employment.

The success of the CWBL is reflected in the number of learners who willingly participated and provided such informative and positive feedback on the impact of adult education on themselves, their families and their communities. The CWBL revealed how Community Education increased confidence and self-esteem of participants, encouraged and supported them to participate/volunteer in their local communities and in some cases acted as a first step in progression into further education and training.

Because the questions are open-ended and allow the learners to express their opinions, they generate a wide spectrum of thoughts and ideas. Data gathered highlights the importance of local inclusive community-based learning as many learners mention the

positive feeling from interacting with their neighbours, community and people with similar abilities and interests. Learners' intentions to access more programmes are also very evident with comments such as *"I am hoping to do a certified mosaic course. I am also*

*hoping to do a Start Your Own Business course with the plan to do a crafting business."* The following extracts are a sample of the responses that Community Education Service in Co Clare has received from a wide variety of different learners.

## "Wider benefits of learning" – what does that mean?

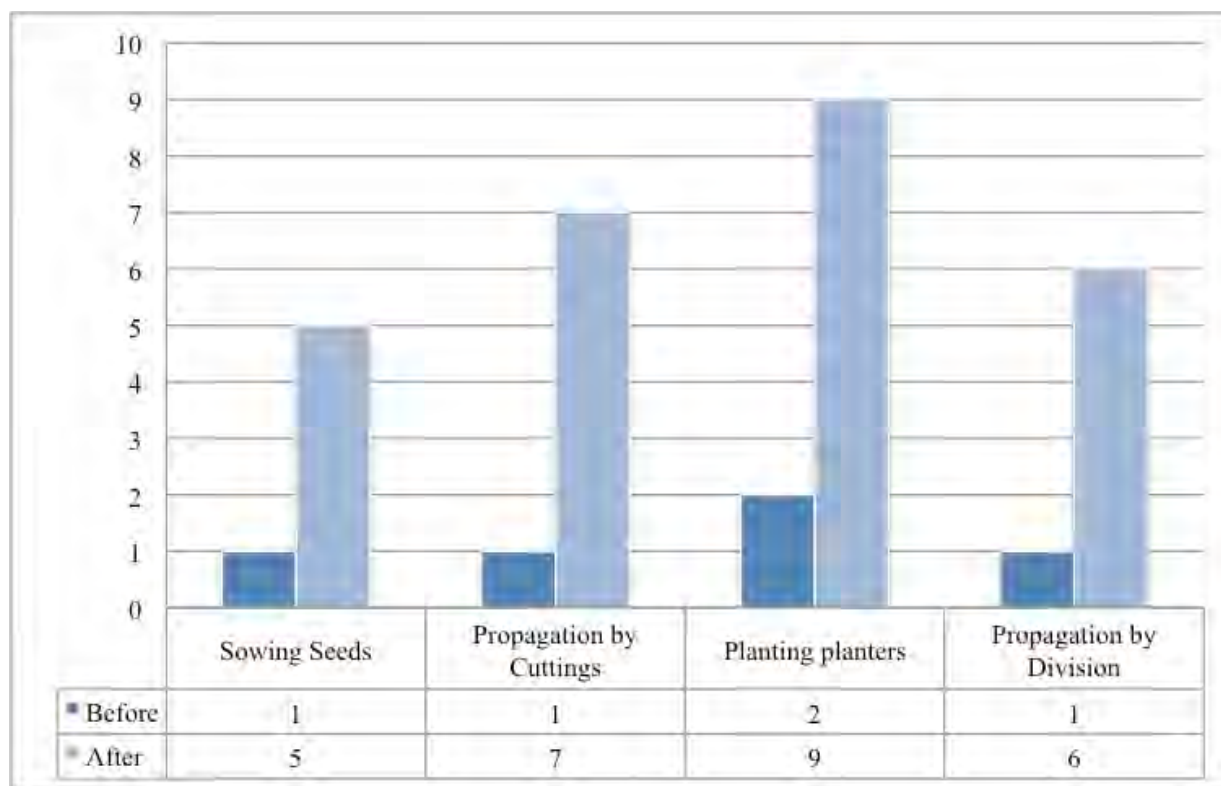
The benefits of education and training and the benefits of learning can be summarized as the added value of education and training for individuals and society. Benefits of education and training can be private, i.e. received by individual persons or enterprises, or public, i.e. benefiting a whole region, economy or society; benefits can be monetary (e.g. wages), economic (e.g. employment, productivity, growth) or non-monetary (e.g. health, well-being, social cohesion and reduced criminality).

The term "wider benefits of learning" is generally taken to mean the non-economic benefits of learning on personal, emotional and social life, including the impact on the health and well-being of individuals, and the impact on levels of crime and social cohesion within communities and society as a whole.

An analysis of multiple surveys across Europe has found that adult learning had positive impacts on reported life satisfaction and happiness, self-confidence, satisfaction with social life and leisure, self-reported health satisfaction, and was associated with increased trade union membership and involvement in voluntary work, greater desire to find a better job and improved financial expectations.



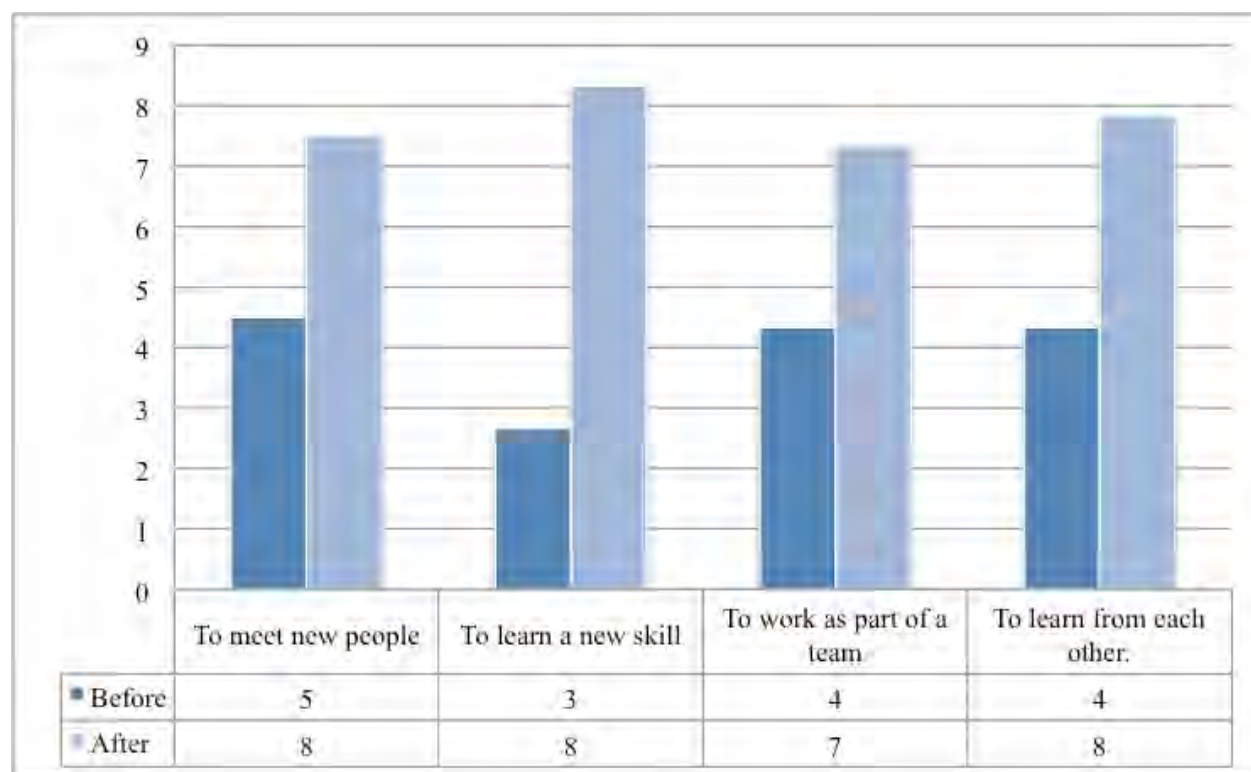
## Horticulture Course



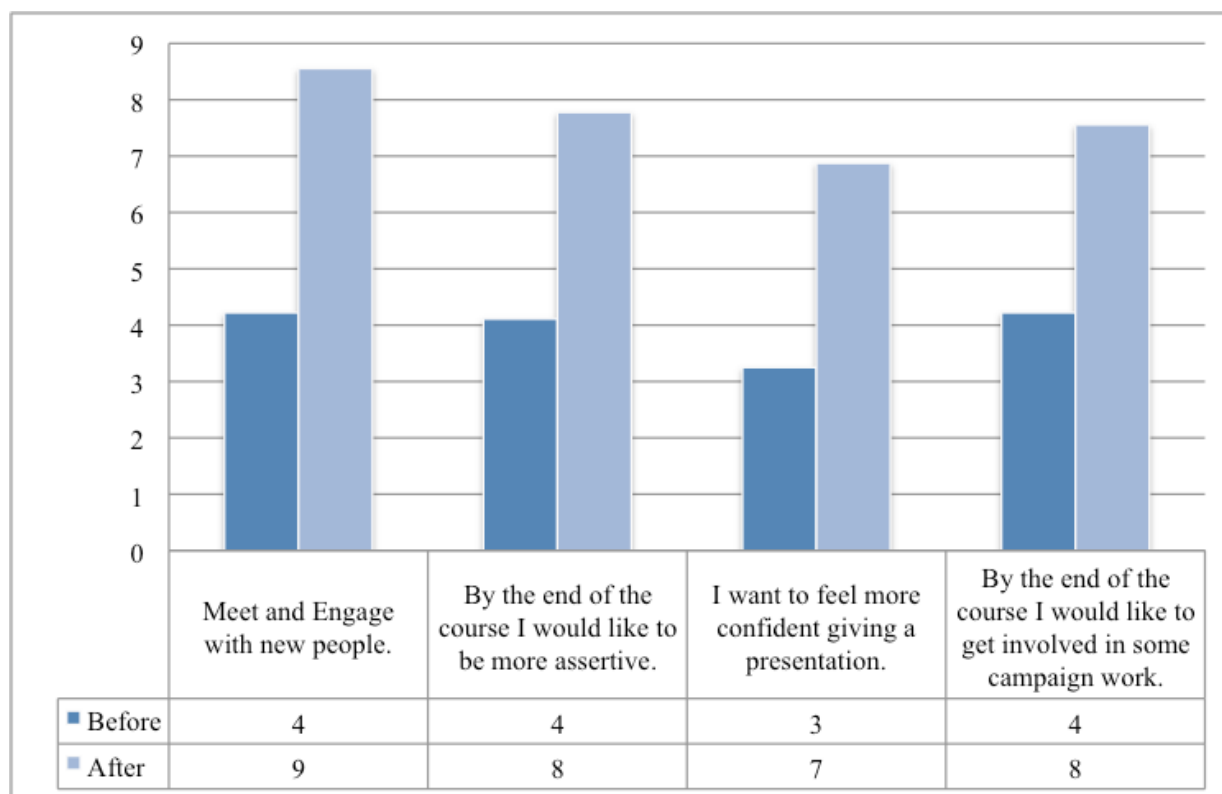
	My Personal Learning	My Health or Well-being	My Family or My Community	My Future Education or Employment
<b>Learner 1</b>	Yes, I have learned some interesting ways to get flowers and vegetables cheaply.	Yes, I have learned some natural ways of growing food organic etc.	Yes, I have shown my family ways to increase their vegetables and flowers at no extra cost.	Yes, it is in my interest to learn and try and educate myself.
<b>Learner 2</b>	I learned how to grow vegetables and plants. I made new friends. The teacher is nice and helpful.	I was healthy and happy doing the course.	My family are a great support to me.	Grow new plants and lots of vegetables.
<b>Learner 3</b>	I learned more about gardening, about growing veg. Replanting, planting from seeds.	Good to know new things.	Hope I could help more in my community to grow more veg at home.	To learn as much as I can.
<b>Learner 4</b>	I learnt a lot of things I wasn't sure off, like sowing and cut-offs.	My health and well-being has gained as we learned to sow a lot of lettuce, spinach, watercress and herbs.		I hope this will help me in my future education and employment.
<b>Learner 5</b>	I've learned how to grow many different plants, met lots of new people. I also get to spend a few hours doing something I enjoy.	I feel healthier being out in the fresh air as opposed to being in a class. I feel fitter jogging the four miles to the course.	My family are glad that I've gone back to education and that I'm doing something I enjoy.	When this is finished I plan to do more courses and hopefully get employment.



## Men's Shed Crafts 2015 – Stained Glass



	My Personal Learning	My Health or Well-being	My Family or My Community	My Future Education or Employment
<b>Learner 1</b>	I talked to new people. I learned to cut glass and solder.	I started walking some days of the week. I did some other exercise. I did some voluntary work.	I volunteered with the Tidy Town people. I voted in the last election.	I would like to do something to further my education.
<b>Learner 2</b>	My personal learning has improved. Looking Forward to doing more. Broadens the mind.	Attending the classes is a help to health and well-being. It's relaxing (The classes) i.e. mastering something that you thought you couldn't do.	My family are impressed with the things made with the stained glass.	Looking forward to more practice at something else, or even to do more on the stained glass.
<b>Learner 3</b>	Helped me at matching different coloured glass	Very relaxing and good for improving concentration	It helped to have a common objective with the rest of the group	Would like to do more similar courses
<b>Learner 4</b>	Help me with matching coloured glass	Very relaxing for me	Helped me to have a good friends with group	Would like to do more similar courses
<b>Learner 5</b>	From zero to understanding of the principals behind the art	Not applicable	Not applicable	Retired
<b>Learner 6</b>	Help to co-ordinate different colours	Give you peace of mind and get new ideas	To meet other people and exchange ideas. Very relaxing	I would like to do similar courses



## A Date for your Diary

### 2016 ETBI Further Education & Training Conference

The 2016 ETBI Further Education & Training Conference takes place on **Tuesday 22nd** and **Wednesday 23rd November 2016** in the Killashee House Hotel and ETBI HQ, Naas, Co Kildare. The Conference theme is ETBs Working Towards a Best-in-Class Further Education and Training Service for 21st Century Ireland.

Contact ETBI for registration and further details.



	My Personal Learning	My Health or Well-being	My Family or My Community	My Future Education or Employment
<b>Learner 1</b>	Having an ISC interpreter available class. Feel more in control. Confidence.	Time out for me. Listening to meditative music.	More patience	Leadership course Miltown Malbay 2016. To improve / learn more on Community Development.
<b>Learner 2</b>	Learned to stand up and make a presentation to my peers. Got to think about various aspects of life.	More hopeful. Helped my mental health, getting out meeting people, feeling positive reason to get up and out.	I am happier in myself so happier at home. This course came at right time for me when I needed chance to get out and about.	Hope to do Community Leadership course.
<b>Learner 3</b>	Have learned to wait before speaking and listen more.	Feel more hopeful having met the women on the course that our future is in great hands.	Have become more patient with kids.	Doing this course has given me the confidence to look in to more campaigning or possible beginning course.
<b>Learner 4</b>	Speaking better in public	More conscious of health issues		May learn more if something suitable comes up.
<b>Learner 5</b>	Confident. More assertive to my needs. Involvement to campaign	Isolation awareness. Doing voluntary work in Citizen's Information	Getting more involved	Continue to education and getting on with campaign
<b>Learner 6</b>	About what is important to women. I am proud of myself.	Improved my confidence. Makes me feel I can achieve course.	They are proud of me for achieving this course.	I would like to do another course.
<b>Learner 7</b>	Met people from different backgrounds and learned from them.	More confident in certain areas (presentations).	I passed on what I have learned from other participants.	I would like to do the community leadership course.
<b>Learner 8</b>	How to be more assertive. Listening skills.	Passion for learning. More grateful for all I have in my life.	Better social skills. More confident in helping with local events.	Women's studies. Interested in further education.
<b>Learner 9</b>	I learnt a great deal from the research compiled for us by our tutor and so much from the presentations given by fellow students.	More inter-action with others. Made me feel safer and more hopeful.	I feel encouraged to persevere in trying for change.	Great to learn of the chance to pursue further learning in this field and maybe have fellow students here to go with.

Tutors delivering for CES are provided with a pack where the CWBL information is included. Both tutor and learners agree on course content and delivery which meet the learners' needs, tutors' plans and the needs of the community at the beginning of the course and when learning outcomes are set. On completion of the course, the learners compare where their skill levels were on starting the course and where they believe their skill levels have progressed to.

A sample of one learner's perspective having attended a cookery course:

**Compare where you are now with where you were at the start of your course for each outcome.**

**Outcome 1:** *I wanted to make new dishes that were easy.*

Where was I before I started this course?

☹ 1 **2** 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ☺

Where am I now?

☹ 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9 10 ☺

**Outcome 2:** *I wanted to improve my knife skills.*

Where was I before I started this course?

☹ 1 **2** 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ☺

Where am I now?

☹ 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9 10 ☺

**Outcome 3:** *I wanted to make nice deserts.*

Where was I before I started this course?

☹ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9 10 ☺

Where am I now?

☹ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **10** ☺

**Outcome 4:** *I wanted to work well as part of a team.*

Where was I before I started this course?

☹ 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10 ☺

Where am I now?

☹ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **10** ☺

**Outcome 5:** *I wanted to meet new people and make new friends.*

Where was I before I started this course?

☹ 1 2 3 4 **5** 6 7 8 9 10 ☺

Where am I now?

☹ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **9** 10 ☺



The evaluation also provides the learner with the opportunity to express how the course has impacted on not only their educational life but also on their personal/community/family life and further education and employment.

Community Education in Co Clare offered a wide variety of courses in 2015 including Basic Computer Skills, Leadership for Women, Cookery, Horticulture, Sewing,

and more. The Wider Benefits of Learning Assessment Tool/Methodology was successful in returning evidence of how the learners' recognition of their own improvement through the learning outcomes exercise led to a sense of self-achievement, increased self-esteem and confidence. Evidence was also returned on how taking part in the course had a positive impact for the participants both psychologically and emotionally and often led to a renewed connection with family and community. ***"I volunteered in***

### My Personal Learning

- I talked to new people.
- I feel more confident.
- I tried out new activities.
- I am more understanding of myself.

### My Health or Well-being

- I started walking every day.
- I take more time out for me when I get stressed.
- I am happier in myself.
- I know where to go for help.
- I eat a lot better now.

### My Family or Community

- I get on better with my family.
- I am more patient.
- I cook for my family.
- I have more contact with friends and family.

### My Future Education or Employment

- I feel less afraid of attending a new course now.
- I decided I want to learn more.
- I went and got some advice on looking for a job.

"Evidence was also returned on how taking part in the course had a positive impact for the participants both psychologically and emotionally and often led to a renewed connection with family and community."

***my local community and got all my family together again.***" Many also indicated a confidence and interest in pursuing further educational opportunities while others have seen the community education course as a first step on the road to gaining meaningful employment. ***"This has made me want to get involved more in my community. I have plans to move on to doing some courses in the future and getting a good job."***

A key element to the success of the programme was the relationship with the tutor, with many reporting the significance of this for them.

Whilst this form of data-gathering is resource-dependant on tutors and administration and is somewhat limited, it does record vital data about the impact of community education which will help community groups and Clare Community Education Service with reporting and planning.

CWBL highlights the work done in the individual centres and programmes, the ongoing need for such courses and the renewed sense of inclusion for the learners with their peers, families and communities. This pilot scheme has worked successfully for Clare Community Education Service and we hope to roll it out to all our programmes in 2016.

## Other responses

"To meet new people. Enjoy listening to the various ideas and suggestions from the other people."

"It has helped me get involved in my local community and to be aware of what is going on in the community."

"Gives you a more positive view of life. A lot happier doing and learning on this course. Less stressed."

"I want to attend new classes in cooking to get a job in a kitchen."

"I help my family. I look after the graves of my parents and in-laws. I teach my kids to be kind and well-mannered."

"I tried out new activities. I feel more confident."

"I am better equipped for the future."

"I know where to go for help."

# Integrating ECDL Workforce into Further Education and Training

Deputy CEO of the Irish Computer Society (ICS), Tom O'Sullivan, discusses how the new ECDL Workforce solution can be integrated with current course offerings in further education and training.



Just as today's employees, students and citizens need to be flexible, so do the programmes on offer in further education and training. Whether we are preparing students for the workforce for the first time, helping them get back into the workforce or preparing them for further study, we share a responsibility to ensure they have the right mix of competencies. When ECDL was founded in 1997 by a small group of European computer societies (including the Irish Computer Society) its mission was "to enable proficient use of ICT that empowers individuals, organisations and society, through the development, promotion, and delivery of quality certification programmes".

When anyone hears the acronym ECDL they'd be forgiven for making assumptions about what it meant. Of course, literally it means European Computer Driving Licence but that's just a name. What it really stands for is a constantly evolving competency development programme founded on quality standards and certification.

If you are familiar with the ECDL of five or ten years ago, you might fail to recognise the ECDL of today! Today's ECDL is more flexible; offers a broader range of competencies; supports best practice in technology-enhanced learning; and allows locally-developed content to be integrated that meets the specific needs of our market.

Over the 19 years of its existence, ECDL has changed as the needs of the economy and society have changed. The priorities when ECDL was established were the familiar desktop applications. Today, the range of digital competencies that ECDL helps to build cover security, privacy, project planning, online collaboration, web and image editing, and of course the stalwarts of word processing and spreadsheets among others.

No one could have predicted in 1997 that ECDL (called ICDL internationally) would grow to include almost 20 modules, be offered in 40 languages in over 150 countries, and reach over 14 million students. ECDL/ICDL has been adopted by government ministries in numerous countries as well by the European Union itself; it has been adopted by international aid agencies including UNESCO, and by thousands of companies and education providers across the globe. It is inarguably the world's leading digital skills certification. Recently, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation became an ECDL Accredited Test Centre.

Here at home, ECDL has been a key contributor to the up-skilling of the population. Close to 1 million people in Ireland have benefitted from the programme, and every day thousands of individuals are developing new digital competencies through ECDL. However,

in some ways ECDL in Ireland has been a victim of its own success. So many people have done ECDL over the past nineteen years that many think it is a relic of the past. They fail to realise how current and relevant it is today, having undergone almost constant update and renewal.

The possibilities with ECDL Workforce today are so varied compared to the standard ECDL offering of five or ten years ago. Now our students choose from a wider range of competencies; and they get certified in the competencies they *need* and not a fixed set determined by us. Increasingly, our students come back to us to update, or add, one or two competencies.

ECDL is no longer something you *complete*, instead it is a programme you enrol in for life, and engage with as and when you need it.

## ECDL IN FURTHER EDUCATION

In the past, the standard ECDL offering was an instructor-led course of seven specific modules. Today, the ECDL curriculum is flexible and allows a choice of 16 (and growing) modules that can be certified independently or in groups that correspond to the needs of common job roles or profiles.

The new ECDL Workforce solution comprises eLearning, webinars, online practice tests, automatically-marked certification tests and digital

certificates. It is a prime example of technology-enhanced learning that gives students the best chance of success while maintaining the high standards of a world-leading certification.

Employers, educators and funding bodies, including SOLAS and the Department of Education and Skills, all recognise the important role that industry certifications play in Further Education Training (FET) provision. Despite the wealth of valuable QQI-accredited courses available, industry bodies play an important role in ensuring that content, assessment and certification of the latest skills and technologies are available in the market in a timely fashion.

Funding is provided to Education and Training Boards (ETBs) for industry certifications so that they can be agile enough to meet the rapidly changing needs of the economy and wider society. The role of QQI awards and industry certifications in further education are not mutually exclusive, and often students can benefit from pursuing both.

There are three distinct ways of using ECDL in further education and training:

1. ECDL can be used to **enhance** current courses with additional skills that improve the employability of graduates of those courses.
2. ECDL can be **embedded** in the delivery of QQI courses where there are shared learning objectives. This allows students to gain industry certification at the same time as they pursue a QQI award.
3. ECDL can be used as an **exemption** from certain component awards.

### ENHANCING CURRENT COURSES WITH NEW SKILLS

Many of ECDL's newer modules cover digital competencies that are commonly

required by employers, but which are not currently taught in mainstream provision.

The recent National Data Protection survey showed that the biggest cause of data and security breaches in business are the accidental and inadvertent actions of users, and no current technology can totally safeguard against user error. For this reason employers are increasingly requiring their employees to understand the fundamentals of data protection and cyber-security.

The **ICS/ECDL Safe Worker Award** combats weaknesses in individuals' knowledge about their privacy and security responsibilities. It enables individuals to protect themselves and their business from common threats while also building the understanding of their important role in safeguarding the employer's data and reputation.

The ICS/ECDL Safe Worker Award comprises the following two modules:

- Security Essentials
- Privacy Essentials

Delivered via two 5-hour eLearning

modules, with the support of further online resources including webinars and discussion boards, the modules can easily be added to popular business courses.

Students get access to unlimited practice tests and once they pass the certification test will be awarded the Safe Worker Award which is triple-accredited by the Association of Data Protection Officers, the Irish Computer Society and the ECDL Foundation, the governing body for ECDL Worldwide.

Other examples of digital competencies that complement current provision are Online Collaboration and Project Planning. Increasingly workers are required to work in mobile or distributed teams and to take responsibility for planning complex tasks. These two ECDL modules can be delivered together or independently to update traditional office administration courses for the modern demands of business.

### USING ECDL TO TEACH CURRENT QQI COURSES

As mentioned earlier the ECDL Workforce solution delivers best





"There will be many times when learners, particularly adults, will need an introductory course in order to help them reach the first rung of the digital ladder."

practice technology-enhanced learning. Many QQI courses include components that are covered by one or more ECDL modules. For example, the QQI Word Processing Level 5 Award (5N1358) is 98% covered by just two ECDL modules, Computer Essentials and Word Processing. With the addition of two brief webinars students can meet all their learning objectives and gain an ECDL certification before completing their final project to gain their QQI award.

Using ECDL content and assessment while pursuing these QQI awards benefits students in a number of ways:

- High-quality content accessible anywhere, anytime
- Industry certification highly valued in over 150 countries
- Registration for life that encourages lifelong learning

### USING ECDL AS AN EXEMPTION

ECDL Workforce exemptions for ECDL are limited to specific groupings of modules. Currently if components 4N1112 + 4N1125 are listed in the choice of components towards a QQI award, ECDL may be used as an exemption against those components. This exemption is valid with QQI for 5 years after the ECDL certification date.

Approximately a quarter of all post-primary students are lucky enough to gain an ECDL Award while in school. If they proceed to Further Education there will be many instances where they will appreciate being able to use ECDL as an exemption towards their chosen award, and as they have been enrolled for life, they can add further ECDL awards very economically.

### OVER 40% OF QQI AWARDS COULD BENEFIT FROM ECDL

Having reviewed the specifications for the top 100 QQI awards (by number awarded in 2015), we believe that over 40 QQI awards could be significantly enhanced by the integration of just one or two ECDL modules. Awards in the fields of business and health stand out to benefit the most from the latest knowledge in data protection and health informatics.

The health and business sectors have changed dramatically in the past few years. These 40-plus QQI awards, ranging from Level 3 to Level 6, and involving 63,700 recipients in 2015, could meet more of the needs of employers by simply introducing a couple of ECDL modules.

### BRIDGING THE GAP

There will be many times when learners, particularly adults, will need an introductory course in order to help them reach the first rung of the digital ladder. Our Equalskills course, with very similar content to the QQI Level 3 Computer Literacy Award, fits that requirement perfectly. It is an accessible, engaging, introduction to computers that gently brings the participants from not knowing what the function of a mouse is, to being able to do some basic word processing, send and receive emails, search the internet and recognise the icons on the desktop.

When Equalskills was being developed, great care was taken to write the text in "plain English". As a result, participants with literacy difficulties are able to complete the

programme without fear of finding the text in the Equalskills workbook too challenging for them.

Students' positive experience of the Equalskills programme has meant that a very high percentage progress to more advanced studies.

### OTHER ICS INNOVATIONS IN FET

As well as ECDL, the Irish Computer Society has a number of other initiatives of value to the FET sector including:

- Accreditation to award ICS Continuous Professional Development (CPD) points
- Free ICS membership for FET students on computing courses
- Accelerated progression to Professional Member for graduates of courses endorsed by ICS
- Free entry to the graduate development programme for students of endorsed courses

### SUMMARY

Whether you are responsible for PLC, Youthreach, VTOS, community education or apprenticeships, ECDL and ICS certifications enhance learning and offer valued industry-recognised certification.

Irish Computer Society members are the potential future employers of your students. Time and again they tell us that they prioritise applicants who possess our certifications, membership and CPD history. It is clear they value our services and trust our certifications. If you want to give your students the best possible start in their career you should consider enhancing current offerings with ECDL/ICS qualifications.

**To discuss how ECDL or ICS initiatives could enhance your FET Services plans, please contact [fet@ics.ie](mailto:fet@ics.ie).**



# TEL Strategy - What is it?

By Michael Mooney, Manager of eCollege, SOLAS



**S**OLAS and ETBI are excited to announce the launch of the first Strategy for Technology-Enhanced Learning for the FET sector in Ireland<sup>1</sup>.

The Strategy defines technology-enhanced learning as “using technology to facilitate and support innovative teaching and learning practices”, and success in implementing the strategy will result in:

- Learners who are skilled and confident in using technology as part of their work, study and home life
- Technology being used appropriately as part of all teaching and learning
- Significant improvement in access to further education and training
- Learners being more engaged, and achieving more from their learning.

Technology can be used to enhance learning on initial engagement, as part

of course delivery and assessment, and in supporting career progression. Learners may access technology in all course areas and models of provision, including in-class, full- or part-time provision, blended learning or exclusively on-line learning.

Developed in cooperation between SOLAS and an ETBI advisory group, chaired by Cynthia Deane, CEO of Carlow Kilkenny ETB, this marks the culmination of over 12 months of consultation and development work. The strategy spans the further education and training system as a whole and builds on the excellent practice that already exists within the sector. It supports the overarching strategy for further education and training and the goals to provide skills for the economy, active inclusion, quality provision and integrated planning and funding and to improve the overall standing of further education and training in Ireland. It also aligns Ireland with leading practice on

**Vision:** By 2019, technology-enhanced teaching and learning is providing greater access to further education and training and is achieving positive outcomes for learners, enterprise, and our wider society and economy.

technology-enhanced learning in Europe and further afield.

## WHY DO WE NEED A TEL STRATEGY?

In an environment where technology increasingly underpins day-to-day life and interactions, technology needs to be an integral part of what, how and where people learn. The ‘internet of things’ – a vast global network connecting things and people via the internet – is gaining currency as a vision of the future. To be ready for this, and to benefit from the opportunities that technology brings, there is a realisation that citizens of all ages must be equipped to engage with the digital world.

<sup>1</sup> Available for download from [http://www1.solas.ie/SolasPdfLibrary/TEL\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www1.solas.ie/SolasPdfLibrary/TEL_Strategy.pdf)

Educators in all environments have recognised that, through the internet, open learning resources, and new modes of teaching, technology can transform learning experiences and outcomes. From early childhood through to postgraduate education, FET staff and teachers and trainers are increasingly using technology to great effect as part of their practice. Through the internet, learners can decide when and where they engage with their learning; they can receive individualised feedback; people can interact and share learning in small and large online learning groups; complex concepts can be explained drawing on simulated and real life audio-visual examples; and the overall learning environment can become more flexible and interactive than ever before.

Technology can also be used to provide increased access to education and training opportunities by all members of society. With the improvements in the economy this can include access to training for the most marginalised of our society as well as those in employment seeking career progression opportunities.

### HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

The strategy aims to achieve its vision, through the implementation of eighteen practical actions, grouped under three strategic themes of building on existing capacity, expanding access and continuous improvement and innovation.

The strategy is structured under three themes.

**Theme 1** of the strategy focusses on building on existing good practice. Actions within this theme aim to embed a systemic culture, structures and practices so that technology-enhanced learning becomes an intrinsic part of further education and training in Ireland. To ensure success, a set of

interconnected elements are required. These are: staff with technologically-appropriate pedagogical skills and confidence; access to digital learning content and resources; appropriate technology infrastructure and supports; and high-quality programme design and assessment. Each component relies on the other and each must be in place in order to avoid the challenges that have at times been reported as part of the adoption of technology in education and training around the world. SOLAS will work closely with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to implement the strategy.

**Theme 2** focusses on expanding access. The actions within this theme aim to expand access to further education and training for people who need flexible learning opportunities. Target groups include those in employment who wish to or need to up-skill and those disadvantaged due to their circumstances such as their remote location, personal circumstances or a disability.

**Theme 3** focusses on continuous improvement and innovation. The actions within this theme aim to support continuous improvement in provision of technology-enhanced learning, drawing on national and international policy and good practice. Collaboration with the wider education and training system – primary, post-primary and higher education, and with the enterprise community – will support high quality, expert teaching and learning.

### WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DELIVERING THE STRATEGY?

Key partners in achieving the strategy are learners and those who deliver FET in each of the sixteen Education and Training Boards (ETBs), ETB further education colleges, education centres and training centres, supported by management and administration colleagues; and other



FET providers. Lead partners include SOLAS, Education Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), individual Education and Training Boards and the Further Education Support Service (FESS).

SOLAS will support and facilitate achievement of the strategy through its funding and co-ordinating responsibilities, and there will be close liaison with teams working on national initiatives to build shared service platforms and technology infrastructure.

### WHAT IS THE IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE?

The strategy includes a number of examples of existing practice; these are just a snapshot of the ways in which technology is being used to engage learners and to ensure a high-quality, relevant learning experience. By building on the existing good practice, the strategy includes 18 actions with proposed dates for implementation over the next three years. A national symposium is planned for September 2016, where interested parties can share in the implementation planning and roll-out of individual initiatives.

The experience of developing this strategy was a very positive one, with engagement by a wide range of stakeholders through an ETBI/SOLAS advisory group, working meetings with representative groups, and the online consultation process. We look forward with confidence to similar strong engagement and success in implementing the strategy.

# Innovative Practices Using Moodle at BIFE

By Seán Cryan, Tutor in Law, Business and Accounting at Bray Institute of Further Education

**M**oodle is a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). A technical name for what is essentially a website that allows educators to share resources with students, conduct quizzes and receive the submission of assignments and deliver feedback. It was introduced across Bray Institute of Further Education last year. I had heard of it before though, it had been around for at least 10 years. I knew the Open University ran their courses through Moodle and a lot of Irish Universities too, so it had a reputation. I was actually excited to see what it could do.

I had been using an array of cloud computing technologies; technologies like dropbox, google drive, share point, twitter and a personal website which managed the job adequately. But they lacked something. When it came to the digital submission of assignments, marking and giving feedback they didn't quite fit.

It took some head scratching before I got to grips with Moodle but when I did, I introduced it to the students.

Students were to access their assignment brief through Moodle, and for good measure, I asked them to click an acknowledgment button to confirm that they read the brief and noted the submission date. They were also required to submit the completed assignment through Moodle and they would receive feedback and their grade there too.

There was no need for the assignment to be in hard copy and it could be submitted from anywhere with access to the internet. I also set a deadline date

and time, 11.55pm proving very effective. After this date and time, Moodle gave a report showing who had submitted their assignment and who had not. Moodle also offered a range of other options to help manage the whole process.

But the real power of Moodle is in the grading and feedback process. I could open the students' assignment through Moodle and start annotating it. This was made easier by using a frequently used comment feature contained within the software.

The grading criteria was set and it required me to enter a mark for each criteria. When the assignment was corrected, I could release the grades and the annotated feedback back to the students, who were automatically notified by email. Moodle also generated helpful reports like the class grade book. This

automatically showed a breakdown of a student's grade and identified students that had overdue assignments. Likewise, it showed any assignments that had been submitted but not yet graded.

So I am a fan, especially as it's free, open-source software (<https://moodle.org>) for anyone to use. There are things that still bug me about it, but it's rare to find something that is perfect for everything. After rolling it out across all classes, it has streamlined the assignment and feedback process and created a new way to connect with students.



Tutor Sean Cryan and students using Moodle to work on assignments



# Better Skills for Better Buildings: The QualiBuild Challenge



By Mark Keyes, Industry Training Coordinator, IT Blanchardstown

In 2011, the EU-funded project Build UP Skills Ireland (BUSI) was tasked with establishing the extent of the skills gap in the building sector for achieving 2020 energy saving targets. The broad training provision for construction workers in Ireland was considered to need some up-dating in light of the significant changes to building standards and the technologies currently being adopted on-site for energy performance. This resulted in the development of a National Roadmap of actions to address the issue.

The BUSI project concluded that the pace of change in building construction and renovation standards has not been matched by the availability of compatible training provision for the construction workforce. As a consequence, a gap has developed in the requisite skills and knowledge for on-site implementation of energy efficiency measures and the integration of renewable energy systems.

Generally, the gap identified is one of knowledge rather than skills. However, this knowledge is fundamental for the successful implementation of low energy buildings. To address this, it was concluded that *all* building workers would require at least an introductory or 'foundation' level of training – a mammoth task with over 60,000 employed in the industry.

The BUSI research also found that the majority of trainers of construction-

related crafts lacked experience and knowledge on the implementation of low-energy building. These trainers, by virtue of the fact that they were not directly engaged with the industry during this significant period of change, were largely unaware of the implications for on-site implementation of new energy performance standards for buildings. This conclusion also highlighted gaps in the continuing professional development of trainers involved in the delivery of construction-related craft apprenticeship and associated programmes for construction skills.

## QUALIBUILD

Build UP Skills QualiBuild, the follow-on project to BUSI, commenced in 2013. One of the project's main objectives is to initiate the key training action identified in the BUSI Roadmap, the need for a foundation energy training course for all building construction workers. QualiBuild has developed this 'Foundation Energy Skills' (FES) course as a 3-day training programme.

To support the piloting of FES, the project has also initiated a Train the Trainer programme with a target to up-skill 100 trainers of construction workers. This programme serves a dual purpose of establishing a pool of suitably qualified trainers of FES for regional delivery *and* ensuring that a significant number of existing trainers of construction craft skills in an apprenticeship setting are prepared for envisaged future updating of curricula.

## TRAIN THE TRAINER PROGRAMME

The Train the Trainer programme was developed as a blended learning programme leading to a Special

Purpose Award at NFQ Level 7. It is a 4-module programme as follows:

1. Building for Energy Performance
2. Building Fabric
3. Building Services
4. Pedagogical Approaches

The programme was offered over two cycles in 2014/2015 and 2015/2016. Training catering for the East of the country was located at IT Blanchardstown, the West at IT Sligo and the South at Cork Institute of Technology (CIT). Over 80 trainers registered for the programme over the two cycles. This included lecturing staff from various Institutes of Technology, trainers and teachers from ETB centres and colleges around the country and a number of trainers from private organisations involved in the delivery of training in the field of low energy building.

From the ETB sector, there was representation from LMETB, GRETB,



Train the Trainer participants attending Site Visit at Ecological Building Systems, Athboy, Co. Meath

"Generally, the gap that

was identified is one of

knowledge rather than skills"



"This training is needed for all construction workers, it affects everyone, if everyone is aware you have a better chance of success" – Peter Halpin, JWP Halpin Builders Ltd

Kilkenny and Carlow ETB, Ballyfermot Training Centre, Pearse College, Cork Training Centre, Coláiste Dhúlaigh, Dun Laoghaire Further Education Institute and Mallow College of Further Education.

In recognition of the work commitments of participants, face-to-face contact time was limited to two days per module. Learner manuals were developed for each module and distributed 3-4 weeks ahead of workshop days held at the regional delivery centres. The workshops were designed to focus on 'active participation' and 'peer learning' through a range of activities based on the learner manual content.

This is effectively a flipped classroom approach, with course content provided to learners ahead of workshops to facilitate independent learning. Pre-workshop activities were also included as part of the course assessment in order to encourage engagement with course content ahead of contact days. For Modules 1, 2 and 3, an additional day of site visits was included to provide insight into practical applications of theories and concepts. For module 4, which focussed on pedagogy, two days of workshops were scheduled to accommodate practical activities, such as in-class presentations and peer feedback.

## FOUNDATION ENERGY SKILLS PROGRAMME

The focus of the Foundation Energy Skills (FES) course is knowledge of the underpinning principles of low-energy buildings and the importance of a new quality-based culture in construction. The challenge was to develop a programme that would lead to a common understanding among all

workers of the key principles of low-energy building while emphasising the need for collaboration between all trades involved in the process in order to achieve standards.

This training needed to be conducted within the constraints of different construction enterprises and the demands on their resources, i.e. offering flexibility to facilitate attendance and a reasonable duration so as not to impact negatively on work outputs.

To this end, the programme sought to strike a balance between the learning objectives and the demands on employers and individual workers. This has resulted in the development of a 3-day training programme, with an evening/Saturday option to cater for the preferences of both individuals and employers.

To support delivery and a certain proportion of independent learning, a comprehensive set of course materials were developed including a learner manual, a trainer manual and a suite of individual and group activities. These materials were designed to emphasise persuasive arguments and messages around the positive aspects of low-energy buildings and maximise opportunities for peer interaction and discussion.

A national piloting of the FES programme commenced in September 2015. To facilitate this, suitable venues needed to be identified to facilitate practical demonstrations of low-energy building

principles, such as air tightness and insulation detailing.

Partnerships were developed with organisations with such facilities in place, including ETB Training Centre Ballyfermot, Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) and private providers such as Saint Gobain Technical Academy in Kingscourt, Cavan and Partel Ltd in Claregalway.

In the first phase of training, seven courses were offered: Blanchardstown (ITB), Cork (CIT), Galway (Partel), Limerick (LIT) and Cavan (Saint Gobain), in both daytime and evening variants.

A further five deliveries were undertaken in early 2016 at locations in Dublin, Limerick, Galway and Waterford at WIT. Additionally, QualiBuild were approached by the coordinators of an SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities project to organise a one-off delivery for contractors and tradespeople in the Gaeltacht region of Belmullet Co Mayo. Also, the Irish Prison Services requested a similar stand-alone course for their Trades Officers, who were responsible for the maintenance of their buildings.

By the end of the pilots, 232 participants had registered for the training with 196 attending all sessions and receiving certification. The pilot is currently undergoing an evaluation process which includes analysis of reaction questionnaires, results of



FES trainees attending practical demonstration day at ETB Training Centre Ballyfermot

## National Roll-Out of the Courses

The Train the Trainer Courses have already trained a number of eligible trainers to deliver the FES course. This course is delivered by ITB and LIT as a NFQ Level 7 award and further courses can be provided on demand.

The FES course is currently certified at NFQ Level 6 as part of a 2-module programme - Certificate in Low-Energy Building Construction - and is accredited at LIT, ITB and CIT (with Springboard option).

It is proposed to validate FES with a City and Guilds certification, enabling the course to be facilitated throughout Ireland by a broad base of providers.

A number of ETB centres (Ballyfermot, DFEI, Dundalk and Tralee) have approached QualiBuild and expressed interest in the FES course. Further ETBs may also be interested in this proposal.

Secondary Schools have expressed an interest in providing the material and content from the FES course as part of the Construction Studies at Leaving Certificate level.

assessments and one-to-one post-training interviews with individual participants and employers whose staff attended training.

Feedback from the evaluation of the pilots has been unanimously positive, with consensus from participants that such a course is a necessity for all construction workers in Ireland as an information-giving and awareness-raising exercise.

### NATIONAL ROLL-OUT AND SUPPORT FROM ETBI AND SOLAS

**Consider this:** to facilitate over 60,000 workers to participate in the FES course, 3,000 courses will need to be delivered (assuming an optimum of 20 participants per class). If the FES course is phased over three years, then 20 courses will need to be carried out every week nationwide. A tall order, but

a necessity for the progression of the construction industry. This emphasises the importance of involving the ETBs, as well as recognised private providers such as Partel (Galway) or St Gobain (Cavan) who participated in the pilot scheme.

### SO WHAT'S NEXT?

The QualiBuild National Roll-Out is in its final phase, providing recommendations on roll-out of courses which consider supporting measures, financial costs and further training (CPD). Gathering support from relevant bodies to work together and agree on the best approach to progress the roll-out of these courses effectively is the final step, and possibly the most important step.

**The groundwork has been completed, now QualiBuild needs to be implemented.**

The National Roll-Out is to incorporate not only the delivery of the aforementioned courses but also the establishment of a *Construction Workers Skills Register* which will record all training and skills achieved by the individual. It is important to encourage construction workers to continue training and the improvement of their knowledge on a regular basis through CPD, as regulations and types of technologies within the construction industry are rapidly changing. The number of workers employed in building construction totals approximately 60,000 people. To date, there are few registers for the individual worker and those that exist are mainly limited to the electrical, plumbing and heating sectors, e.g. RECI, RGII.

It is anticipated that the Construction Workers Skills Register for individual workers will sit alongside existing company registers run by CIF, SOLAS, National Guild of Master Craftsmen, etc, as well as established professional registers such as RIAI, BER Assessors, and so on. To assist in the development of the register, a detailed review of all of the registration bodies in the construction industry in Ireland was completed and a comparison matrix created. The collaboration of all sectors of the construction industry was also seen as being important. Hence, the QualiBuild project held six workshops nationwide inviting workers and professionals from within the construction industry to share their views.

The registration system development is very much an integral part therefore of not just the QualiBuild programme but of the future of the Construction Industry.

### QualiBuild Partners



# A Vision for Lifelong Learning – Keeping the Learner at the Centre

by Niamh O'Reilly, CEO AONTAS



ETBs and ETBI are hugely valued members and allies of AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation.

AONTAS has a long history of engagement with VECs, now ETBs: they comprise a significant percentage of our membership and have been well represented on our Executive Committee down through the years – in the form of representation from ETBI, AEOA, CEFA and AEGI. ETBI is currently represented on our Executive Committee by Cllr Gabriel Keating, who has further facilitated collaboration and engagement between our two organisations for the benefit of adult learners.

Having taken over from the long-standing and highly regarded Berni Brady as the new CEO of AONTAS on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016, I am honoured to steer our organisation through the next chapter, and intend on building and strengthening collaboration with ETBs.

In a time of change, I believe partnership and cooperation with other organisations is essential for ensuring adult learning is effectively supported and resourced.

In my first 100 days as CEO, I engaged in extensive consultations with stakeholders and held meetings with a range of organisations, including ETBI (with General Secretary Michael Moriarty and his colleagues); a presentation to the ETBI Reserve

Members Forum; and the CEFA (Community Education Facilitator's Association) annual general meeting.

## CHALLENGES FACING PRACTITIONERS AND LEARNERS

Having worked in AONTAS since 2005 in various roles, my passion for, and belief in, the right of all adults to engage in adult and community education has been greatly influenced by the incredible work of the AONTAS membership. I understand the challenges that are facing practitioners and learners – in particular: the fallout from the recession, the impact of cutbacks in recent times, the significant task of implementing the SOLAS FET Strategy and the establishment of QQI with its associated new policies.

On the one hand, adult learners have been named as key stakeholders in the SOLAS FET Strategy and, for the first time at national level, there is a policy platform for adult learners through the National Adult Learner Forum (the first meeting of the Forum took place on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2016). However, we are in the early stages in the implementation of the FET Strategy; it is a work in progress.

Community education faces substantial challenges regarding funding and uncertainty regarding future ability to provide accredited programmes due to changes brought in by QQI.

Concern regarding the recognition of the broader understanding and wider

benefits of adult learning – in terms of personal, social and community, as well as economic outcomes – have also been voiced by the AONTAS membership. ETBI and ETBs have made significant headway in developing appropriate tools for measuring the wider benefits of adult learning, which I believe will strengthen the sector.

Whilst AONTAS recognises the undeniable importance of employment for social inclusion, it is also widely documented at national and international level (including the [EAEA Manifesto for Adult Learning](#)) that the wider benefits of adult learning contribute to:

- Active citizenship, democracy and participation
- Life skills for individuals
- Social cohesion, equity and equality
- Migration and demographic change
- Sustainability

"AONTAS understands lifelong learning to mean all learning both formal and non-formal, undertaken by individuals from childhood through to the third age."

AONTAS understands lifelong learning to mean all learning, both formal and non-formal, undertaken by individuals from childhood through to the third age. Adult learning is a key part of the lifelong learning spectrum and its role embraces both economic and broader social purposes.

The modern concept of lifelong learning has its roots in the Delors Report, 'Learning. The Treasure Within', published by UNESCO in 1996. This proposed a holistic and integrated vision of education, and identified the four pillars of education as:

- Learning to be
- Learning to know
- Learning to do
- Learning to live together

Thus, similar to ETBI, AONTAS's vision for lifelong learning is a holistic, learner-centred process that seeks to widen participation, particularly for the educationally disadvantaged, in quality adult learning experiences that develop the whole person and

enable them to actively engage in their community and society.

## AONTAS'S PLAN FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS

In looking forward to the next two years, I will implement a plan for strengthening AONTAS in a time of change. Our activities will be set within the current AONTAS strategic plan, which was adopted by the AONTAS membership and will act as a backdrop to our work. Within that framework, I will be reviewing the organisation and focusing on the following areas of work:

- **Promotion:** focusing on the wider benefits of adult learning and the importance of community education (accredited and un-accredited).
- **Advocacy:** asserting our role as a "critical friend" to policymakers. We can offer policymakers a unique perspective because we keep the learner at the heart of our advocacy work. Therefore, we can articulate the impact of policy from the grassroots perspective.
- **European impact:** as National

Coordinator of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL), we will deliver on this project and also extend opportunities to our membership for greater engagement with, and benefit from, European Commission-funded programmes and links with other adult educators across Europe.

- **Membership engagement:** AONTAS will develop new ways to enhance membership engagement, including the use of online platforms. We want to proactively involve members in our work, so that they can be part of bringing this organisation forward.

## COLLABORATION BETWEEN AONTAS AND ETBS

Key areas of ongoing and future collaboration between AONTAS and ETBs include:

1. The National Adult Learner Forum
2. The European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL)





## 1. National Adult Learner Forum

One of the key actions in the SOLAS FET Strategy was the establishment of a National Adult Learner Forum. As a result of our extensive learner engagement and advocacy experience, SOLAS tasked AONTAS with establishing the Forum in 2016, and organising it every year after for the life of the FET strategy.

The National Adult Learner Forum came to fruition in February 2016 and ETBs played a central role in its successful development. The Forum acts as a national advocacy platform for FET learners who are participating in SOLAS-funded programmes, giving them a unique and exciting opportunity to directly influence the FET service based on their needs.

In addition to quantitative data on FET learners, through the Forum, SOLAS will gain rich qualitative data detailing learners' experiences of the FET service. This, in turn, will help shape future policy decisions.

In advance of the National Adult Learner Forum in February, AONTAS contacted the Adult Education Officers in each Education and Training Board and requested that they nominate learners to attend the Forum.

Due to the enthusiastic response from providers, the first Forum event proved a great success, with over 70 learners in attendance. There was also a balanced learner representation from across a range of SOLAS FET programmes throughout Ireland, ensuring a good spread of urban and rural participants to capture the range of learner experiences.

We are currently compiling the report from the Forum. We hope that, with the support of FET providers, the Forum will grow from strength to strength.

## 2. European Agenda for Adult Learning

Another key area of collaboration

"One of the outcomes of the ETB promotional activities included over 1,300 learners participating in events organised by ETBs, with many of these learners enrolling onto courses as a result of attending events."

between AONTAS and ETBs has been the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) project.

The EAAL highlights the need to raise awareness and increase participation in adult learning. The project is funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union and co-financed by the Department of Education and Skills, through SOLAS.

Since 2012, AONTAS – along with partners NALA (The National Adult Literacy Agency) and ETBI – have been involved in carrying out activities under the EAAL Project: AONTAS managed the One Step Up initiative, NALA were responsible for the training of Learner Ambassadors, and ETBI promoted adult learning activities at a local level.

In 2014, AONTAS was nominated by the Department of Education and Skills to become the National Coordinator for the implementation of the EAAL.

During the second phase of the project, ETBs were one of the main stakeholders and their involvement was key to success. One of the main activities included AONTAS supporting each ETB to organise a promotional event or produce a promotional tool, for example, a video featuring learners showcasing a range of education opportunities within their service.

The ETBs were also instrumental in engaging with learners who acted as advocates at promotional events or took part in promotional videos.

The building of relationships with ETBs has been extremely important in

contributing to the success of the EAAL project, especially at a time of radical change and transformation in the Irish further education and training sector.

The EAAL project gave an opportunity for each ETB to benefit from the promotional fund available and supported them to carry out promotional activities. AONTAS ran a wide-ranging promotional campaign that further highlighted the services provided by ETBs.

One of the outcomes of the ETB promotional activities included over 1,300 learners participating in events organised by ETBs, with many of these learners enrolling onto courses as a result of attending events.

AONTAS has been successful in our application for a further two-year project (2015–2017), 'Learning Today for a Better Tomorrow', which will continue to build on our EAAL work to date. As part of this, there will be continued opportunities to highlight the valuable work undertaken by ETBs.

## CONCLUSION

The adult learning sector has faced huge changes in recent years. However, I believe that by collectively working together, we can build a better further education and training service that is inclusive, equitable and supportive, and enables people to fulfil their educational aspirations.

**Further information about AONTAS is available at [www.aontas.com](http://www.aontas.com), [www.facebook.com/AONTASAdultlearning](http://www.facebook.com/AONTASAdultlearning) or by following @aontas on Twitter.**



# The NFQ – Changing How We Think about Qualifications

By Deirdre Miller, Digital Communications and Information, QQI

QQI, as custodian of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), has a statutory role to promote, develop and review the NFQ.

Since 2003 we've been working hard with national and international stakeholders to build and promote a framework that is useful for learners, providers and employers.

Based on a system of ten levels, the NFQ makes it easier to understand and compare qualifications. By making learning requirements more explicit, the NFQ can also make a contribution to the quality of qualifications and their recognition.

QQI has developed a number of resources to help explain the Irish and European frameworks, all available from the QQI website.

- Qualifications Frameworks - Making Connections for You (information leaflet with overview of European and National frameworks)
- Interactive Framework Fan Diagram (includes a description of the ten levels of the Irish framework)
- Qualifications can cross boundaries (shows which qualifications in other countries are broadly comparable in Ireland and the UK).

Over the next 18 months, we will be reflecting upon and restating our national ambitions for the NFQ. With this in mind we want to know what



users in ETBs think about the future of the NFQ. We want to explore new ways of collaborating with ETBs so as to ensure that the NFQ remains fit for purpose. In the coming months ETB users will be invited to participate in our consultation processes but in the meantime, if there is something we should hear about the NFQ, a good news story, a disappointment or a hope for the future, please let us know.

Go to <http://createsend.com/t/r-A31B279E40F31C132540EF23F30FEDED> to find out how you can 'Have your Say and Join the Conversation' or email [NFQforwardthink@qqi.ie](mailto:NFQforwardthink@qqi.ie).

"By making learning requirements more explicit, the NFQ can also make a contribution to the quality of qualifications and their recognition."



# DCU launches Further Education and Training Research Centre (FETRC)

By Dr Justin Rami, coordinator of the activities of FETRC and lecturer and researcher in the School of Education Studies/Institute of Education, DCU.



In February 2016, DCU marked the establishment of DCU's Further Education & Training Research Centre (FETRC) with the first in a series of public lectures designed to raise awareness of the future role of Further Education and Training (FET) in the State.

The attendance was full to capacity with over 150 specially invited guests including: Dr Gary Granville, NCAD; Pat O'Mahony, ETBI; Colette Harrison, QQI; Dr Ann Campbell, President of DkIT; staff from Department of Education and Skills, Further Education Support Service (FESS), ETBs and SOLAS, as well as policy makers, practitioners and students.

Speaking at the launch were DCU's President Professor Brian MacCraith, Professor Joe O'Hara, Fiona Hartley, Executive Director of SOLAS and Dr Justin Rami, Director of FETRC. Dr Rami said, *'Part of the work of FETRC will examine how practice can influence policy. Using evidenced-based research should be a significant driver of policy development.'* By establishing this new Research Centre, Dr Rami suggested that *'the time is right to raise research above the current platforms, and ensure that all voices are heard.'*

The launch of the Research Centre marks an historic part of the new history of DCU and the DCU Institute of Education. The Institute of Education will be of internationally

significant scale and will build on the pioneering research in priority areas for 21st century education previously undertaken by the four partner institutions (DCU, Church of Ireland College of Education, Mater Dei Institute of Education and St Patrick's College, Drumcondra). The vision, scale and expertise of the Institute give it the potential to transform the landscape of education in Ireland.

Giving the inaugural lecture, Adjunct Professor Dermot Stokes reflected on the evolution of FET in Ireland, the influences and factors that have shaped that evolution and issues arising regarding policy, practice and research both in FET itself and at its intersections with second level and higher education. He proposed that wider social and cultural processes should inform present concerns regarding participation and outcomes. In his lecture he argued that institutional and system memory are critically important in understanding the FET landscape and that new structural and institutional arrangements offer a key opportunity to build a comprehensive knowledge base through research that is both rigorous and relevant.

Important developments in FET in Ireland suggest the need to develop research capacity capable of informing innovation across the sector at both a regional and national level. In 2016 there were 5076 more CAO

applications than there were in 2013. However, many observers now question whether the continual increase in higher-level enrolment best serves the interests of both young people and employers and argue the need for a robust FET sector as an essential complement to higher education (HE) provision. Recent data show that on average 11.5% of first years in HE do not progress to second year. Ongoing research by DCU's Further Education & Training Research Centre (FETRC) suggests that this isn't just a problem for HEIs; it is a systemic problem that bridges post-primary, further education & training and higher education. Recently John Sweeney (formerly of NESC) addressed a gathering of FET stakeholders at the invitation of ETBI. He suggested that Higher Education might be less of a guarantee of employment success in the future. Indeed, some HE graduates work in elementary occupations. He said, *"Past performance is no guarantee for the present or the future"*. Dr Sweeney suggested that over the coming decades there will be a strong demand for people with intermediate skills, and

"Though the drive from government is closely focused on job creation, youth unemployment is still hovering around 20% in the State."

"The voice of practitioners in FET is crucial to providing evidence-based research rooted in practice, delivery, learner experience and context."

CEDEFOP (2014) estimates that 40% of jobs will be at this level.

Though the drive from government is closely focused on job creation, youth unemployment is still hovering around 20% in the State. The FET Strategy (2014-2019) is being rolled out by SOLAS, and it is intended that the revised Apprenticeship system will go some way to addressing this issue.

Conducting research to examine these barriers is part of the work of FETRC and its partners. Initial

research by the Centre is probing issues related to the 'points system' and the CAO, guidance at post-primary level, funding between FET and HE and quality assurance within the NFQ (National Framework of Qualifications). Research is also important in the development of new metrics and what John McGrath (SOLAS) identified to the ETBI conference as "*appropriate indicators*". Since future funding in the FET sector will be linked to performance, this is a central and urgent issue. Education and training are not just about employment, they are about social capital, equity and social justice for all, and both evaluative instruments and research should reflect this.

By establishing this new Research Centre (FETRC) DCU and its partners in the Institute aim to broaden educational research to ensure

that all voices are heard. FETRC is very interested in working with all stakeholders in FET to encapsulate the innovation and responsive practice endemic to FE and CE settings and to reflect and progress the learning from a rich history of diverse and wide-ranging education and training provision. The voice of practitioners in FET is crucial to providing evidence-based research rooted in practice, delivery, learner experience and context. Research is currently underway on the experience of students and FE providers on teaching placement as part of the DCU BSc in Education and Training, which is the only concurrent initial teacher education qualification in Further Education nationally.

To find out more about the Further Education & Training Research Centre and to view the full lecture, visit the FETRC website: [www.dcu.ie/fetrc](http://www.dcu.ie/fetrc).



L-R Prof Joe O'Hara, Dr Justin Rami (FETRC), Dr Dermot Stokes, Fiona Hartley SOLAS, Prof Brian MacCraith

# ETB Procurement Communications Survey: Some Successes but Room to Improve

By Gwen Moore, PSR Coordinator, ETBI

**In the first Sector-wide survey since the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) commenced operations in 2014, ETB finance, procurement and administrative staff at all levels have shared their views on the 'new model'. Primarily focussing on the critical area of communications, the results highlight some of the successes and challenges resulting from ETB interaction with the new centralised procurement system.**

The electronic survey, developed by ETBI in collaboration with the Education Procurement Service<sup>1</sup> and which took place in April 2016, aimed to evaluate the ETB staff experience of procurement-related communications since the government decision to move to a centralised procurement model. Over 40 personnel across the Sector, including senior managers, finance and procurement personnel as well as school and centre staff who are expected to use the contracts and frameworks participated.

The survey results indicate that while ETBs show a strong understanding of the model and generally feel adequately communicated with regarding contracts and frameworks, guidance and support on how to draw-down from them could be improved.

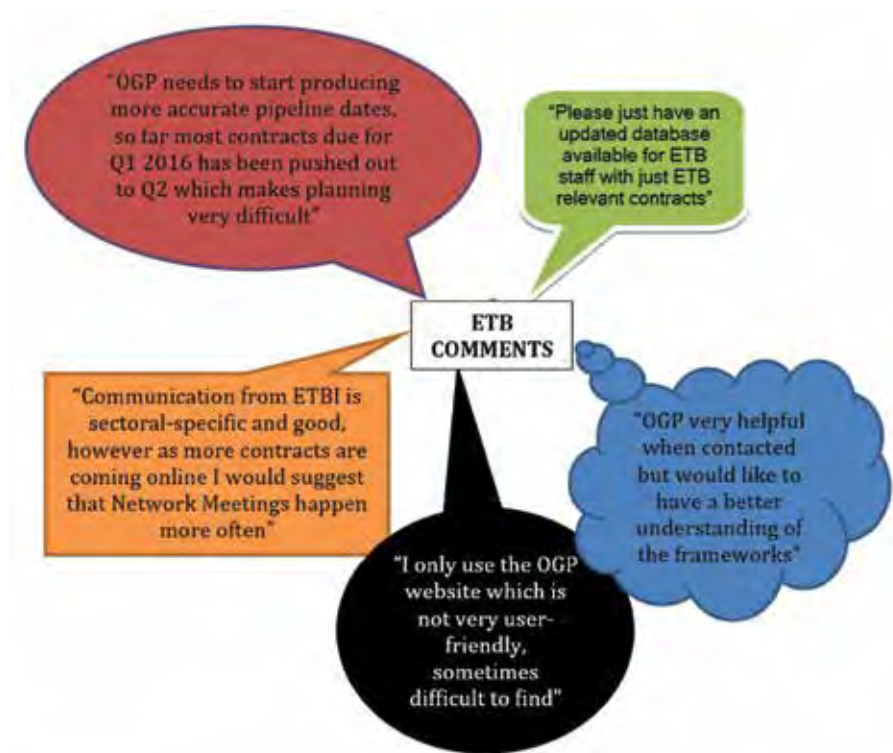
ETBs expressed a strong preference for retaining the current approach in terms of the PSR Unit in ETBI being the primary conduit for information on contracts and frameworks over the OGP and the EPS.

While the OGP website was considered the least helpful of procurement-related web resources available to ETBs, feedback on their customer service support desk was very positive.

A follow-up workshop with a cross-section of ETB personnel is planned for Summer 2016 so that ETB experiences can be developed into a constructive plan for improvement and brought to the Department of Education and Skills and the OGP Executive.

For more information contact [gwen.moore@etbi.ie](mailto:gwen.moore@etbi.ie).

"While ETBs show a strong understanding of the model and generally feel adequately communicated with regarding contracts and frameworks, guidance and support on how to draw-down from them could be improved."



<sup>1</sup> The Education Procurement Service (EPS), designated 'Education Hub' by the Dept of Education & Skills, is based in the University of Limerick. Its Director is Philip Gurnett.



# Work-Based Learning Externship for Teachers and Trainers in CDETb



By Miriam O'Donoghue, Deputy Director, CDETb Curriculum Development Unit and National Manager Further Education Support Service (FESS)

## BACKGROUND

In 2015, the Skills4Work project team, made up of members from Ireland, Northern Ireland, Germany and Slovenia, identified key principles that contribute towards supporting a quality Work Experience / WBL model.

Five Work-Based Learning (WBL) Principles were highlighted as being important to the Skills4Work project and relevant to all the partners.

The WBL Principles included:

1. develop the knowledge, experience and skills of all teachers and trainers working in the field of work-based learning
2. ensure that learning institutions and employers collaborate effectively so that they are regularly sharing information
3. ensure that all learners have the skills and opportunities to reflect critically on their participation in work-based learning
4. provide clarity around the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in work-based learning
5. develop reliable and valid assessments for work-based learning.

In 2016, to support principle 1 (**Develop the knowledge, experience and skills of all teachers and trainers working in the field of work-based learning**), CDETb piloted a Work-Based Learning (WBL) Model of Continuing Professional Development for teachers and trainers.

The action agreed to help to achieve this, was to:

- support teachers and trainers with the implementation of work experience programmes and improve the relevance of what they do in the classroom with learners in preparation for the workplace by setting up and piloting an **'Externship Programme'** for CDETb teachers and trainers.

Most people are familiar with the term 'internship' which involves first-hand experiential learning and is typically a period of time an individual spends working in another organisation with the objective of learning and developing from the experience. Internships and Externships are similar in that they provide temporary work experience to help individuals gain skills and relevant experience in specific field areas. Internships often involve some form of payment while externships are not usually paid. An externship is generally much shorter in duration than an internship and because of its short duration can sometimes involve more job-shadowing than hands-on experience.

## PURPOSE OF THE CDETb EXTERNSHIP MODEL

The Externship Model was designed to support the professional development of CDETb Teachers and Trainers to:

- expand their knowledge, skills and confidence (academic, technical, 21st Century etc.) and make connections between the curriculum, programme or subject they teach and the workplace
- learn through direct experience about needs, realities, trends, challenges and practices in different institutions or work environments
- develop an understanding of workplace practices to ensure that what they do in the classroom with learners is more informed, meaningful and up to date so that learners are better prepared for current, emerging and future career opportunities and meeting employer and industry needs
- expand their capacity to implement meaningful and engaging teaching and learning methodologies in the classroom by drawing on case studies and real world work examples
- engage meaningfully with employers and develop mutually beneficial working partnerships and understandings about workplace and education requirements and expectations.

## LENGTH OF AN EXTERNSHIP

While CDETb piloted one- and two-



day externships for a small group of teachers, an externship for a teacher or trainer can in theory be any length from one day to several weeks or months, and can take place at different times of the year depending on the arrangements possible at local level e.g. during periods when learners are out on work placements, at the start of the academic year before classes commence, in term time when a visiting guest business or industry representative might cover classes or during holiday periods when a teacher or trainer might wish to make their own personal professional development arrangements. The length and scheduling will in practice be influenced and decided on by several factors or considerations.

Some of these might include:

- the time of the year and the length of time a teacher, tutor or trainer can realistically be released from their college or centre if the externship is being scheduled during term time
- the arrangements that can be put in place for the learners while the teacher or trainer is participating in an externship programme to minimise disruption of their learning
- the type of skills, learning or experience the externship will provide and how much time is needed to realistically achieve this
- the number of teachers or trainers participating in externships and any overlapping periods
- the level of commitment and time the host placement or employer can dedicate to the externship.

## TYPES OF EXTERNSHIPS

While the pilot included externships in areas such as financial services, construction and education, externships opportunities are diverse, for example:

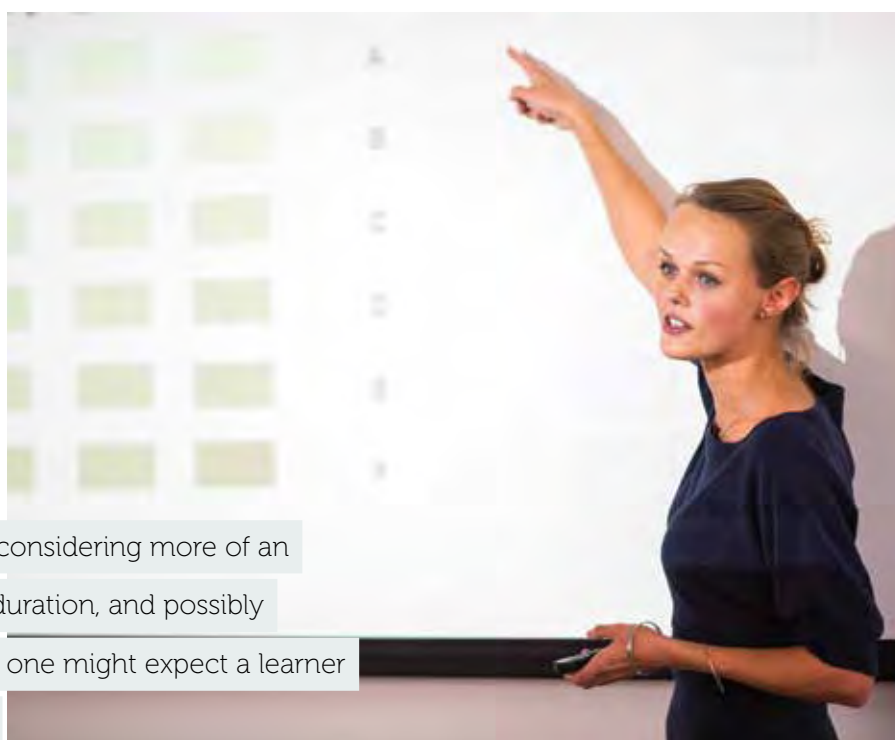
- placements in Industry or businesses linked to specific programmes being delivered by teachers and trainers
- international study trips and exchanges to gain cultural insights and practical experience of different systems
- placements in educational institutions e.g. for the purpose of comparing approaches, standards, benchmarking etc.
- observerships e.g. involving observation and work-shadowing.

## SOURCING AN EXTERNSHIP

Externships were sourced from existing partnerships that CDETb colleges and centres had. As the model is rolled out to more teachers and trainers in 2016/17 strategies might need to involve:

- approaching a company or organisation that the college or centre already has a relationship with, e.g. through student work experience placements, supplier of goods or services to the college / centre etc.
- word of mouth, e.g. by talking to friends, family or colleagues to seek recommendations or contacts
- making contact with professional associations or networks
- conducting keyword searches on the internet, e.g. targeting specific company types and following up with a personal contact
- attending exhibitions or job fairs and talking to personnel on stands
- making connections through LinkedIn
- getting ideas for companies by reading magazines and newspapers, e.g. business sections, advertisements etc. and following up.

"Time permitting, I would suggest considering more of an 'immersion' experience, of longer duration, and possibly undertaking some of the tasks that one might expect a learner to be assigned." – CDETb Teacher



## THE EXTERNSHIP MODEL IN CDETB

The three key stages of the CDETB pilot Externship Model:

### Stage 1: Planning the Externship

A Teacher or Trainer indicates an interest in participating in an Externship. They identify an area of a programme that they teach (or will be teaching in the future), that they would like to be the focus of their externship, e.g. they might identify one or more learning outcomes from a programme.

The Teacher or Trainer completes the **CDETB Externship Application Form** and uses this as the basis of a preliminary discussion with their Principal, Head of Centre or other appointed person. The form addresses areas such as:

- what do you hope to achieve by undertaking this externship?
- what programme module will this externship support? How will it link with the Learning Outcomes?
- how will this externship benefit your Learners?
- what provision might be made for your learners during your externship?

As part of the discussion, both address how learners might be supported when the Teacher or Trainer is away on the externship e.g.

- are the learners on work experience themselves at this time?
- what type of substitution arrangements can be put in place if needed?
- can the externship be done before/after courses start/finish?

During the meeting, if there is agreement in principle to the externship taking place, an action plan is drawn up using the **CDETB Externship Action Plan Template**. This sets out and agrees how the externship will be

further progressed and implemented. A potential host company or organisation is contacted and a plan for the externship is agreed. A named person is identified who will be the point of contact and mentor in the company or organisation. Goals and expectations are clarified and agreed for all parties.

### Stage 2: During the Externship

To maximise the externship opportunity, teachers and trainers are advised to engage as appropriate in a range of activities, such as:

- visit different departments within the company or organisation to get a good overview of the roles, range of work, facilities etc. available
- arrange for HR to provide an insight into recruitment, roles and positions, skills needs, pay and conditions, training, performance review processes, policies and procedures etc.
- request resources that might give an insight into the company or organisation, e.g. annual reports, brochures, articles, online links, PowerPoint presentations etc.
- job shadow in different sections / departments or with employees with different roles
- keep a log, prepare a presentation that can be used on return to the college or centre to share learning with other teachers, tutors, or trainers
- build a portfolio of resources that can be used with learners in the classroom
- provide the company or organisation with knowledge of the FET sector and the opportunities for employing FET graduates and further networking opportunities.

Teachers and trainers are also provided with a toolkit of **Sample Questions to ask during an Externship**. These are useful either before and/or during an Externship to help to gain insight into the host

placement and maximise opportunities for learning.

Teachers and Trainers are also advised to:

- be aware of and sensitive to employer needs and wishes and workplace requirements
- be realistic about what can be achieved in the time available, balanced with making the most of the opportunity
- keep a log and record experiences
- reflect on how things are going and how the externship is potentially supporting the delivery of a programme to learners and what new ideas, case studies, approaches etc. might be implemented in the classroom
- think about what peer sharing could take place with colleagues on return to the college or centre
- complete an evaluation using the template CDETB **Evaluation of the Externship**.

### Stage 3: After the Externship

Teachers and Trainers are advised to:

- contact the host company or employer to thank them for the opportunity
- invite the host company or organisation to complete an evaluation form using **Evaluation of Externship by Host Company/ Organisation**
- reflect on learning and skills achieved during the externship
- complete the evaluation of the externship experience and learning
- disseminate and share the learning experience from the externship at college, centre or organisation level
- make recommendations to management on any aspect of the process that needs adjustment for future externships
- implement the learning from the externship in the classroom with learners.

# National Roll-out of the Externship Model



**D**rawing on the Skills4Work project experiences and in particular CDETB's experiences of externships for teachers and trainers, the Further Education Support Service (FESS) in partnership with the National Network of IT Teachers and with the support of ETBI and SOLAS eCollege, is planning an externship model of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for FET IT teachers and trainers in Autumn 2016. This innovative approach to CPD was presented by FESS at a recent ETBI QQI Forum where the proposal was met with great enthusiasm and support by all ETB representatives.

The principle aim of the Externship Visiting Programme (EVP), as it will be called, is to provide teachers and trainers with an opportunity to experience and share practices with

industry counterparts in the field of learning in which they teach, for collaborating organisations to inform and gain valuable insights into the skills, knowledge and competency that

"I have already discussed my externship experience with a number of colleagues and can only highly recommend it, not only from the point of view of teachers' CPD but also for the beneficial impact it can have for learners when the output from this experience is discussed, shared and incorporated into teaching methodology."

– CDETB Teacher



the FET system can provide to future employees, and finally, to develop a community of practice with other colleagues based on the experiences and relationships developed while on the EVP.

It is envisaged that externship attendees will:

- visit a company or organisation to get an overview of the roles, range of work, facilities etc. available
- become familiar with a range of contemporary and current practices, processes, technologies and methodologies used in organisations today
- develop an insight into recruitment, roles and positions, skills needs, pay and conditions, training, performance review processes, policies and procedures (e.g. Q&A with HR manager)
- engage with and share practices with employees working in relevant fields within the company or organisation (e.g. speed-shadowing) and other colleagues on EVP.
- acquire a portfolio of information that can be used to inform their own teaching and learning when returning to the classroom
- provide the company or organisation with knowledge of the FET sector and the opportunities for employing our graduates and for further networking opportunities
- develop a community of practice among the FET sector, which will ultimately lead to higher standards of quality assurance and to graduates who are better equipped for direct employment in modern industry.

The primary target audience for this pilot programme will be IT teachers

## Skills4Work

[www.skills4workproject.eu](http://www.skills4workproject.eu)

The Skills4Work project is an Erasmus+ project that aims to improve the quality of work-based learning (WBL) / work experience for VET students, providers and employers. The emphasis is on learning from partners' experience of WBL and engaging in real dialogue with employers.

The project is developing guidelines and resources to help to support the improvement and quality of work experience programmes and is supporting teachers and trainers by creating WBL CPD materials and resources and facilitating the transfer of good practice through joint peer learning events, CPD activities and study visits.

### Skills4Work Project Partners:

- H2 Learning Ltd, Ireland (Lead)
- City of Dublin Education and Training Board, Ireland (supported by CDET B Curriculum Development Unit)
- South Eastern Regional College, Northern Ireland
- SOLSKI Centre Kranj, Slovenia
- Center Republike Slovenije za poklicno izobraževanje, Slovenia
- Oberstufenzentrum Informations- und Medizintechnik, Germany

and trainers working in the FET sector. Following learning from this pilot it is hoped to extend it to other field areas e.g. Healthcare, Childcare, and Hospitality.

### PROCESS

The Externship Visiting Programme will take place as a pilot with FET IT teachers and trainers over several dates in the coming academic year 2016/2017, with two to three IT companies involved.

Collaborating companies will be requested to facilitate a visiting group of teachers and trainers (circa 10 to 15), and to provide access to suitable

staff and facilities.

FET teachers / trainers will be asked to apply for the Externship Visiting Programme.

Selection will be based on teaching subject, company suitability, and teacher and trainer purpose statement. Where there are more applicants than places available, a lottery will be held.

This initiative will form part of the FESS CPD calendar for 2016/17 and full details will be available on the FESS website [www.fess.ie](http://www.fess.ie) in Autumn 2016.



# The Evolution of Higher Education in Ballyfermot College<sup>1</sup>



By Dr Denis Murray, BA MBS PhD, Teacher and Education and Programme Director of the BA (Hons) degree in Media Production Management in Ballyfermot College of Further Education, Dublin

The provision of higher education (HE) in further education (FE) settings has provided alternative progression pathways to learners who otherwise may have discontinued education prematurely, and there is merit in developing such provision further. Further education (FE) is now a major part of the educational landscape, with in excess of 30,000 full-time students, yet it remains incompletely understood even by those in leadership roles in education. In implementing the Further Education and Training (FET) strategy it is important that the contribution of HE in an FE setting is valued and preserved.

## BALLYFERMOT COLLEGE OPENS ITS DOORS

Ballyfermot College of Further Education (BCFE) was established in 1979 by City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) as Senior College Ballyfermot (SCB), with the founding purpose of providing Leaving Certificate education for students from three local schools where enrolments were declining.

At its official opening in April 1981, the chair of CDVEC, Patrick Donegan, predicted that SCB would become 'one of the finest schools in the country and a model for others to emulate'. At the opening also, the CEO of CDVEC, William Arundel, paid tribute to the hard work of the various bodies that

led to the establishment of the college: Ballyfermot Community Association (BCA), the Department of Education, CDVEC and two local post primary schools, one run by the Daughters of Charity and the other by the Dominican Sisters. Mr Arundel said the curriculum would prepare students for life, work and entry to third level education and noted that a programme of adult education was being developed to implement this important element of SCB's brief.

The establishment of SCB involved a partnership between the local Ballyfermot community, the Department of Education and CDVEC. This partnership was initially led by the college Principal, Sr Margaret MacCurtain, who, in her opening address, highlighted a number of very interesting questions.

'Senior College Ballyfermot grew out of the search for viable alternatives to difficult choices that had to be made about the organisation of second- and third-level education in Ballyfermot. Which took priority, secondary or tertiary education? Where did one end and the other begin? What was the best age for young people to begin the education that led to life choices?'

These questions rang true with many of the young teachers embarking on teaching careers in this exciting new educational experiment. The questions also resonated with the BCA which was concerned for the future of young people leaving school before completing the senior cycle. This was a particular problem for girls and boys who were not attracted to a traditional education. This problem had long been recognised and specific programmes had been developed in the new vocational school in Ballyfermot to respond to them.

BCA formed an education sub-committee in 1971 and Tommy Phelan, a leading member, was most concerned with the status quo in educational structures. He believed reform was important and that consultation with local communities should be central to any new education initiative. He saw the gap between the individual's right to education and the social reality within his community in Ballyfermot as 'too wide'. Having toiled for more than a decade to bring about such reform, his opening remarks at the inauguration of the college reflected the completion of a successful mission.

'For the first time since the foundation of the State, a Management Board, comprising community representatives, progressive educationalists and other

1. This article summarises the key findings in Dr Denis Murray's Ed.D Thesis presented to Dublin City University, School of Education Studies. It may be downloaded from: [http://doras.dcu.ie/20566/1/Denis\\_Murray's\\_Final\\_Thesis\\_for\\_Binding\\_21\\_April\\_2015-signed.pdf](http://doras.dcu.ie/20566/1/Denis_Murray's_Final_Thesis_for_Binding_21_April_2015-signed.pdf)





involved bodies, planned a senior cycle college and the result is Ballyfermot Senior College. Previously, educational establishments were structured without consultation with the local community... The advent of the college, with its emphasis on life, will expose the stereotyped educational experiences of the past so that the gaps between rights and realities will be diminished if not erased.'

Senior College Ballyfermot was off to a good start with the full backing of the community, the Department of Education, CDVEC and local secondary schools. This was combined with an enthusiastic and innovative teaching staff, some of whom had experience in the development of new and exciting programmes of education under the guidance of Dr Anton Trant at the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU), a joint venture between CDVEC and Trinity College.

### PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT IN BALLYFERMOT COLLEGE

A culture of new course development emerged from the CDU under the tutelage of Dr Anton Trant. There, motivated individuals, who were daily involved in the practice of teaching, believed it was important to develop and provide courses which supported those students who, in many cases, would not have survived in another educational setting. The CDU played a central role in coordinating developments and provided a forum for research and development. Teachers became enculturated in the research and development of new programmes for the betterment of the students and their colleges. These teachers became masters of their own destiny and led developments in teaching that were crucial to the growth of the vocational sector.

Soon after its opening, SCB began to develop a range of pre-employment courses (Vocational Preparation Training Programmes – VPTPs) for post-

Intermediate and Group Certificate students. These were initially designed to support early school-leavers who needed preparation for work. With the changing age demographic and second-level student numbers dropping in certain areas, there was an urgency to create new courses both to keep the schools open and to meet local population needs. Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses were initially developed in the late 70s. They evolved out of VPTPs within the vocational schools and were boosted from the mid-80s on by the availability of funding from the European Social Fund.

### BALLYFERMOT COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION

The former SCB, now Ballyfermot College of Further Education (BCFE), was at the forefront of this innovative development and began to create a range of courses in unconventional areas such as 'Animation', 'Music Management', 'Radio and Television', Film and 'Rock Management'. This was quite a radical development as these types of courses would not previously have been considered in second-level education. The 'Rock School' was born and after this many other 'Media and Performance' courses followed.

Necessity had proved the mother of invention in Ballyfermot. There weren't enough Leaving Certificate students to keep the place going, so they had to be creative. This development coincided with the availability of European funding for VPTP programmes and the then Principal, Jerome Morrissey, seeing the opportunity to develop new programmes; and 'further education' simply took off.

Ballyfermot College saw the opportunity to deliver new courses which were attractive to both students and industry in areas never covered in this country before. With no official certification for many of these programmes, Ballyfermot sought accreditation from outside of

the State, firstly with Sheridan College in Canada through which links were made with Disney, and this led to Ballyfermot having the first ever fully-accredited programme in animation outside of Canada and the US. In a sense, Ballyfermot College helped set up the animation industry in Ireland after consultation with the IDA, the Irish Enterprise Board and the newly-arrived animation company Sullivan Bluth in 1985.

However, these courses succeeded in the face of considerable opposition from CDVEC. In some cases, CDVEC was not aware of some of these developments.

The college continued to seek validation, accreditation and certification abroad during this crucial stage of development between the mid-80s and the eventual establishment of the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) in 1991. By this time, FE had been going for quite a few years without national certification. Indeed, it was almost ten years after the NCVA was established that the Qualifications Education and Training Act (1999) created the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) to provide an administrative structure for the development, recognition and award of education and training qualifications in the State.

Ballyfermot College evolved into a college of both further and higher education with courses ranging from level 5 to honours degree level 8. After 1994 BCFE discontinued the Leaving Certificate to focus more specifically on these new PLC programmes which had become hugely popular. The college was leading in these new areas, and from a very early stage, staff who had been involved with the CDU learned about quality assurance, validation and accreditation. Pre-employment courses in Ballyfermot College had a range of

certifying bodies which included Bolton Street for engineering and CERT for catering and tourism. However, there were no obvious bodies to validate or accredit the newer courses being pioneered at the college.

The College's venture into 'foreign' accreditation, in the late 80's, with Sheridan College for the Higher Diploma in Animation programme, was the beginning of what was to become a regular feature of its quest for certification of new programmes. The 'Sheridan' experience laid the foundation for new learning for those teachers in the college who were writing new syllabi and demonstrating the resourcefulness and quality required for developing authentic programmes. Over time, Ballyfermot College engaged with a range of accreditation bodies outside of the State - Pitman for secretarial, the Joint Examining Board for Teaching Diplomas in IT and Word Processing, City and Guilds for Radio and Television, the Royal Academy for Drama and Presentation and BTEC for Business, Social Care and Media. All of these bodies had their own validation and accreditation processes with specific pre-requisites in terms of resources and quality control. This engagement required the college to implement a range of relatively new processes such as module and assignment design, assessment, moderation, external examination and internal quality verification.

The early 90s saw the development of the first BTEC Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) in Business, Social Care and Media Production and an honours degree in Media Production Management. In fact, the college's

success in implementing the quality assurance processes referred to above was so good that it was recognised as an asset to be called upon by the newly established NCVA and several of the college's staff were seconded to the NCVA to develop new national programmes at levels 4 and 5. Teachers in the college become expert in developing new educational programmes and a certain synergy began to develop across programmes. For example, elements of business were brought into media and combined with research, marketing and law to form the basis of relevant courses.

Jerome Morrissey, the Principal, believed the College could contribute to the new growth in art and cultural industries. There was also a significant interest in a growing cohort of potential students looking for something different and in keeping with contemporary popular culture. The Radio and Television Act (1988) ended RTE's monopoly in public service broadcasting, bringing a demand for training for those who would be employed to operate the new commercial stations.

In order to compete with those with a more traditional education to degree level, the College explored the development of two-year courses which would more adequately prepare students for work in these new industries. The college already had a good relationship with BTEC Edexcel in the UK as they had validated a number of one-year programmes at National Diploma level. In the early 90's three new two-year programmes were devised in the college and proposed to BTEC for validation. These were in Social Care, Business Studies and Media Production. These

"Ballyfermot sought accreditation from outside of the State, firstly with Sheridan College in Canada through which links were made with Disney, and this led to Ballyfermot having the first ever fully-accredited programme in animation outside of Canada and the US."

courses proved highly successful and students went on to gain employment in their chosen fields. Then, in late 1992 it was decided to develop the Higher National Diploma (HND) in Media Production. This was done in collaboration with a college in Sheffield and the course commenced in 1993.

These were exciting times for BCFE and its teachers were highly motivated by their ground-breaking work. The Principal gave clear leadership and the staff responded in kind. Ideas, creativity and innovation were central to the culture of the college in those years.

## DEGREE COURSES IN BALLYFERMOT COLLEGE

The idea of a degree programme in BCFE came about when I raised the prospect with the Principal, Jerome Morrissey. By 1993, a new programme development culture was well-established in the college and I had experience of developing programmes for both An Chomhairle Oiliúna (AnCO) and An Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS). BCFE had recently established a partnership with Thames Valley University (TVU) in London, funded through the European Social Fund (ESF), to enable trainees to take a publishing concept [e.g. for a new trade magazine] from initial concept through to the market place. The partnership provided me with an opportunity to make a proposal to TVU for the development of a degree in Media Production and Management. The development process began in the Summer of 1993, and in July 1995, the BA (Hons) degree top-up year was validated and the first students graduated in June 1996.

In Ballyfermot College, the partnership arrangement with Thames Valley University in London proved most successful and several graduates of the BA (Hons) degree in Media Production Management (at times as

many as 25%) went on to Master's degree level and increasing numbers have completed doctoral degrees. One graduate of the programme who completed his PhD in Animation went on to develop a second Honours degree in Ballyfermot College: the BA (Hons) Visual Media in Animation/Game Design. Today the BA (Hons) Media Production Management degree is accredited by Dublin City University and continues into its 21<sup>st</sup> year.

## CONCLUSION

There has been very little qualitative research in the PLC/FE sector and none that I could find looked at higher education provision within further education settings. Unsurprisingly therefore, misinformation and misunderstandings about the work of the sector abound.

Additionally, the 1999 Qualifications (Education and Training) Act put FE on a statutory basis and put in place a framework of bodies to regulate the sector. It is clear that at that point, HE in FE settings were not considered to be viable options. There are two possible explanations for this conclusion. Either the policy makers were unaware of developments in BCFE and similar colleges or, being aware of the developments, they took a deliberate decision to abandon them. However it came about, this conclusion was regrettable and set aside the work of dedicated and innovative principals and teachers in integrating relevant higher education programmes into FE provision.

Recent research undertaken by this author suggests higher education programmes were developed 'from the ground up' by teachers who understood the needs of their students. These FE practitioners saw the need for their students to progress up the educational ladder and provided attractive courses that kept students in education who had nowhere else to go, a development that also met emerging skills needs in the economy.

A healthy culture of programme development was encouraged and those involved amassed high levels of 'symbolic capital'. This created feelings of ownership and pride which in turn boosted the quality and image of FE provision.

The research also shows the benefits for students who undertook these HE courses with many students continuing to master's degree level and some to doctoral studies. The ever-increasing number of applicants for these courses was clear testament to their success with students opting for FE courses in preference to higher education.

The student voice was central to this research and it was given priority over more quantitative and structured research. This insight into students' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and opinions about HE in FE settings throws light on an aspect of FE that was not explored previously. I believe the evidence clearly demonstrates that FE colleges should be resourced to continue providing HE courses to meet the progression needs of their students in the context of meeting ever-changing skills needs in the workplace.

My research also provided an insight into the positive impact that including HE in the FE college programme can have on the morale of teachers and principals involved in this development. Clearly, the inclusion of HE in the FE college programme improves the status of the college, and this impacts positively on both staff and students. Given that one of the key goals in the SOLAS FET strategy is to raise the status of FET, is this not a significant finding? Imagine what a network of strategically placed FE colleges, each offering a number of HE programmes focussed on the skills needs of its catchment area, would do to improve the image of FE. It is still not too late to learn from the success of the unsung innovators in Ballyfermot College and similar institutions around the country.

# School Newspaper Memories

A memoir by Gerry Jeffers, 086-0727339 gerryjeffers10@gmail.com

For anyone mapping the ups and downs of Irish educational journalism, the *Education Times* stands out as a high point. During its short life, between 1973 and 1976, this weekly newspaper covered a wide range of topics and issues. It probed and it provoked. Looking back through its now-yellowing pages, it isn't just the breadth and depth that strikes the reader but the resonances with concerns that are still current. Curriculum reform, school patronage and management, enrolment policies, even talk of a TUI-ASTI merger are all there, and lots more.

The *Education Times* also presented opportunities for young people to express themselves, each week publishing a selection of young writers' work. There was also an annual school newspapers competition, with primary, second-level and third-level categories.

Front page news on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1975 was that *The Lark* from Larkhill Primary School in Dublin and *Gown* from Queen's University, Belfast, were clear winners in their respective sections. However, at second-level, the paper reported, there was 'fierce competition' with *Tech Tatler* from the City Vocational School, Kilkenny 'coming out a short head in front of *Radharc* from Coolmine Community School'. 'Full details' were promised for the following week.

News of a national victory gave a great boost to the City Vocational School, Kilkenny. We looked forward enthusiastically to the following week's edition of the *Education Times*. Peppy Barlow's report began with high praise for *The Lark*, which 'came closest to what the



three judges considered a school newspaper should be'.

When it came to second-level, wrote Barlow, 'the influence of the staff seemed to be more inhibiting and many of the editors found it difficult to escape the old idea of a school magazine full of literary contributions. Long adjectives and nineteenth century prose are not the best recipe for twentieth century school journalism and as one judge pointed out, very few [contributors] were likely to become poets'.

The report stated: 'The *Tech Tatler* from the City Vocational School, Kilkenny certainly managed to include some excellent creative work without

losing the breadth necessary for a newspaper. It proved compelling reading for one judge who said, 'I read every word of the available issues of this magazine. Imaginative headlines and many excellent and apt illustrations should ensure that most students read from cover to cover as I did'.

Barlow continued, 'The fiction and poetry are the best of the whole three sections of this competition. The school news is well presented. It is the magazine which showed the least signs of adult help. It is the magazine which achieves best what it set out to do. It is light years away from a chalk-and-talk atmosphere'.



"Involvement with *Tech Tatler* was just one of Tom Hunt's significant contributions to school life at that time. He was a gifted and much-loved teacher of English, wrote and directed original plays as well as managing football and athletics teams."

Another judge described *Tech Tatler* as 'bubbling over with enthusiasm and self-confidence', stating 'it works well within clearly-understood technical limitations and is obviously a focal point for the school'.

That phrase 'least signs of adult help' provoked more than wry smiles from Tom Hunt and myself. As the two teachers in the school who had driven and supported the *Tech Tatler* project, we had worked hard to encourage student self-expression. We had seen up close how the magazine could build student confidence and self-esteem.

Clear memories of those days resurfaced this March with the death, at age 72, of Tom Hunt. Tom was a wonderful colleague, an inspirational educator and a great friend. Re-reading those back issues of the *Education Times* in the Russell Library in Maynooth University, I was also reminded of how some of what appeared in *Tech Tatler* ruffled feathers, inside and outside the school. Then, as now, nurturing 'student voice', as Domnall Fleming wrote in *ETBI magazine*, Spring 2016, was complex and challenging. Back in the mid-1970s, to the great credit of school principal Seán Dignan, a very active and occasionally unpredictable man, he stood by the *Tech Tatler* team, even though I'm sure its edgy content caused him some sleepless nights.

He recognised, as did the *Education Times* judges, that when young people can express their views -including their views on their own schooling - very positive energy and goodwill is

generated. The subsequent visit to the school of *The Education Times* editor John Horgan to present the prize – a portable typewriter – further strengthened *Tech Tatler's* place within the culture of the school.

Involvement with *Tech Tatler* was just one of Tom Hunt's significant contributions to school life at that time. He was a gifted and much-loved teacher of English, wrote and directed original plays as well as managing football and athletics teams. Tom was elected President of the Teachers Union of Ireland and in that role was courageous, inspiring and very effective.

He moved to Ballyhale, Co Kilkenny, now Scoil Aireagail, and became principal there in 1990. He was much loved and greatly respected by students, staff and the local community. You can see that very clearly in the warm and insightful



Tom Hunt 2008

appreciation penned by one of his former students, PM O'Sullivan, in the *Irish Examiner* of 29 April 2016. In his tribute to Tom Hunt, he wrote, 'The most unusual thing was his ability to see potential in lads nobody else rated'.

Coincidentally, Seán Dignan who served the people of Kilkenny energetically for over three decades, died two weeks after Tom. Seán was aged 84. The loss of these two fine men is keenly felt. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hAnam nacha dílis.*



# Gaiscígh na hIdirbhliana i mbun GAISCE

From Maria Nolan, Communications & Buildings Officer, WWETB



Daltaí na hIdirbhliana i mbun cadhcála ar an mBearú

**N**íl deireadh le sodar dhaltaí na hIdirbhliana na laethanta seo agus go leor, leor imeachtaí suimiúla á ndéanamh acu ó d'fhill siad tar éis na Cásca. Bhí lá den scoth acu agus iad ar turas stairiúil ar an Aird Mhór agus ag cleachtadh dreapadóireachta le hIonad Eachtraíochta na hAird Móra. Níorbh é sin deireadh na scléipe áfach agus ar aghaidh leo an lá dar gcionn go dtí Staid Neptune i gCorcaigh chun páirt a ghlacadh i gCraobh Chomórtas sa Chispheil Chathaoir Rothaí, áit ar tugadh suntas dá fheabhas is a bhí siad i mbun na ceirde. D'eagraigh múinteoir Matamaitice na hIdirbhliana, Karen Cashman, cuairt fíorshuimiúil ó fhóiréinseolaí ó Chaisleán an Leasa Mhóir agus chuir na daltaí an-suim ar fad ina raibh le taispeáint agus le léiriú aici dóibh agus cuid díobh ag smaoineamh ar phostanna le CSI amach anseo! An tseachtain chéanna

d'fhreastail ceathrar daltaí ón rang, Saoirse Ní Argáin, Saoirse Nic Craith, Macdara Ó Faoláin agus Kyle Ó Laochdha ar Choláiste Ollscoile Chorcaí chun blaiseadh de na cúrsaí ollscoile éagsúla a bhíonn á dtairiscint ann agus bhain siad idir thaitneamh agus thairbhe as gach aon ghné den taithí sin. Ár mbuíochas le Clár Ní Fhathaigh a d'eagraigh an tréimhse ollscoile sin do na daltaí. Is cosúil nach féidir fuinneamh lucht na hIdirbhliana a chloí agus agus d'fháiltigh siad roimh theacht an tSamhraidh le turas GAISCE i nGráig na Manach ar an 3 agus an 4 Bealtaine. Thug siad faoi thuras cadhcála 10 n-uaire a chloig ar an mBearú agus dhein siad éacht mar gur éirigh leo talamh a bhaint amach slán sábháilte, fiú amháin má bhí siad spíonta ag deireadh an lae! Is chun críoch speisialta a chur leis an tseachtain, leanadh le nós na hoilithreachta atá leanta ag lucht na

hIdirbhliana le cúpla bliain anuas faoi stiúir an Mháistir Uí Dhroma agus shiúil siad ar fad i dtreo an tSolais le chéile, ar mhaithe le Pieta House i gcoim na hoíche, Dé hAoine an 6 Bealtaine. Is creid é nó ná creid, thug na daltaí fuinniúla céanna faoi scrúdú Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge an lá dar gcionn! Beidh teastas GAISCE á bhronnadh orthu ar fad ag deireadh na hIdirbhliana de bharr na n-éachtaí ar fad atá curtha i gcrích acu i rith na bliana agus tá an gradam sin tuillte go rímhaith ag gach aon duine díobh, go deimhin!



# Miltown Malbay Youthreach Takes Part in YSI Life Time Lab Cork

By Elaine Tubridy, LCETB Miltown Malbay

In Life Time Lab Cork, ten project teams recently took part in a Dragon's Den-style pitch to a Young Social Innovators (YSI) Panel for a share of a €15k social innovation fund. The fund was created to assist teams to implement their innovative ideas to bring about positive change and increase the impact of their project work. Some also requested mentorship and support from the YSI Dragons in specialised areas such as marketing and finance.

The initiative challenges young people to work within their communities to identify areas of social need and to come up with and implement solutions for positive social change. The teams pitching at this year's YSI Den addressed a range of social issues including mental health, nutrition, homophobia, road safety and addiction.

Three students from Youthreach Miltown Malbay, Megan McInerney, Reese Hallett and Martin Mongan, travelled to Cork to pitch their YSI project to the YSI panel.

The title of the Miltown Malbay YSI project is ***"Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass but learning to dance in the rain"***. This project came about as a result of:

- Research carried out with a number of Youthreach centres in Clare and Limerick which identified possible supports and coping skills (positive and negative) that young people use.
- A response to a remembrance of hope service that we had in the Miltown Malbay centre, at which a former Youthreach student on our programme who died by suicide was remembered. His mother made an impact through the words she said;

most importantly: "Suicide does not have to be a permanent solution to a temporary problem."

- The YSI class focused on what they wanted to achieve: to raise awareness about mental health, positive coping skills and support services that young people could contact.

The YSI project developed into asking the questions, "What can we do as an YSI team to address and raise awareness? How can we get young people to become more aware of their feelings, identify positive coping skills and provide support service numbers if they need help in their lives?"

The team's plan to address this was to design, develop and create a "checklist card" that young people can use to become more aware of how they are feeling by asking themselves key questions, and which lists positive coping skills that a young person could use in their lives to deal with issues, as well as contact numbers and details for support services that young people could access.

This YSI project was created by young people, for young people. The team worked hard in identifying coping skills and key questions in their checklist card that they hope young people will honestly answer to themselves about how they are really feeling. It is their hope to help and inform, if only one person, that there is help available; there is a more positive way of coping with what is going on their life at that time.

The YSI project received support from local organisations and services, including North Clare Mental Health Association, Samaritans, Youthreach counsellor, West Clare Taking Care, and Clare Suicide Bereavement support group.

Overall it was a very successful day for the three students; they were awarded €400 from the YSI panel to go towards funding the checklist card and make their YSI goals a reality. They scored very high marks in their pitch and were commended for their project title and the positive change that it will bring about in the community.



LCETB Miltown Malbay Youthreach students



# KCETB schools mark the 1916 centenary in a dynamic learning forum

By

*Cynthia Deane, Chief Executive, Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board*

*Cathy McSorley, Principal, Kilkenny City Vocational School*

*Nigel Quirke-Bolt, Deputy Principal, Carlow Vocational School*

In 2015, the members of Kilkenny and Carlow ETB suggested that their schools should be encouraged to do something special to mark the centenary of the 1916 Rising. Principals and teachers in KCETB schools were quick to identify the educational importance of the commemorations. The schools worked together to ensure their pupils would learn, experience and benefit from the celebrations that were planned across the Kilkenny-Carlow region.

The KCETB senior management team, which includes the thirteen school principals, formed a working group under the leadership of Cathy McSorley, Principal of Kilkenny City Vocational School and Dr Nigel Quirke-Bolt, Deputy Principal of Carlow Vocational School, to come up with a plan. The main idea was that the 1916 commemoration would offer exciting and innovative learning opportunities for the 5000 students in KCETB schools during 2016.

Two main events were planned, with a focus on enabling students to meet young people from other schools. An inter-school quiz for teams of first year students was held in Kilkenny City Vocational School on 15 April 2016, and a Schools Commemoration Day was held in the Woodford Dolmen Hotel Carlow on 22 April.

Each school sent two teams of four first-year pupils to compete in the quiz.

Questions were based on events of the 1916 Rising, with some general knowledge questions as well. The students enjoyed meeting students from other schools and the excitement and energy created was palpable. The students involved not only learned about the 1916 Rising, but also made a lot of new friends and learned about the other schools within KCETB.

The Schools Commemoration Day was a hugely successful event, which included an exhibition and presentation of the work undertaken in each school. The students and their teachers had scope to showcase the projects, research, performances and artefacts they had produced in whatever format they chose. Each school group

displayed creative, imaginative and inspiring responses to the brief they had been given.

It was a truly unique occasion, showcasing “the best of what we are” across all KCETB schools. The students who represented their schools were worthy ambassadors who spoke and performed with pride on behalf of their whole school community. The displays at the stands were a testament to the hard work and research that had gone into the preparation for the event in every school.

Based on each school’s commemoration projects, a booklet has been published and circulated to every student and staff member



Students from Carlow Vocational School making their presentation





Students from Coláiste Mhuire Johnstown performing music with 1916 connections



Students from Kilkenny City Vocational School at their display stand

in our schools, and to members of Boards of Management. The articles in the booklet show how the 1916 commemoration was linked to every aspect of the school curriculum. The contributions recall the legacy of the Rising in story, song, music, drama, poetry, film, literature, photography, costume, food, games, personal testimony and even modern interactive technology.

The students have written new proclamations, with the values expressed by the original signatories re-imagined for a modern era: the focus now is on peace, tolerance, justice, equality, and a different type of freedom – “the freedom to be yourself”. Some of the themes that matter to this generation, such as mental health and homelessness, are highlighted with reference to the struggles of the past.

The booklet includes a rich and colourful snapshot of the creative and exciting work carried out in all Kilkenny and Carlow ETB schools in 2016. It captures the enthusiasm and energy shown by the students in undertaking projects and taking part in events that were organised in their schools in this centenary year.

In the articles, readers will in turn be moved by a touching love story and amused by seeing how children played in 1916; they will find explorations of social justice set against the ideals of

the proclamation; they will be energised by the artistic creativity of the students and challenged by the new perspectives they present on historical events. They will discover new facts about life in 1916 – about how people worked, the food they enjoyed, the songs they sang and the causes they believed in. At the same time, they will gain a powerful insight into the qualities displayed by the young people in our schools in our time: their confidence, their enthusiasm and their compassion.

The publication of the booklet will ensure that the research completed by the students is shared among our school communities, creating a dynamic and powerful collective learning forum.

*Nigel Quirke-Bolt, editor of the booklet, writes:*

“One of the things that has struck me most about this whole project has been the potential this type of activity holds for student learning. For instance, each school celebrated the 1916 Rising in their own way, drawing on their own strengths and capabilities; but by sharing their work across the ETB, there was an opportunity for schools to gain a much broader insight into the 1916 Rising than if they had worked on their own.

I am sure that it would be possible to identify parts of the current Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate

syllabus where a collective approach across a number of schools would provide students with a much stronger understanding of an element of their studies. Schools and students might be able to use this approach to maximise their use of time more effectively. The students could present their findings to one other via presentations, and through the exchange of notes, group discussions, perhaps using a mixture of face-to-face meetings, social networks and postal exchanges.

I think the ‘1916 Rising project’ has opened the door to the possibility of a very innovative and ground breaking ‘community of practice’! On carrying out a quick literature search, it would appear that this isn’t a learning model that has been examined to any great extent before. Of course, it could provide not only a powerful teaching and learning medium, but also a strong collegial experience for schools.”

KCETB is very interested in exploring the potential of this model of student learning, and Nigel proposes to organise a pilot project next year to develop the idea with colleagues from other schools.



# Cycle against Suicide visits Coláiste Phobal RosCré

From Claire Fox, Tipperary Education and Training Board

Over 800 people die by suicide on the island of Ireland each year. That is 800 families and communities devastated; 800 lives cut short. Cycle against Suicide aims to change this by beginning a conversation about mental health and getting the message that 'it's ok not to feel ok; and it's absolutely ok to ask for help' into schools, businesses and communities throughout the island of Ireland.

On the morning of May 3rd Jim Breen and the Cycle against Suicide group spoke to the entire Coláiste Phobal community with their main message being 'it's ok not to feel ok; and it's absolutely ok to ask for help'. The group were high energy, high spirits and the students thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Roscrea is very fortunate in that Pieta House has a base in the town and was represented



in the gym along with other help/support groups present. We at Coláiste Phobal are very fortunate also to have excellent counsellors and also

probably the coolest School Chaplain in the country in Fr. Lorcan!!!! Don't be alone, don't suffer in silence... Ask for help.





# Davitt College Castlebar Selected to Introduce New Politics and Society Subject

By Bernie Rowland, Principal, Davitt College, Castlebar



Bernie Rowland, Principal Davitt College Castlebar, Minister for Education Jan O'Sullivan TD and Frank Kelleher, Teacher of Politics and Society, Davitt College, at the launch of the new subject in Limerick

A new subject has been developed for the Leaving Certificate Programme called Politics and Society. This will be an optional Leaving Certificate subject, just like other exam subjects. It will be introduced on a phased basis, starting with a small number of schools in September 2016. Davitt College in Castlebar is one of these schools. Students will sit the first Leaving Certificate Politics and Society examination in June 2018.

"We are delighted that our school has been selected to introduce Leaving Certificate Politics and Society from this coming September 2016," said Bernie Rowland, Davitt College

Principal. "Politics and Society is a very exciting and rewarding subject that will suit any student who is interested in human rights, equality, diversity, sustainable development, power and democratic decision-making", she said. It is envisaged that studying Politics and Society will give students a real insight into people, power and how society works.

The subject will be assessed at two levels, Ordinary and Higher. There will be two assessment components at each level – a written examination which accounts for 80% of the final grade and a citizenship project which accounts for 20%. The citizenship project enables students to research

a topic of interest to them and then apply their learning in action.

"The introduction of Politics and Society complements the already very wide range of subjects we offer in Davitt College to students in the Leaving Certificate Programme", said Ms Rowland. "There has been a considerable interest in the uptake of this subject already from students and a number of teachers have expressed a wish to teach Politics and Society in Davitt College."



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Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna  
Mnáigh Éo, Shligigh agus Liatroma  
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim  
Education and Training Board

# First ETB student in Tipperary to Win All-Ireland Debating Final

From Claire Fox, Tipperary ETB

In a packed Áras Moyola in the National university of Ireland, Galway, Ireland's best schools debaters came to debate the topical proposition that '*This House Regrets the Valorisation of The Easter Rising*'.

The All-Ireland Debating Final brings together the best schools' debaters in the country. The roll-call of previous winners is a highly impressive list that includes many well-known political and legal figures who have put their debating skills to impressive use, confirming that to get to the final was and is highly remarkable.

All the debaters in the Final had either won or come runners-up in their provincial heats. As in the Munster Final, Emma Quirke, a student at

Coláiste Dún Iascaigh in Cahir was Tipperary's sole representative. Schools from Cork, Galway, Dublin and Co Meath all had representatives. The Debate was chaired by recently elected TD Catherine Connolly, who also serves as Lord Mayor of Galway City.

There have been many highly emotional and vociferous debates about the merits and flaws of this auspicious occasion in Ireland's history. This was a very tough debate with people feeling very strongly about our national history.

All personal feelings had to be put aside as Emma Quirke tore into the debate. Emma's two key points were that the Rising was doomed to fail because of the tactics of its leaders,

and that the Ireland it produced was stunted in its growth for a number of generations because of its after-effects. Pointing to the high number of civilian and young casualties during the Rising, Emma questioned how the leaders have been venerated. She also pointed to the domination of a conservative cohort and Ireland's isolation after the Rising.

The adjudication was undoubtedly a gruelling affair for the judges. It must have been incredibly tough to separate twelve speakers of outstanding quality. After over an hour of deliberation, Emma Quirke was announced as All-Ireland champion debater, to a roar of delight from her supporters and a look of shock from herself. This was a truly historic and magnificent victory.





# Kerry ETB Adult Guidance and Information Service Hosts Third Annual Inter-Organisational Presentations Day

By Rico Stein, Adult Guidance Counsellor/ Coordinator, Kerry ETB

In December 2015, Kerry Adult Guidance and Information Service (KAGS) hosted their third Annual Inter-Organisational Presentations Day, inviting representatives from organisations and programmes that work with clients groups similar to the Further and Education and Training target groups of the Kerry ETB. The purpose of the event is to:

- 1) hear presentations from different organisations/programmes on client trends, needs, and possible recommendations for change;
- 2) as a collective group, identify and prioritise key recommendations for change;
- 3) increase staff networking and inter-organisation staff co-operation by offering an event such as this, and

4) by the recommendations identified on the day, effect positive change to the benefit of the clients we mutually serve.

The first part of the morning involved organisations giving short presentations on the client trends and needs that they were encountering in their work. This then formed a basis for shared learning, group work, feedback and collective recommendations for change.

In tandem with the morning's presentations, Councillor Jim Finucane, Chair of Kerry ETB Board, launched KAGS' annual publication "Client Trends, Needs and Recommendations". This publication captured the client trends and needs that KAGS observed over the previous year in the course of its work. The

publication included recommendations for change in policy and practice based on issues and trends identified. The publication is shared with the ETB staff, including the Board, and KAGS' network of contacts in other organisations. [NOTE: If you would like a copy of this publication, please contact us at [guidance@kerryetb.ie](mailto:guidance@kerryetb.ie)].

The event was well attended. There was representation from Citizens' Information Service, Department of Social Protection, LES, Jobs Club, Employability Kerry, Kerry College of Further Education, Listowel Community College, Kerry Diocesan Youth Service, Kerry ETB Training Centre, National Learning Network, Society of St. Vincent De Paul, IT Tralee, SHEP, Kerry Regional Drugs Task Force, as well as Kerry ETB Adult Education staff from our Adult



L-R: Kay Lanigan Ryan, Kerry College of Further Education, Junior Locke, St Vincent de Paul, Brian Harkin, Principal Kerry College of Further Education



L-R: Sharon Browne, Adult Education Officer, Angela O'Sullivan, Adult Guidance Information Officer, Colm McEvoy, Chief Executive Officer Kerry ETB, Rico Stein, Adult Guidance Counsellor/Coordinator, Ann O'Dwyer, Education Officer Kerry ETB

Education Centres, Adult Literacy Service, Community Education, VTOS, and KAGS itself.

### SPECIAL PRESENTATION

A special feature of this year's event was presenting a cheque to Junior Locke, Tralee Area President, Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, as a token of Kerry ETB's gratitude for the continued SVP educational funding support of learners. A specific fundraising event was organised by Kerry College of Further Education (KCFE), and a cheque was presented by Brian Harkin, Principal, and Kay Lanigan Ryan, Course Coordinator for Professional Cookery, of KCFE.

### GROUP WORK

Following the presentations, participants were facilitated by Louise Nagle, Career Guidance Counsellor with the Institute of Technology, Tralee, focussing, first in small groups, then collectively, on identifying and prioritising key recommendations for change. The top five issues identified by the participants of this year's event were:

- 1) Confidence Building – core basic skills nurtured and enhanced, "Initial Intervention".
- 2) Earlier intervention in schools for personal development of children/young people at risk. Focus on core competencies development, guidance and information on accessing services. (Primary & second-level)
- 3) More Level 2, 3 and 4 QQI programmes with assessments, with built-in supports e.g. transport.
- 4) A supported and responsive system that recognises the need for the development and delivery of learner-centred courses.



Front Row: Aoife McCormack, County Adult Literacy Coordinator, Catherine Galway, Youth Mentor Project  
Back Row: Louise Nagle, IT Tralee Careers Officer, Frank Heffernan, Asst Principal Officer DSP, Emmett Spring, Jobs Club Facilitator, Joe Brennan, VTOS/Youthreach Coordinator ]



Attendees at the KAGS Annual Inter-Organisational Presentations Day

#### Key principles:

- Respond to an individual (learners) action plan
  - Integrated
  - Collaboration
  - Holistic
  - Advocacy
  - Equal access
- 5) More support for young people (especially 17½ year-olds) financial, guidance, learning support, family centred support.

### WHAT NEXT?

It was agreed that the key issues and recommendations for change identified would be brought back to each organisation attending in order to help effect change. It was unanimously agreed by those in attendance to run the event again in 2016 (the event is now scheduled for 18 November 2016).



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Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Chiarraí  
Kerry Education and Training Board



# Taoiseach Enda Kenny & Minister Jan O'Sullivan Announce Commitment to Music Generation Funding

By Aoife Lucey, Communications Manager, Music Generation



Maxwell's Photography

Last January, Taoiseach Enda Kenny, Minister for Education Jan O'Sullivan, U2's Adam Clayton and The Ireland Funds recently joined young children from Music Generation South Dublin who attend Scoil Chronáin, Rathcoole, in Government Buildings to mark a commitment by the Government to the future on-going funding of Phase 2 of Music Generation, Ireland's National

Music Education Programme. The commitment, which follows a recent €3m philanthropic donation by U2 (€2m) and The Ireland Funds (€1m) to Music Generation which enabled the second phase of the music education programme, will further facilitate the expansion of the ground-breaking music initiative in up to nine areas of the country and the funding of the programme beyond 2020. Music

Generation is currently established in 12 areas of the country, reaching some 26,000 children and young people annually who would otherwise not have had the choice of access or the chance to participate in non-mainstream music education.





## Entrepreneurial Education

ETBI is pleased to offer teachers the opportunity to complete a Professional Development Programme on Entrepreneurial Education to help schools/colleges/centres build an entrepreneurial culture.

The programme comprises of 3 Modules:

- *You and Entrepreneurship*, aiming to develop your understanding of: entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial education, your entrepreneurial competencies.
- *Entrepreneurial Education in your Classroom*, aiming to develop your pedagogy to facilitate entrepreneurial classrooms.
- *Building an Entrepreneurial Culture in your school/college*, this module aims to assist you in embedding entrepreneurial education in your school/college.

**When registering, a minimum of two teachers per school/college/centre is required.**

**When?** - September 9th & 10th, September 23rd & 24th, October 7th & 8th, November 11th & 12th

**Time:** Each Friday 5pm—7.30pm and Saturday 9.30am—3.30pm

**Where?** ETBI, Pipers Hill, Kilcullen Road, Naas, Co. Kildare

**Cost:** €250pp inclusive of resources, lunch and refreshments

**Register:** please email Paula at [paula.fitzpatrick@etbi.ie](mailto:paula.fitzpatrick@etbi.ie) on or before Wednesday May 25th. Places offered on a first come first served basis.

*Joan Russell,*

Project Officer for Instructional Practices (ETBI)



# AEOA Reunion – An Opportunity to Celebrate the Past and Consider the Future

By Mary Walsh, Adult Education Officer WWETB, President AEOA

On the evening of April 27th 2016, sixty-five Adult Education Officers past and present were joined by ETBI President Pat Gilmore and Clare McMahon representing ETBI, in the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone. This reunion dinner was a celebration of the work of the Adult Education Officers (AEOs) who served in the Vocational Education Committees since 1979, and now in the Education and Training Boards since 2013.

The Adult Education Officers Association (AEOA) was formed on 25th February 1980, in Sligo, following the first in-service Induction Seminar, arranged by IVEA and the Association of CEOs in association with the Department of Education. Since that induction, the AEOA members have developed the adult education service into the significant structure it is today. This success is down to the hard work and dedication of the many AEOs who served over those years, their competencies, their energies, their vision and their empathy with their staff and learners. When Jack McCann, Chairman of IVEA, and Edward Gibson, President of the CEOs' Association, encouraged the newly appointed AEOs to form a professional association for themselves, little did they know how far that association would come.

From very small beginnings, AEOA grew to over 50 members and then fell dramatically during two moratoria, until this year when some new recruits joined the ranks. From driving round rural Ireland with "SuperSers" in the boots of cars to engage with communities in learning, the AEOs have driven the FET service to where it is now.

Further Education and Training services work strategically with national and regional programmes, linking with employers and communities throughout Ireland, and providing programmes from QQI levels 1 to 6 over six days and nights every week. That flexibility to offer a service 14 hours a day over six days has been an integral part of the success and the transformation of the Further Education and Training landscape. In her speech, Mary Walsh, President of AEOA, acknowledged the part played by those pioneering AEOs in making themselves available at times that were normally outside the education "box" and facilitating outreach learning, distance learning and communities of practice.

Among those present on the night was AEO Jim Marsden, who ran the first pilot programme in Adult Education in Co Meath. It was noted, "Had Jim not made a success of that pilot, the current Further Education and Training service as we know it, might not be here today." In recognition of Jim's pioneering work, AEOA President Mary Walsh invited him to cut the celebration cake – success is always sweet!

In the time-honoured tradition of AEOA, the night consisted of in-depth philosophical and educational discussion led by Ted Fleming and Helen Keogh, interspersed by recitation and song led by the redoubtable Liam Bane and Michael



Fiona Maloney, ETBI/Cavan-Monaghan ETB, Des Murtagh retired AEO Co Dublin VEC/KWETB, Marian Duffy retired AEO KC ETB, Nuala Glanton Cork ETB



Mary Walsh, President AEOA, welcoming the guests at the AEOA Reunion

McLoughlin. That sense of collegiality at gatherings is the basis for the long and lasting friendships which have stood the test of time in the Association.

With the passage of time, a small number of former colleagues have gone to their eternal reward: Jim O'Flynn, Tony Downes, Lesley Warren, Paddy Haverty, Martin O'Grady, Larry Kavanagh, John Barry, Eoin Rua O'Neill and Jack Fraser. Again in the time-honoured way, they were remembered by colleagues new and old on the night, as they contemplated on how quickly the past thirty-six years flew and looked forward with relish to the next thirty-six!

Donall O'Scoláir retired AEO Co Leitrim VEC, Clare McMahon ETBI and former AEO/CEO Co Wexford VEC and Briain MacDiarmada, retired AEO Co Wicklow VEC



Eimear Brophy MC for the night starts the ball rolling



Celia Rafferty AEO City of Dublin ETB, Liz O'Sullivan AEO City of Dublin ETB, Eimear Brophy AEO LCETB and Marian Duffy retired AEO KCET

## GRETB Student Demonstrates Fresh Talent at Fresh Film Festival

From Maeve Waldron, GRETB

**F**ounded in 1997 as part of the Limerick Film Festival, Fresh Film Festival has since grown into a year-round organisation with a focus on national and international filmmakers spanning the primary and secondary age groups. 'Fresh' has grown incrementally and 'Ireland's Young Filmmaker' Awards now encompass three sections – Junior (7-12 years), Senior (12-18 years), and the 'International Young Filmmaker' Awards. Each section is open to individual filmmakers, schools, and youth and community groups in these age categories.

Congratulations to Johnathan Connolly, student at Archbishop McHale College in Tuam Co Galway,

winner of the audience award at the Galway Heat of the Fresh Film Festival for his film entitled '*Stranger Danger*' - highlighting the dangers young people can encounter on the internet. Johnathan had submitted a number of films, including a film made in conjunction with his TY Gaeilge class documenting a class outing to the Aran Islands, '*Iomramh go hÁrainn*'. Johnathan beat off stiff competition from



Johnathan Connolly and classmates at the Galway heat of the Fresh Film Festival

schools across Connacht to become regional champion, and went on to receive a Highly Commended Award for Direction at the national finals in March 2016.

# DDLETB Leading Lights in Road Safety Awards

From Patricia Cassells, Manager, DDLETB Training Centre Baldoyle

**D**ublin & Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board came out tops at the annual Road Safety Authority (RSA) 'Leading Lights in Road Safety' Awards which took place in December 2015 in Farmleigh in the Phoenix Park. The awards celebrate the outstanding efforts of people to improve road safety in their communities and provide a special opportunity for members of the public to honour the contribution of exceptional people to making our roads safer for everyone.

The 'CPC Trainer of the Year' award winner was Paul White of DDLETB. Paul was selected as CPC Trainer of the Year following extremely positive feedback from the professional drivers who attended his training sessions. Effective CPC trainers need to share

their experience and expertise to help ensure key road safety messages are taken on board. Engaging with drivers can be challenging at times but Paul continuously demonstrates a real flair for getting the message across. In addition Paul regularly assists the RSA with the review of the Driver CPC training material, sharing his wealth of knowledge and experience for the benefit of all road users.

The 'CPC Training Organisation of the Year' was awarded to Dublin & Dún Laoghaire ETB. Receiving the award on behalf of DDLETB was Sharon McCarthy. Drivers who did their CPC training at DDLETB Training Centre Baldoyle had acknowledged the hard work that went into delivering quality periodic CPC training to professional drivers by providing very positive feedback through

the RSA's training evaluation scheme, which led to DDLETB being selected as 'CPC Training Organisation of the Year'. Congratulations to all involved!



Sharon McCarthy accepted the CPC Training Organisation of the Year award for DDLETB



CPC Trainer of the Year – Paul White

## LWETB Athlone Training Centre wins Professional Service Provider of the Year Award

From John Costello, Area Training Manager, LWETB Athlone Training Centre

**T**he sixteenth of April last was a fantastic night at the Athlone Business Awards for Athlone Training Centre, as the Centre was awarded 'Professional Service Provider of the Year' for 2016. Athlone Training Centre (ATC) is part of Longford & Westmeath Education and Training Board, and is the leading provider of skills training, meeting the current needs of all sectors of industry in the Midlands area. The Training Centre has a long-established and proven track record working with both SMEs and large multinationals, and with existing and new start-up businesses. In 2015 over 2000 learners successfully completed courses relevant to local business requirements across a span

of disciplines and trades/professions.

"This achievement was possible thanks to the Training Centre's fantastic hardworking staff and tutors who make us what we are today," said John Costello, Athlone Training Centre Manager. "We are delighted to win this award, it was a tough category. It is very much appreciated to have the formal recognition and support of local businesses that value and use our services during the year, demonstrated

in such a tangible meaningful way. The genuine support and collaboration we have received from the IDA and local businesses in developing and tailoring our courses to meet local needs has been realised with this win."



The staff of LWETB Athlone Training Centre celebrate their win



# A Date for your Diary

## ETBI Annual Conference

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The ETBI Annual Conference takes place on **Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> September** and **Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September** 2016 at the Gleneagle Hotel, Muckcross Road, Killarney, Co Kerry.



Contact your ETB Head Office for further information.



# Coláiste Gleann Lí- flying the flags for anti-bullying and positive mental health promotion

By Maryanne Lowney Slattery, Assistant Principal, Coláiste Gleann Lí

Coláiste Gleann Lí in Tralee has become the first school in Kerry and one of only five post-primary schools nationally to be presented with the 'Anti-bullying' flag\*. The accolade is presented in recognition of the school community's commitment to strengthening their preventative and proactive approach to bullying. The prestigious flag was raised by Kerry player and School Mentor Darren O'Sullivan on the 8th of February last to the applause of the students and staff of the post-primary school. The school is one of eight post-primary schools under the auspices of Kerry Education and Training Board; and the school's efforts to ensure a positive learning environment were commended by Education Officer, Ann O'Dwyer.

The 'Anti-bullying' Flag is an honour bestowed on schools that have made concrete efforts to ensure the implementation of an evidence-informed approach to the management and prevention of bullying. The flag is awarded to schools and clubs that not only fully implement the ISPCCs Shield Campaign but fulfill six additional criteria, such as completing the ISPCC Shield My School of Anti-Bullying Toolkit; ensuring a dedicated Anti-Bullying coordinator is assigned within the school; installing the ISPCC 'Stand Up' Report (online) Tool to their web page; as well as a range of cross-curricular events and activities. One of the most noticeable visual reminders of the school's proactive approach to positive mental health is the large anti-bullying wall that greets you as you enter the main corridor. This wall was created by the students and is regularly updated with information and supports available to students.

Myrna Egan, Coordinator of the Coláiste Gleann Lí 'Anti-bullying' Committee thanked all those involved in attaining the award, and commended their "...

*sustained interest and support in ensuring that our school is a positive place where each student is valued and respected for their positive contributions to our learning environment."*

At the official launch, the ISPCC's Sinead McKee commended the staff and students of Coláiste Gleann Lí for their continual efforts to prevent and combat bullying in the school. She explained that "All too often within the ISPCC we see the damage and impact bullying can have on a young person's self-esteem and confidence. The experience of bullying can prevent a young person from reaching their full potential in childhood and can have long lasting negative effects into adulthood. The ISPCC are extremely proud of Coláiste Gleann Lí for taking a preventative and evidence-informed approach to bullying. They are now leading the way in the Kingdom, as shining examples on working that extra mile towards the Flag".

Principal of Coláiste Gleann Lí Richard Lawlor noted that the flag symbolises "... the commitment of our school community to work together to ensure that our school is a safe place where all students can learn in an environment of respect and inclusion. This award is a testament to our core values of learning, caring, respect and inclusion and we are very proud, but not surprised, to be the first school in Kerry to receive the 'Anti-bullying' flag".

The Anti-bullying flag was raised in tandem with their recently awarded 'Amber Flag' for positive mental health promotion. The Amber Flag was presented to the school for its relentless work on bringing about a cultural change in the

promotion of positive mental health within the school context. This initiative was coordinated by Kerry ETB's Niamh Mulligan, a trained psychotherapist who works in the scheme. The school's characteristic spirit has been commended for promoting mental and physical health and for breaking down barriers to inclusion by combatting racism, bullying and isolation.

Many of the speakers at the launch commented on the positive feeling they got on entering the school. Youth and Community Engagement Worker with Jigsaw Kerry, Donagh Hennebry captured the sentiment when he commented on the 'warm, welcoming and open atmosphere that captured him' when he first came to speak with students a number of years ago. The relationship with agencies such as Jigsaw has proved invaluable to realizing the school's objective to lead the way in creating a positive learning environment.

Assistant Principal, Maryanne Lowney Slattery, explained "The school's characteristic spirit centres on our core values: learning, caring, respect and inclusion. We support all members of the school community to live the core values to ensure that all young people are supported in a caring and happy school environment". \*all data accurate as of 8/2/2016



The anti-bullying wall in Coláiste Gleann Lí's main corridor



Coláiste Gleann Lí in Tralee was awarded both the 'Anti-Bullying' Flag and the 'Amber' Flag

# BlanchArtstown Youthreach Students Getting Creative

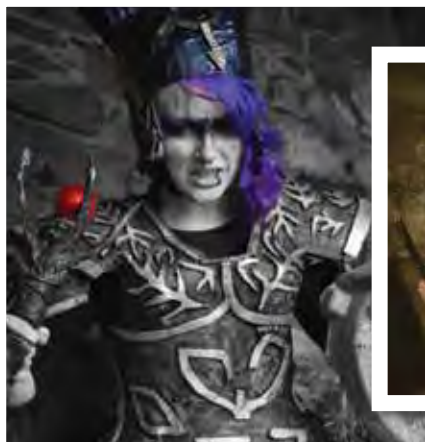
Story & images by Sandra Bagnall, Resource Manager, Youthreach The Brace Centre, Blanchardstown

Students of Blanchardstown Youthreach entered the 2016 national “Junk Kouture” contest along with many other young designers from Youthreach centres and second level schools around Ireland and Northern Ireland. The contest is supported by Bank of Ireland and encourages young people to be imaginative in designing and creating couture clothing using everyday junk that is thrown away. The group entered two designs for the competition “The Gladiator” and “Warrior Queen” and we are delighted to announce that The

Gladiator themed outfit was selected for the eastern regional final in the Helix in March. Art teacher Caroline Murray said “every student in the centre participated in the project by collecting everything that could be recycled from crisp packets to egg cartons. The project has made students more aware of the importance of recycling and how junk can be transformed into wearable outfits. The project was so enjoyable and allowed student to develop their creativity, art and teamwork skills. Participating in the Junk Kouture contest is a fantastic and inventive process

that encouraged our students to look at environmental issues and is definitely a process we will do again”.

Shauna Power was entered for the Royal Hibernian Academy/Avolon Youthreach Programme by her art teacher Elaine Hurley. Shauna was among six students selected from Youthreach centers nationwide to participate in workshops that will provide them with the opportunity to develop art skills, visit galleries and art colleges and become immersed in the world of the arts. We will keep you updated on her progress.



Elisha O'Connor “Warrior Queen” and makeup artist for the photoshoot



Peter and Elisha



Peter Walsh winning outfit



Shauna Power



QQI Level 5 Youth Studies Group Back  
l-r: Peter Walsh (modelled for “The Gladiator” outfit) Robyn Byrne, Kelly Smith, Megan O'Reilly and art teacher Caroline Murray. Front l-r: Darragh O'Connor, Dylan O'Doherty and Niall Kelly



**etb**  
Boord Oideachais agus Oiliúna  
Ardra Clóth agus Uifrín Laochraire  
Dublin and Dún Laoghaire  
Education and Training Board

# Youthreach Trim makes all the 'Diff' at Spraoi Mor

By Edel Galvin, Resource Officer, Youthreach Trim

**T**he annual Spraoi Mor was staged for the sixth year running in the 'Solstice' in Navan last March.

This is an annual talent showcase which is organised and funded by the Louth & Meath Education and Training Board and exhibits the best of talent and spirit in performances from Youthreach centres across the region. The show is a unique feature of the ETB and involves Youthreach staff and students joining forces in the planning, direction and production of outstanding performances in the spirit of good fun and friendship, as demonstrated in the acts this year. The venue, coordination and production of the show was exceptional and characterised by professionalism and collaboration. Trim Youthreach were certainly not shy this year, with superb performances from their two acts 'Hit the Diff' and 'Wagon Wheel'. The Wagon Wheel act starred Michaela Mulvaney on lead vocals and was accompanied by a team of line dancers and backing singers including Stacey Lee, Craig Gaynor and Youthreach staff members stepping it out on stage as well. Assistance backstage was provided by Nathan Murphy and Sarah Alexander on hair and make-up.

Marty Mones' original 'Hit the Diff' was performed by Craig Gaynor who gave a stellar performance while negotiating a 'John Deere' around the stage. Craig was joined on 'backing tractors' by Michaela and Stacey in convincing attire. This performance raised the roof and generated huge audience participation which was greatly appreciated on the day.

The show was very enjoyable and hugely successful overall. Trim Youthreach were delighted and proud to participate, and as Coordinator Mary Hibbits noted, 'Spraoi gives both the students and staff the opportunity to work together in

*friendship and the chance to showcase their talents in a high quality production, which is testament to their spirit and commitment. Very well done to all involved and we are already looking forward to next year".*



Youthreach Trim





# 104 GTI STUDENTS ON EUROPEAN WORK PLACEMENTS – CHANGING LIVES, OPENING MINDS

Galway Technical Institute is the largest provider of ERASMUS+ placements in Ireland and the first group of students to participate in 2016 is The Fashion Department. Six students travelled to Tenerife to work on Carnival costumes for 3 weeks in January 2016. The Tenerife Carnival is the 2nd biggest carnival in the world after Rio so the students were thrilled at the opportunity being afforded them to be part of a world class event. Elaine Mears commented 'This was a dream opportunity and I expanded my knowledge of costume design.' Emma O Sullivan added 'Fashion is my true passion so I was over the moon to be chosen to participate.' Katie Coughlan also commented on the amazing opportunity 'I applied for Erasmus+ as I saw it as a great opportunity to gain knowledge and experience in such an exciting work environment. I really liked seeing how the extreme and extravagant costumes were created.' Funding for this initiative is made available from The European Commission via the Irish National Agency Léargas.

Each year 2 out of every 25 students at GTI get the opportunity to avail of a fully funded work placement. Students travel to many countries including Finland, England, France, Portugal, Spain, Scotland and Turkey. Each work placement is for between 2 and 4 weeks. This is a truly unique opportunity for students to gain valuable real-life work environment experience in their career area. For the past number of years, GTI students have been involved in the most incredible work situations and bring back tales of exciting projects that they have been working on. The GTI Media

students have worked on CNN TV Turkey as part of their work placement in Istanbul. Art students have had the opportunity to build installations in Contemporary Art Museums in Finland. Sports students pitch up in Glasgow each year and have met and been mentored by some of Scotland's premier footballers while on their work experience.

Through ERASMUS+ students get the chance to experience new cultures and diverse lifestyles, learn the basics of a new language and make strong professional and social connections.

Many students have used these connections to go back and work long term in the country they previously visited through ERASMUS+.

For more information on ERASMUS+ please contact [john.mcloughlin@gretb.ie](mailto:john.mcloughlin@gretb.ie)

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Phone: 091 581342  
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Tenerife Carnival 2016. Pictured is the winning costumes by Daniel Pages. Also pictured is Darren Sheil, GTI Fashion Student.



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# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

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**20TH - 22ND OCTOBER 2016**

**IN**

**THE MOUNT WOLSELEY  
HOTEL, SPA AND GOLF RESORT  
TULLOW, CO. CARLOW**

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**TEACHERS LEADING SYSTEMIC CHANGE:**

“  
*COLLABORATIVELY DEVELOPING  
POWERFUL TEACHING AND LEARNING  
ENVIRONMENTS TO MAXIMISE LEARNING FOR ALL*  
”

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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION  
CONTACT PAULA AT (045) 901 070**



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[www.instructionalleadership.ie](http://www.instructionalleadership.ie)

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