

# etbi

AUTUMN  
2016

Education and Training Boards Ireland

**Fetchcourses.ie**  
is Launched

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**Fitness to Teach**  
Regulations Come into Effect

ETBI Contributes to European  
Commission Roundtable on

**Digital Skills**

Facilitating **Migrant Integration**  
into the Education and Socio-  
economic Environment

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**etbi**

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

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# Editorial

The culture of change and innovation which was a defining characteristic of the VEC sector continues to permeate the entirety of the ETB sector, including the (former FÁS) training centres. ETB staff, whether teaching in schools, tutoring in centres or working in head office administration, have been at the forefront of leading and responding to change.

The ETB sector was recently reformed and restructured more than any other part of the public sector. The sector has also transformed much of what it delivers over the past two decades, examples of which include PLC courses, night classes, and adult education programmes. More recently ETBs have been involved in the development of community national schools, the recent extension of apprenticeship programmes, and the establishment of a rapid response to the needs of migrants and refugees. Notable too is the fact that all ETB schools are now implementing the new Junior Cycle programme.

Perhaps it is this capacity to adapt to on-going change which distinguishes and enhances our sector most from the other education sectors. The present industrial unrest across the education sector and the different responses by teacher unions seem to reflect different cultures in different sectors.

The ETB sector's capacity for fostering and leading change is demonstrated by ETBI's recent International Instructional Leadership Conference. The Instructional Leadership (IL) programme is high quality continuous professional development programme developed by ETBI for the teaching community, to support radical systemic change focused on how

students learn. Unique in an Irish education setting, this programme sees teachers, teacher unions, management bodies, and academics, all collaborating in a great movement towards systemic change, leading to the enrichment of learning by both teachers and students. Unique, also, is the fact that the programme welcomes participants from all the other education sectors.

The theme of the inaugural International IL Conference in October was *Teachers Leading Systemic Change: collaboratively developing powerful teaching and learning environments in our classrooms to maximise learning for all*. Prominent international speakers from Canada, Germany, England, Australia and Ireland addressed the enthusiastic and enthralled attendees on such topics as the idea of instructional intelligence, building a systemic culture that facilitates teacher learning and leadership, the voice of student, teacher, and management in the classroom, identifying barriers to learning and skills, and tactics and strategies to enhance teaching and learning, among others.

While this enthusiastic change culture has been nurtured and led by the best international experts, it is no surprise that the Instructional Leadership programme is embedded in, and has been steadily expanded from, the ETB sector. This change programme is not driven by the Department of Education and Skills or other government agencies; it has been developed in response to a desire in response to a desire by teachers to lead systemic change. The attendees at the conference want to drive change in their schools and classrooms.

Two other highlights on the ETBI calendar also confirm sectoral support for change and innovation. The ETBI Annual Conference in September was regarded by all who attended as innovative and challenging, and one of the best conferences in recent years. Following the Annual Conference, the first module of ETBI's new CPD programme for teachers on entrepreneurial education, Edison, was delivered. The programme provides strategies and training aimed at helping schools, colleges and centres to build an entrepreneurial culture by embedding core entrepreneurship competencies in the classroom. This programme will also be open to participants from the other education sectors.

The ETB sector embraces change as a way of life; clearly, it also leads change. This is due in no small way to the exceptional people who work in the sector, and who promote excellence in the support and delivery of educational and training programmes, at all levels, across the entire community.

As General Secretary of ETBI, I feel extremely honoured to be part of a sector which is inspiring the development of "powerful teaching and learning environments" through programmes such as Instructional Leadership and Edison.

These and other developments indicate that the ETB sector is well on the way to becoming a world class FET sector as envisioned by former Minister Quinn, and becoming one of the chief drivers of "the best education and training service in Europe by 2026", as envisaged by Minister Bruton.

**Michael Moriarty, General Secretary**



# Collaboration, consultation and commitment in action – **fetchcourses.ie** is launched

By Nikki Gallagher, SOLAS Communications Unit

**T**he close working relationship between SOLAS and the ETBs has once again proven invaluable with the recent launch of **fetchcourses.ie**. Bringing all up-to-date information on FET courses together for the first time, **fetchcourses.ie**, a joint initiative between SOLAS and the Education and Training Boards, is a new Further Education & Training Course Hub that allows learners to access information about further education and training opportunities such as Post-Leaving Cert courses, the latest traineeships, back to education initiatives and many more, all delivered by a network of further education and training providers across 26 counties, and online through SOLAS eCollege.

The development of **fetchcourses.ie** and its subsequent launch is the result of the enormous contribution of dedicated technical and project teams across SOLAS, ETBs and other Government and State bodies including the Department of Social Protection, the National Centre for Guidance in Education and Department of Education and Skills, and is a prime example of what can be achieved through close collaboration and consultation.

**Fetchcourses.ie** is one element of the Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS), an information technology system aimed at building an information technology system that provides an integrated approach

to collection of key data on further education and training programme outputs, outcomes and performance. The PLSS project involves a wide range of Government and State bodies working together to enable a better and shared understanding of the complex issues that need to be addressed through PLSS and their solutions. A steering group, jointly chaired by SOLAS and ETBI, includes representatives from ETBI, SOLAS, the Department of Social Protection, AONTAS, QQI, the Department of Education and Skills, the Higher Education Authority and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The other elements of the PLSS are the National Programme Database and the National Course Calendar. The National Programme Database

is a repository of all programmes designed to be run by the FET providers, funded through SOLAS. Containing a full inventory of available further education and training programmes, the NPD will provide a full picture of the range of provision available and will support the scheduling of FET courses within a calendar year. The National Course Calendar contains a published inventory of Further Education and Training courses, including details of where and when they are being run.

The PLSS provides, for the first time, a centralised platform for the collection and exposure of data on FET courses, learners and outcome, thus enabling evidence-based planning and co-ordination and funding of FET, and will benefit all involved in the sector.



Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton TD and Paul O'Toole, CEO, SOLAS with students from Sallynoggin College of Further Education, at the recent launch of **fetchcourses.ie**

# Fitness to Teach - a significant development for teaching in Ireland

By Finola O'Dwyer, Solicitor and Professional Standards Officer with the Teaching Council



**J**uly 25th 2016 was a significant day for Irish teachers and the wider public, when Minister Richard Bruton formally commenced Part 5 of the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015.

In doing so, he confirmed that the Teaching Council can now investigate complaints relating to registered teachers. As Director of the Council Tomás Ó Ruairc wrote in an Irish Independent Opinion piece, it marked yet another important "milestone on the journey of enhanced teaching and learning that the profession is leading through the Teaching Council".

It is a further step in the significant body of work undertaken by the Council since its establishment in 2006, including providing for a fully qualified registered profession, the development of a Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers, the review and accreditation of all programmes of initial teacher education and the development of national processes for the induction and continuing professional development of teachers. Throughout that period, the Council has also facilitated the Garda Vetting of all new teachers entering our classrooms. As I write, planning is at an advanced stage to begin the vetting of all remaining un-vetted teachers.

The commencement of the Council's fitness to teach remit also brings Ireland into line with other professions within the State including doctors, solicitors, accountants and nurses and with teacher professional standards bodies in the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, among others. It acknowledges the fact that while the vast majority of teachers do a very good job, day in day out, there will be a small number of times when teachers will encounter professional difficulties.

It is important to note that while the Council is obliged under the Teaching Council legislation to consider complaints received, ultimately only the more serious cases will be referred onwards to a formal public inquiry. The relevant legislation envisages schools / employers continuing to deal with issues as they arise at local level, where the greatest prospect of early resolution lies. Therefore, schools will continue to operate procedures under section 24 of the Education Act 1998 and local complaints or grievance procedures and will continue to comply with existing child protection and reporting obligations. It is expected that the Minister for Education and Skills will, in due course, give effect to regulations setting out specific obligations on employers to notify the Council where teachers are

dismissed or resign. However, it is important to note that employers already have a duty of care to their students and the public and should be aware that an employer, as well as considering complaints submitted to them, can themselves make a complaint to the Teaching Council in relation to a registered teacher, where they deem it appropriate.

## PRE 25 JULY 2016 COMPLAINTS

The Council will investigate complaints about registered teachers including Principals. The effective date of the Council's remit is with effect from 25 July 2016. It has limited scope to investigate matters prior to this date and this is restricted to cases where, to quote from the legislation, "the conduct of the teacher concerned would have constituted a criminal offence and where the conduct is of a nature as to reasonably give rise to a real concern that the teacher may harm or contribute to harm or potential harm, to any child or vulnerable person."

## MAKING A COMPLAINT

Any person, including a school/ employer and other teachers, can make a complaint on a number of grounds, including professional misconduct, poor professional performance, engaging in conduct contrary to the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers, being

medically unfit to teach, and court convictions for certain offences. While it is anticipated the majority of complaints will relate to conduct within schools, complaints can relate to conduct outside the school or outside Ireland, on grounds such as convictions for certain offences and where the conduct is of such a serious nature as to bring the profession into disrepute. Under the legislation, the Director has initial responsibility for ensuring that complaints are in writing, signed, relate to a registered teacher, and are not of a frivolous or vexatious nature. If a complaint meets these criteria, it is forwarded to the Council's Investigating Committee.

#### THE INVESTIGATING STAGE

If the Investigating Committee is satisfied that the complaint relates to a fitness to teach matter, it will then establish if any disciplinary or grievance procedures are or have been undertaken at school/ employer level. The Committee will normally refuse a complaint where a section 24 procedure is on-going, unless it feels that there is good and sufficient reason to proceed with its own investigation. If a school/employer-based complaints or grievance procedure is on-going, the Committee will decide as to what course of action it wishes to take. Similarly, if a Garda or Child and Family Agency investigation is on-going, the Committee will decide the most appropriate course of action.

Where the Investigating Committee proceeds to investigate a complaint, it will seek and consider submissions from the registered teacher and the complainant. The Investigating Committee may also seek submissions and reports from school/ employers and relevant experts such as medical professionals, where appropriate.

If the Investigating Committee concludes that there is a *prima facie* case which has a realistic prospect of a finding against a teacher, it will forward the complaint to the Disciplinary Committee providing reasons for its decision. If the Investigating Committee concludes that a *prima facie* case does not exist, it will refuse (dismiss) the complaint against the teacher, providing reasons for its decision. The committee will notify the complainant, the teacher and the teacher's employer of its decision.

#### THE DISCIPLINARY STAGE

Where a complaint is forwarded to the Disciplinary Committee, it will establish a formal inquiry and will appoint a Panel of three to five members, all of whom are members of the Teaching Council and a majority of whom must be registered teachers. Inquiries are similar to a hearing before a court or tribunal, where witnesses give

evidence under oath. Proceedings take place in public unless the teacher or a witness applies to have all or part of the hearing take place in private and the Panel deems this appropriate in the circumstances. This might happen in cases where personal or health-related matters are to be discussed, or where minors are required to give evidence. If a hearing is held in public, the panel may keep a teacher's identity, or the identity of the other people involved, confidential.

The Panel, which has the powers of the High Court to compel the production of documents or attendance of witnesses, will hear submissions on behalf of the Director of the Teaching Council and on behalf of the registered teacher. The complainant and other witnesses may be called to give evidence. A representative of the school or schools where the registered teacher is or was employed may be called to



"The Teaching Council believes complaints about registered teachers (including Principal teachers) should normally be addressed at local level in the first instance."

give evidence. Registered teachers can be represented or accompanied at the inquiry. The Panel will be advised by an independent legal assessor (usually a Senior Counsel) to ensure fair procedures are observed and to advise on points of law. In certain circumstances, where the facts of the matter are not contested, an inquiry may take place by examination of documents. In such cases, a formal public hearing will not take place. The Panel conducting such an inquiry must be satisfied that it is appropriate for the matter to proceed by way of examination of documents with no oral evidence heard.

At the conclusion of an Inquiry, the Panel must decide if the matters complained of have been proven 'beyond a reasonable doubt' and if they should impose sanctions. Sanctions can range from advising / admonishing /censuring the teacher concerned or placing conditions on the teacher's registration. The latter might arise in cases where the teacher is required to undergo a professional development course or seek the assistance of a health or support service. In more serious cases, a teacher may be suspended from the Register of Teachers for a period of up to two years, or removed from the Register entirely and not permitted to apply to be restored for a set period. In both of these circumstances, the teacher concerned would not be able to

teach in a position funded by the Department of Education and Skills as they are no longer on the register of teachers. Given the level of seriousness attached to applying conditions to a teacher's registration or suspending or removing them from the Register, these more serious sanctions must be approved by the High Court. The teacher concerned can also appeal the imposition of these sanctions to the High Court.

### EMERGENCY SUSPENSIONS FROM THE REGISTER

From time to time, in exceptional situations, the Council may consider it necessary to apply to the High Court for an immediate suspension of a registered teacher's registration with the Teaching Council, where it is considered to be in the public interest. This is allowed for under section 47 of the Teaching Council Act and allows the High Court to approve the immediate suspension of a teacher from the register, while the Council conducts an investigation. In such cases, the High Court will direct if the teacher concerned should continue to be in receipt of salary.

### THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS / EMPLOYERS IN THE FITNESS TO TEACH PROCESS

The Teaching Council believes complaints about registered teachers (including Principal teachers) should normally be addressed at local level in the first instance, availing of the established Section 24 procedures and agreed school-based grievance and complaints procedures.

It is expected that the Minister for Education and Skills will give effect to regulations setting out specific obligations on employers to notify the Council where teachers are dismissed or resign. However, as

outlined elsewhere in this article, employers already have a duty of care to their students and the public and, as well as dealing with complaints submitted to them, they can themselves make a complaint to the Teaching Council, where they deem it appropriate.

An employer can also make what is known as a discretionary referral, if they have concerns about a teacher's suitability to teach. They can make a referral at any time, even if the teacher remains in employment, but the general principle continues to apply whereby the Teaching Council cannot generally look into a complaint unless the school's disciplinary procedures (established under Section 24 of the Education Act, 1998) have been exhausted. The exception to this is where there are good and sufficient reasons, which may include where children or vulnerable persons are, or may be, at risk of harm.

In conclusion, it is envisaged that the recently commenced fitness to teach provisions will, in the words of the Minister for Education and Skills, "help make the teaching profession more open and more accountable..... will support high professional standards amongst teachers in the interests of children and parents, and will enhance the reputation and status of the teaching profession".

Further information about the Council's Fitness to Teach process can be found at the Teaching Council website<sup>1</sup> where dedicated information booklets for employers<sup>2</sup>, teachers, the public and witnesses at an inquiry can be found. Email queries can be forwarded to [professionalstandards@teachingcouncil.ie](mailto:professionalstandards@teachingcouncil.ie).

1 [www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Fitness-to-Teach/Complaints-about-Registered-Teachers/Making-a-Complaint/](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Fitness-to-Teach/Complaints-about-Registered-Teachers/Making-a-Complaint/)

2 [www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Fitness-to-Teach/Information-for-Employers.pdf](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Fitness-to-Teach/Information-for-Employers.pdf)



# Can we avert a future skills gap disaster in the building trades?

By Eoghan Ó Murchadha, teacher of apprenticeship in Dún Laoghaire Further Education Institute – DFEI (DDLETB). Eoghan is currently researching for a PhD in the field of apprenticeship education.

***Building trades apprenticeships in Ireland were so decimated by the recent economic downturn that official figures SOLAS figures reveal that by 2010 there were more redundant apprentices than there were apprentices in training. Although currently experiencing recovery, building trade apprenticeship training needs investment and remodelling in order to succeed. The experience of other countries, such as the UK, which have under-invested in apprenticeship shows that a skills gap is present more than a generation later, adversely affecting not only apprenticeships but the entire performance of the construction industry.***

## BOOM TO BUST

The arrival of the economic recession in 2008, which impacted upon the Irish construction industry, then at an all-time peak, was followed by six consecutive years of contraction for the sector. This unprecedented collapse in terms of output was accompanied by a similarly severe reduction in employment in the sector, as an ever-increasing number of contractors, large and small, became insolvent in what seemed to be a never-ending war of attrition.

A consequence of this decline in construction employment was the under-reported matter of building trades apprentice redundancy. Until this point, this issue had not been significant due to the over-inflation of the construction sector and the associated plentiful employment which accompanied it. However, the

Irish apprenticeship model, whilst upheld internationally as a model of excellence in times of economic prosperity, was, in recession, exposed as over-reliant upon employer engagement in order to thrive. The result therefore, was nothing short of a devastating implosion of the building trades apprenticeship system during the economic downturn.

## AN EMPLOYMENT CATASTROPHE

Between 2007 and 2014, direct employment in the construction sector declined by approximately 60 per cent. Although this statistic is stark in its own right, it is overshadowed by a reduction of over 70 per cent in the building trades apprentice population for the same period. Moreover, the effect upon apprenticeships was twofold; firstly, it impacted upon registrations of new apprentices, and secondly, it impacted upon the employment status of existing apprentices.

Using the 2007 peak as a base, a year-on-year reduction of new building trades apprentice registrations totalled 71 per cent by 2013. Even this statistic belies the true catastrophe of the situation, as at its lowest level in 2010, new registrations had dipped to just 18% of the 2007 figures. Even more significantly, the decline in the construction trades alone had reached 88 per cent by 2013. At its worst in 2012, new registrations were just seven per cent of the 2007 base – only 222 apprentices nationally.

A yet more drastic indicator of the negative effect of the contraction in employment can be seen from the increase in the number of redundant apprentices. In just three years, the number of unemployed building trades apprentices swelled to more than 20 times the 2007 figure. So alarming was this increase that in 2010 there were more redundant apprentices in Ireland than there were apprentices in employment.

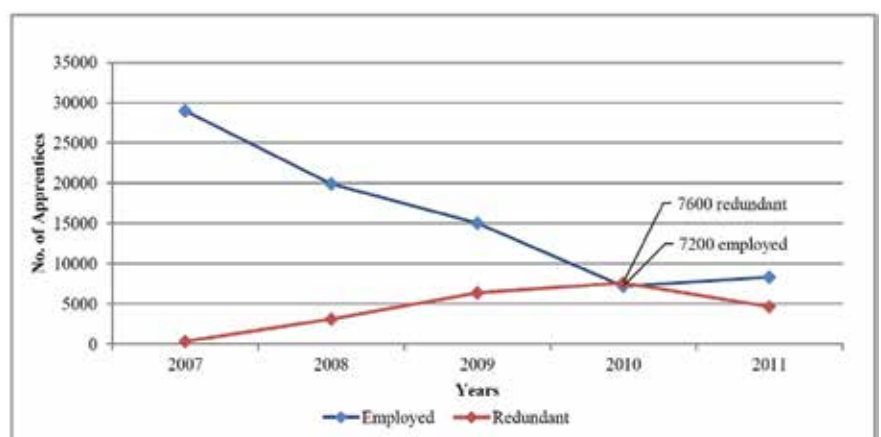


Figure 1: Employed v. redundant apprentices nationally. (Data: SOLAS, 2015)



## IMPACTING CAREER ADVANCEMENT

The implications of the above statistics may not at first be obvious. Again, the consequences are twofold; firstly, to the progression and promotion of individuals within a hierarchical employment structure, and secondly, to the future skills requirements of the construction industry.

Apprenticeships play a vital role within the employment structure of the construction sector. As a method of learning, apprenticeships provide individuals with the skills necessary to become tradesmen. Historically, the trend is that it is these tradesmen who then progress to further positions of management within the occupational framework. Whilst perhaps not immediately apparent, it is former tradesmen who generally occupy the role of foreman and site agent. As construction managers, they represent the only members of the project team who have progressed through a more vocational route to management than the more typical tertiary educational qualifications of other project team members, such as the architect, quantity surveyor or engineer.

It is precisely this background which makes the construction manager a key link in the chain. It is the hands-on experience of construction, which begins at apprenticeship, which confers the construction manager with the practical knowledge of building and the capability to convey instructions in a meaningful manner to the project workforce and subcontractors. This under-appreciated and generally unrecognised competence is key to turning plans into buildings.

However, as can be seen from the vocational journey through which these skills develop, if the industry has no apprentices, it will soon have no practically-skilled construction managers.

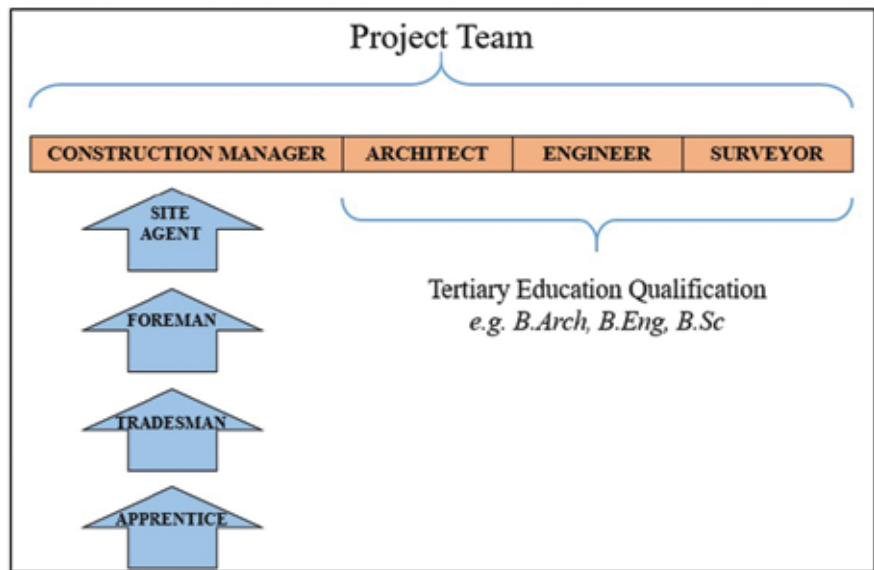


Figure 2: Vocational Route v. Tertiary Route to Project Team

Consequently, the short-term problem of a lack of learners now, will result in a long-term problem of a lack of learned managers in the future. In other words, the impending skills drain means that the industry faces into a future of uncertainty, due to the potential for a skills shortage and a knowledge gap in the prospective construction workforce.

## THE BIGGER PICTURE

The effects of this issue are not limited to the construction industry. While it does not often receive the credit it deserves, construction is of strategic importance to any economy as it delivers the building and infrastructural needs of the rest of society. Therefore, without the appropriately skilled and qualified workforce required to help build growth in the economy, Ireland will face an inability to meet the future skills needs of the sector and the economy generally.

For a country such as Ireland, which relies so heavily upon foreign direct investment, such an inability could be ruinous. It does not take academic prowess to realise that foreign investment depends upon our society being able to deliver the

projects the investors require, when they require them. If we can't deliver the buildings and developments which they want, then these vital investments will simply go elsewhere.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

As reported in the most recent construction reviews, the construction industry is now in a phase of tentative recovery. The rise in construction employment of late is obviously attributable to the rise in construction output. Accordingly, the number of redundant building trades apprentices has reduced and the number of new registrations has increased. This is not, however, attributable to any strategic decision or action by government, but rather to the determined efforts of SOLAS to reduce the number of redundant apprentices.

As the industry is enjoying increased output and estimates point to the return of a buoyant construction economy, it is feasible to assume that the government has decided that the building trades apprentice situation in construction is no longer an imperative.

In 2013, the government announced

a long-overdue review of the apprenticeship system in Ireland. The culmination of this was a recommendation for the expansion of apprenticeships as a paradigm of education into other areas of industry and commerce. However, though the curriculum for apprenticeships in the construction trades was prioritised for revision, no action has been taken to ensure that future downturns in construction will not result in skill shortages down the road.

Perhaps it has been lost on the policy makers that the economy is cyclical. The industry is simply on the upturn of the cycle currently, and enjoying a cautious recovery. It is only a matter of time, however, before there is a return to negative growth. As such, it is imperative that decisions are made now to address the natural problem of regression associated with pro-cyclical economic declines.

### LEARNING FROM OTHERS' MISTAKES

Ireland does not need to look far to see the effect of under-investment in apprenticeship. In the 1980s, following a lack of investment and a consequential deregulation, building trades apprenticeship in the UK suffered a serious decline. Today, almost two generations later, British apprenticeships have still not recovered and the government there is investing millions in order to readapt, re-regulate and retrain in apprenticeships. A recent survey of contractors in the UK by the Chartered Institute of Building found that 82% of respondents believe there is a serious skills shortage in the UK construction industry.

We can avoid a similar situation here in Ireland by learning from

"What Ireland needs is a building trades apprenticeship model capable of resisting the economic uncertainties of the cyclical construction economy. It is better to be pro-active, and to address this issue now rather than ignore it, as was the case during the recent economic downturn."

the earlier mistakes of the UK construction industry. However, the fact that the issue has not yet been addressed by the government here means that the beginnings of skills shortages are already starting to arise. DKM Economic Consultants in a recent report<sup>1</sup> on the industry for The Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland have already pointed to the availability of skills as *"a significant challenge"* facing recovery. Nor is the issue lost on the national training authority SOLAS, who themselves have noted that *"the availability of qualified tradespersons may become an issue as the recovery...continues"*.

The impact upon the construction industry of a skills gap is extremely serious from all perspectives. Value for money within the industry is built upon three core pillars: time,

cost and quality. When sufficient skills are present, projects are completed on time, on cost and to the required quality (i.e. time and cost are low and quality is high). However, when a skills gap exists, all three pillars are inverted; deadlines are missed, costs increase and quality declines (i.e. time and cost are high and quality is low). This is not an acceptable situation for either client or contractor.

### TIME FOR CHANGE

What Ireland needs is a building trades apprenticeship model capable of resisting the economic uncertainties of the cyclical construction economy. It is better to be pro-active, and to address this issue now rather than ignore it, as was the case during the recent economic downturn.

As the government seems to be currently more focussed on the expanding of apprenticeships, rather than addressing the needs of the existing ones, stakeholders in the construction trades should not wait for the government or its agencies to be pro-active. Rather, they should themselves act to devise a robust, modern and attractive apprenticeship model, capable of being cognisant of the skills and curricular needs of industry and therefore capable of meeting the industry's future requirements. By doing so, the construction industry would act in the best interests of society and education, and would help avoid a future skills gap.

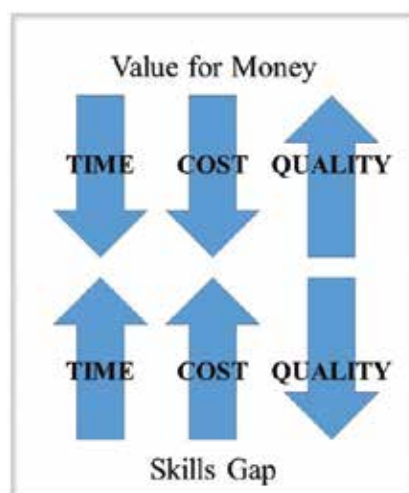


Figure 3: Inverse correlation of Value for Money (sufficient skills) to Skills Gap (skills shortage)

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.scsi.ie/documents/get\\_job?id=538&field=file](https://www.scsi.ie/documents/get_job?id=538&field=file)



# ETBI contributes to European Commission Roundtable on Digital Skills

Original data and observations prepared by Rory O'Toole, Education Officer, KWETB; with additional contribution by Daniel Wisniewski, EFEE General Secretary;

Report of Roundtable meeting by Daniel Wisniewski

**E**TBI General Secretary Michael Moriarty, in his role as President of the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE), recently participated in a Roundtable organised by the European Commission in Brussels to coincide with the launch of extensive public consultations on Digital Skills. Representatives of all sectors across Europe were invited to share their main concerns related to the digitalisation of the economy and society. The roundtable was chaired by Commissioner Oettinger, who is responsible for the Digital Economy and Society portfolio in the present Juncker Commission.

All representatives of different economic and social sectors at the Roundtable agreed that digitalisation is transforming all spheres of our everyday life. The growing importance of internet-based technologies affects the way people think and communicate. Therefore, all business sectors need to address these changes, in order to respond to the requirements of consumers.

Simultaneously, participants underlined the importance of the education sector as the main driver for digitalisation, calling for the introduction of appropriate subjects, like programming and computing,

from the lowest education levels possible. Participants also called for the promotion of greater linkages between business and education sectors, in order to assure qualified workforce for the labour market.

Mr Moriarty stressed that, to address constantly changing demands of economy, education systems need to become more flexible. Digitalisation is forcing us to change the curricula that are taught, our methods of teachings or management of schools, in order to prepare the learners for the future, which is unknown.

The meeting was concluded by Commissioner Oettinger who assured the participants that the European Commission their inputs would be valuable in the on-going discussion concerning the strategy for digitalisation.

***What follows is EFEE's input to the EU Roundtable meeting, delivered by Michael Moriarty.***

## INTRODUCTION

When considering challenges associated with the development of digital literacy and digital skills, the UK Digital Skills Taskforce's three-band definition is a useful reference point: Digital Citizens, Digital Workers, and Digital Makers.

- **Digital Citizens:** Have the ability to use ICT efficiently and effectively to communicate, conduct transactions, and find and evaluate online information. This is increasingly a benchmark for the fulfilling of most contemporary work roles across all sectors.
- **Digital Workers:** Building on the skills of the Digital Citizen, the Digital Worker has the ability to configure and customise complex digital systems. This skill level frequently requires scripting and basic coding competencies.
- **Digital Makers:** Have the ability to design and create digital technology, often requiring high-level coding skills. There may be significant overlap with the category of Digital Worker and encompass 3D printing technologies, 'Internet of Things' development, cyber-risk management, wearable technology, medical monitoring technology, and big data/cloud solutions.



ETBI's Michael Moriarty, who is President of the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE), with EU Commissioner Günther Oettinger at the recent Roundtable on Digital Skills

## CONVERGING TRENDS IN THE DIGITAL SECTOR

A number of converging trends characterise the digital landscape at present. These will continue to influence education, training, and employment at key points on the talent-development spectrum. As European schools and colleges operate at different levels - primary education, secondary education, vocational education, and training - it is imperative that these trends are reflected in policy development and provision. Some of the key trends highlighted are:

- **The Development of the "Internet of Things":** As broadband internet connectivity becomes increasingly available, and as the cost of this connectivity reduces, the range of items with the ability to connect to the internet wirelessly is extensive.
- **Cloud Computing:** The development of big data/cloud computing technologies has already had a significant impact on the nature of ICT infrastructure. This is evident in large enterprises, SMEs and governments. The most immediate impact is on the requirement for extensive ICT infrastructures to be developed and maintained by individual organisations.
- **Robotics and Artificial-Intelligence:** The impact of robotics on large-scale manufacturing is already well documented. However, as the sophistication of robotics and AI increases, the availability of these technologies will spread. This will impact on SMEs, but will also have an impact on areas such as transportation, agriculture, health care, and supply chain management.



- **3D Printing:** Linked to the emergence of enhanced robotics, the decreasing costs of 3D printing technologies will impact significantly on product design, manufacture, and delivery.

While the convergence of these trends will continue to alter traditional work roles, it also represents a tremendous opportunity for new employment opportunities. However, the speed at which these technologies emerge vastly outpaces the capacity of current education and training models to respond. In general, we still have low levels of engagement by student in STEM subjects. This is particularly so for female learners. An associated impediment is the tendency in some countries to associate the development of digital skills as the preserve of the tertiary education sector.

### QUESTION 1 – WHAT ARE THE KEY CHALLENGES IN TERMS OF DIGITAL SKILLS SHORTAGES THAT YOUR SECTOR NEEDS TO ADDRESS?

#### Shortages in digital skills and computational thinking

One of the key challenges in term of digital skills shortages is the need for digital literacy for all citizens. Digital skills training should be a feature of education from primary education onwards. Digital literacy consists of basic ICT skills, media literacy (and critical thinking), information skills and computational thinking. While computational thinking is an essential 21<sup>st</sup> **century skill and instrumental for tackling the digital skills shortage, it still**

**is not dealt with adequately in the education system of most countries. An important part of the Skills Agenda** is the planned update of European key competences. Adding Computational thinking to the updated key competences is a recommendation we would like to make.

#### Where we see the digital skill shortages

Education and training requires funding streams to facilitate (i) the integration of these systems into their organisations, (ii) the development of in-house support models to maintain and enhance these systems, and where appropriate, access to shared-services models employing third-party service providers to reduce costs, and (iii) access to flexible training programmes for leaders, managers, trainers and operatives to support the on-going development of digital skills, which is necessary to continue economic growth, to enhance existing industries and services, and to develop new market opportunities.

- An emerging area requiring the development of digital skills is that of **e-leadership**. E-Leadership skills are required within all organisations – public and private – to lead the use of ICT in pursuit of the organisation's objectives. While digital leadership skills will be required with respect to emerging technological trends, increasingly organisation leaders are responsible for teams or individuals that may only meet

face-to-face rarely. A new skill-set of managing and leading 'virtual' teams is required.

- An additional deficit in digital skills development – and for the STEM area in general – is the comparatively **low proportion of female leaders and operatives**.<sup>1</sup>
- **On-line security:** Digital skills education should also take into account such aspects as (social) security and the impact of online actions<sup>2</sup>. Such courses empower people with necessary knowledge regarding basic tips
- **Impact of Digital media on schools:** Digital media have nowadays a big impact on school climate through apps and other tools to quickly share information (this can be used positively and negatively).
- **Digital skills of teachers:** The increasing importance of ICT in education creates a need for further support for teachers willing to use these tools in their daily work. Although most teachers use basic software at schools, including web browsers, office software etc., the use of ICT for higher order learning strategies to develop critical thinking or creativity is still not common. Due to this reason, teachers should be empowered with necessary skills to employ a wide range of different applications that may enhance the learning process and learning outcomes.

1 See [www.information-age.com/it-management/skills-training-and-leadership/123458743/why-key-solving-europes-digital-skills-shortage-attracting-more-girls](http://www.information-age.com/it-management/skills-training-and-leadership/123458743/why-key-solving-europes-digital-skills-shortage-attracting-more-girls)

2 See also Council Conclusions on media literacy <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/05/30-31-eycs-conclusions-developing-media-literacy/>



## QUESTION 2 - WHAT ARE THE KEY FACTORS THAT NEED TO BE PUT IN PLACE TO ADDRESS THEM?

As noted, European employers are uniquely placed on the digital skills development spectrum to influence both **policy and provision to allow for the development of digital skills**. Across the EU, the need to **integrate digital skills development into all levels of education** is necessary. While there are welcome moves to provide greater opportunities for the development of programmes on coding for primary and post-primary students, other avenues should be explored. The use of, for example, online workspaces – where teachers and students work collaboratively – reflects many contemporary work scenarios as well as higher education models. While sometimes neglected in the pursuit of ‘hard’ digital skills, education and training programmes also have a unique opportunity to address the responsible and ethical use of technology. This is increasingly important given the expansion in the use of social

media by large, medium, and small enterprises.

Exploiting existing professional networks can provide **professional development opportunities for career guidance** and CPD workshops to emphasise opportunities for digital workers and promoting suitable programmes.

In a similar vein, professional networks should be exploited to **provide in-house training programmes for teachers and trainers** to bridge the current skills gap.

National educational and qualification authorities could be encouraged to **develop and implement ‘graduate conversion programmes’** through which university graduates of disciplines other than ICT could be offered the opportunity to become ICT specialists in niche technologies in demand.

**Universities could be encouraged to align their curricula with the real needs of the ICT industry** both at national and European level. In addition, to further develop and enhance their links to the local ICT industry and companies through the establishment of ‘industrial training and internship’ programmes in which university students participate to gain practical experience within companies and come close to the technologies used in the industry.

Universities should not be considered as the only contributors to the bridging of digital skills gaps. The secondary level education system can also play a significant role, both in the mid-term and long-term. Thus, it is recommended that the **establishment of specialised ICT & Technology schools could be explored**, in order to offer the opportunity for students to pursue such education and training that will lead to the acquisition of digital skills and competences required by the industry. The curricula of these specialised schools should be adequately designed to align and converge with the rapidly changing needs of the industry. Graduates from such schools should be capable and sufficiently skilled to immediately join the ICT workforce thus contributing to meeting the current digital skills shortages at European level.

The challenge of **developing e-leadership skills** has been identified by the EU<sup>3</sup>. In most countries there are few programmes dedicated to the development of these skills. This is a significant area of opportunity. In addition, the development of programmes combining e-leadership, language, and business-development competencies are required.

<sup>3</sup> [http://eskills-lead.eu/fileadmin/guide/documents/eleadership\\_brochure\\_for\\_download.pdf](http://eskills-lead.eu/fileadmin/guide/documents/eleadership_brochure_for_download.pdf)

**Identification of replicable and scalable best practices:** Scaling digital skills solutions is not always successful given the varied requirements of SMEs, for example. However, what is readily scalable is the development of robust ICT infrastructures, facilitating secure broadband connectivity, data protection, threat management, remote support and monitoring, telecoms, and on-site support. Larger scale initiatives can also reduce capital costs. That said, there are a number of themes with respect to the development of digital skills that are both replicable and scalable. These include:

- Promotion of digital skills in school environment;
- The development of e-learning skills on the part of all teachers and trainers to underpin their field or sectoral expertise;
- The recognition of the emergence of e-leadership as a key requirement and the development of training and up-skilling programmes to meet this need;
- The fostering of cultures – especially at primary and secondary school levels – that seek to address the gender disparity with respect to participation STEM fields;
- The development of a national partnership – linked to a broader EU partnership – with the development of e-leadership and digital skills as the dominant theme.

**Link the allocation of funding for training and certification.** Funding for training programmes that aim to develop digital skills at all levels must be adequately linked to standard and recognised syllabi and content at pan-European and global level (such

as the ECDL). EU funding allocated to digital skills development to date has only covered the costs for training. It did not cover any costs for the certification of the digital skills acquired through the funded programmes. This fact has limited the capacity of national and EU authorities to objectively evaluate and assess the quality and effectiveness of the training provided. To this end, it is recommended that future EU calls for funding of digital skills programmes link must include two interlinked components: funding for the training and funding for the certification of the participants upon completion of the training programme. Such links will effectively act as mechanisms for:

- the provision of highest quality training,
- the quality assurance of the offered training programme,.
- a measurement for the success of the training programme.

If skills training is not followed by a test and corresponding certification, it is impossible to show that the person actually acquired the desired skills and that the training was of a high quality. Certification benefits include:

- measuring training quality and providing proof of the skills acquired;
- demonstrating a person's competence to potential or current employers;
- providing objective verification of employees' skills and demonstrating their competency to a recognised standard.

### QUESTION 3 - HOW CAN YOU TRIGGER YOUR MEMBERS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL, TO

### TAKE ACTION TO SUPPORT AND DELIVER TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION OF DIGITAL SKILLS?

The new initiatives of the European Commission on enhancing ICT and digital skills are in line with the vision of EFEE on contributing to a modern European education sector. **Our mission is to improve the quality of teaching and school management through European cooperation and dialogue. We can support our members in their goals toward achieving a modern and efficient education system.**

EFEE reaffirms that **open learning environments require the leaders of educational institutions to play an active role by providing a strategic vision for transforming institutions into connected learning communities and stimulating professionals to strive for innovative teaching approaches that use ICT to its full potential.**

Not only will schools and curricula become more and more interesting for active pupils and students, but also courses will become more dynamic for teachers and professors.

The **acquisition of digital skills** by teachers is an important step towards efficient use of the possibilities created by new digital technologies. We, as education employers, see such development of digital skills as a necessary investment in our teachers for their pupils and students, and for the future of Europe. It provides an opportunity to increase quality, efficiency and equity in education. However, **the resources necessary for acquiring such digital skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be significant and we need to be realistic in the current economic and financial situation where we as employers are under pressure from national governments to freeze or downsize educational budgets.**

Two possible ways of bridging the

funding gap are through sponsorship by the large multi-national companies providing ICT hardware and software (who will benefit in the longer run from the greater usage of their products from increased ICT literacy); and through pump-priming investment via EU funds. Such funding would be of a once-and-for-all nature, mainly in training trainers, adapting curricula to the special requirements of teaching via ICT and in providing ICT hardware, rather than a continuing subsidy to support national funding.

One should also be mindful that acquiring and further developing **digital skills is not the sole responsibility of the education institutions, but rather a joint effort** amongst the key players in the education sector; national and local authorities, teacher training institutions, education providers, teachers, employers, trade unions, schools, school leaders and other stakeholders. Therefore, the financial burden needs to be spread among these stakeholders. Together, **we need to be innovative in providing training: peer learning and train-the-trainers programmes might provide welcome learning opportunities for teachers and school leaders.**

Needless to say, like any other employee in any other job, teachers themselves have an important role to play in their professional development. They have the first responsibility for their own eligibility in the labour market.

**Connecting classrooms and deploying digital devices and content** is a step towards a more efficient and open educational sector. However, it should be taken into account that the digital situation in schools and universities varies amongst the EU member states and among educational institutions. Therefore, the necessary steps to

take are very diverse. Again it is a shared task and all stakeholders in education will need to be innovative and entrepreneurial in making sure that every school is connected.

**Mobilising all stakeholders to change the role of digital technologies in education institutions** is a challenge and an opportunity for our sector. Employers, trade unions, school leaders and others can contribute to the creation of an atmosphere that stimulates teachers to consider the utilisation of new technologies as an opportunity rather than as a threat. We have already mentioned the importance of finding new and innovative solutions (e.g. peer learning) to concretise the switch towards digital teaching and learning.

## IN CONCLUSION

**The European Federation of Education Employers can foster the exchange of best practices amongst its members regarding digital schools.** Across highly diverse educational systems, EFEE can play a key role as a platform for the promotion of digital skills and computational thinking in the education sector. A peer visit on that topic could be a first step. Furthermore, EFEE promotes and supports the exchange of best practices amongst its members and their regional and local affiliates in the field of:

- **School leadership:** We believe that school heads play a very important role when implementing any changes; therefore, support for school leaders is crucial. School leaders should gain some knowledge about the role of ICT in learning in order to promote development at schools they run.

- **Supporting educators:**

Cooperation between schools and teachers in promoting the effective use of ICT in schools at regional, national and European level is vital. It is important to make the teaching profession more mobile; e.g. co-teaching, exchange visits at regional, national and European level, and continuous professional development for implementing and integrating ICT into teaching and learning processes.

- **Infrastructure:** Schools need continuous support to build IT infrastructure for management and teaching e.g. public tenders, additional funding, etc.
- **Technical support:** Teachers who feel safe using ICT will use it more often. Teachers do not want anything to go wrong during their lessons, so there need to be proper technical supports in every school. Schools need additional staff to take care of devices, networks, etc. and to offer advice and support to teachers.

**EFEE can also promote that media literacy skills should be part of the pedagogical coalition between schools and parents,** and that students should learn these skills through this partnership.

**EFEE can also provide its members with information regarding available EU funding directed towards the promotion of ICT skills at schools.**

EFEE as a platform for exchange of best practices and sharing information is a great asset for our members searching for funding, in order to introduce more ICT elements to their schools.

For further information about EFEE, visit their webpage on [www.educationemployers.eu](http://www.educationemployers.eu).



# USE OF ICT: IRISH STUDENTS LAG BEHIND OTHER YOUNG EUROPEANS

Examining Internet Use of Young Europeans:  
Eurostat Themes (August 2016)<sup>1</sup>

By Frank Milling, CEO of Changed (frank@changed.ie; @IRLchanged; www.changed.ie). Changed is Ireland's first and only think-tank on education.



The most recent Eurostat figures published on August 12th 2016 to celebrate International Youth Day make for grim reading from an Irish perspective. Whilst young Irish people (16-29) score well as a percentage of those who participate in professional networks such as LinkedIn (19%, compared to the EU average of 13%) and 'uploading self-created content to any website to be shared' (61%, compared to the EU average of 48%), the figures make for disheartening reading from there. Notably, Ireland scores:

- last in the EU for % share of 16-29 year olds reading online news and magazines (44% Ire vs 66% EU vs 94% Finland);
- 3rd last in the EU for % share of 16-29 year olds posting opinions on civic or political issues via websites (6% Ire vs 16% EU vs 30% Netherlands);
- 5th last in the EU for % share 16-29 year olds using online learning material (16% Ire vs 25% EU vs 54% Finland);
- 6th last in the EU for % share of 16-29 year olds seeking online health information (36% Ire vs 49% EU vs 79% Finland);
- 6th last in the EU for % share of 16-29 year olds interacting with public authorities online (39% Ire vs 49% EU vs 94% Estonia);
- 6th last in the EU for % share of 16-29 year olds playing networked games with others (22% Ire vs 27% Finland vs 30% EU vs 41% Denmark vs 51% Iceland);
- 7th last in the EU for % share of 16-29 year olds taking part in online consultations or voting on civic or political issues such as urban planning and signing petitions (4% Ire vs 9% EU vs 21% Finland);
- 13th place in the EU for % share of 16-29 year olds creating websites or blogs (10% Ire vs 15% EU vs 47% Finland).

There are a number of issues at play. Certainly, the lack of availability of broadband in rural areas and

pockets of disadvantage are an issue. Scandinavian countries are streets ahead of us here. But the issues are deeper-rooted. The arrival and spread of CoderDojos is a most welcome development. However, the meaningful integration of ICT skills in Ireland's education system – at both primary and secondary level in particular – still eludes us, despite the impact of early adopters within our teaching profession who have fought the good fight for so long.

Certainly the Framework for Junior Cycle, the energy of the JCT, the NCCA and the Inspectorate, and the thinking of the education partners (particularly the ETBI) has afforded a great opportunity for the meaningful embedding of ICT skills at second level in the coming years. This opportunity must be grasped by

"Certainly, the lack of availability of broadband in rural areas and pockets of disadvantage are an issue. Scandinavian countries are streets ahead of us here."

<sup>1</sup> See <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/news/themes-in-the-spotlight/youth-day-2016>



the teaching profession, properly resourced and sustainably grown.

Of particular concern to me as an educator, is the way Ireland lags significantly behind in terms of young people accessing online learning material; academic journals and the like. Also, some may scoff at this statistic, but what does it say about how interconnected we are as a society if only 22% of 16-29 year olds engage in networked gameplay? Iceland's score of 51% is quite high, and one could glibly argue that a more 'homogenous' society would likely produce such a result anyway. But such a thesis is to miss the point: is there something wrong with Irish society that we

don't talk to each other, much less play online? Do we have a more obvious 'class system' than we care to admit? Is enough emphasis placed on collaboration in schools? Maybe there's little of importance in that snapshot statistic, but it's worth the ask.

Quite apart from ICT issues, the fact that Irish people between 16-29 come last in terms of reading online news shocks, but does not surprise. I worry that a larger preponderance of young people than we care to think get most of their news from Facebook and Twitter. News outlet diversification into digital media is to be welcomed – as is the rise of independent news outlets, not

beholden to interests. However, the natural caveat is that journalistic integrity ought to be paramount. Is it?

Looking deeper into the data, is it fair to say that there is a connection between the low levels of online news reading, interaction with public authorities and taking part in online consultations or voting? Aside from the 2015 Marriage Equality referendum, have people in this age-bracket voted in such numbers before? Why? Do we value what our young people have to say? Moreover, do we equip them with the skills to frame a cogent argument and enable them to think creatively for themselves in our education system? How well does government and the civil service respond to the needs of young people? Does our country take our young people (and investing in them) seriously?



# Integrating digital literacy into the school curriculum

The ECDL offers an internationally recognised solution

Article from the Irish Computer Society / ICS Skills ([www.ics.ie](http://www.ics.ie); [www.ics-skills.ie](http://www.ics-skills.ie))

IT Skills are essential in today's classroom, and the ECDL aims to provide those skills for life. ECDL (European Computer Drivers Licence) is an internationally recognised certification comprising more than a dozen modules covering the most essential IT skills. Almost 12 million people have undertaken the ECDL programme worldwide. ECDL is delivered by ECDL Ireland, a not-for-profit organisation, helping people of all ages improve their computer skills.

ECDL has proven itself as a highly effective tool in bridging the digital divide in Ireland. ECDL programmes address the IT skills needs of students at beginner and advanced levels, facilitating both professional and personal enrichment.

In a school setting, digital literacy skills are relevant for all subjects, not just the technical ones. For Claudia Delaney, Head of Education for ECDL Ireland, it's all about the basics. "Learning the fundamental IT skills is essential for all students – and all subjects. Writing an essay in English class? Plan it in Word. Doing a History presentation? Prepare it with Powerpoint. No matter what subject, IT skills will take you a long way. By getting the basics right, your entire learning experience will be enhanced. Teachers can then adapt the curriculum around those skills."

ECDL is highly applicable and relevant to different types of school and curricula. The schools ECDL operates in range from DEIS schools, to smaller rural classrooms, to fee-paying schools.

ECDL is the best international solution for second-level students. ECDL can be implemented from 1st year right

through to 6th year, allowing students to develop their skills in computing in a progressive way just as they do for their other subjects, acquiring advanced level knowledge by 6th year and after they graduate.

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 sixteen modules that can be certified independently or in groups that correspond to the needs of common job roles or profiles. This includes twelve ECDL standard modules and four Computing Curriculum modules. Modules comprise a combination of e-Learning, online practice tests, automatically-marked certification tests, webinars, and onsite support.

"ECDL has become far more flexible. Although IT skills requirements are constantly changing, our courses are always up to date. We adapt course content to fit with the changing needs and skills of the classroom and the office. We are always eager

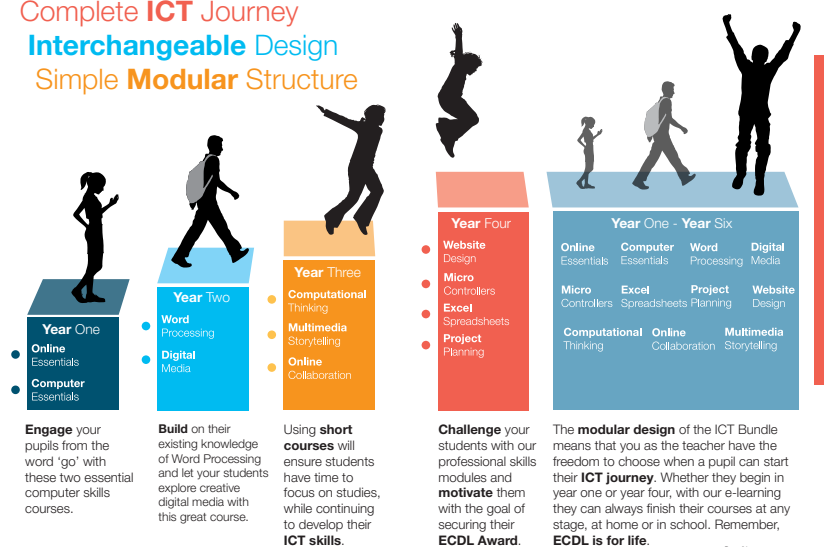
to refine module content or develop new modules to suit the needs of the learner," Claudia says.

"This flexibility makes incorporating it into your curriculum an attainable task. You can develop a programme to suit your students' needs or you can follow an IT curriculum we provide. Teachers can also pursue ECDL certifications alongside their students, an often overlooked benefit."

ECDL has been around for 20 years, and its relevance will continue to grow in the coming years. Claudia strongly believes in the power of ECDL to give equal opportunity to every child to learn skills that matter.

"ECDL has a long established reputation as a trusted IT solution, spanning several decades. ECDL certification is an internationally recognised standard, world-renowned, and is available in over 140 countries. It has been completed by more than 700,000 people within Ireland, making it the most popular IT training solution in the country," concludes Claudia.

## Complete ICT Journey Interchangeable Design Simple Modular Structure



# FACILITATING MIGRANT INTEGRATION INTO THE EDUCATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT



How ETBs can work to promote integration, civic education, intercultural dialogue and democratic citizenship within the migrant community

By Brenda Lynch, Adult Education Officer, KWETB

## IRISH CONTEXT

Migrants arriving in Europe represent highly diverse populations, with a variety of motivations and opportunities for migration, including both legal and irregular means. According to the OECD in 2013, one in ten people residing in the OECD and EU countries was born abroad, comprising over 50 million in the EU (Oliver, 2016).

Ireland hasn't seen the massive influx of migrants that other EU member states have, but in her press release of 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015, Minister for Justice and Equality Frances Fitzgerald announced that the Government had agreed that Ireland will accept up to 4000 persons overall under the EU Resettlement and Relocation Programmes.

The 4000 are made up of:

- 520 programme refugees currently being resettled under previously agreed programmes;
- 600 people already committed to under a previously agreed EU Relocation programme;
- 2900 additional people in need of international protection;
- These numbers may be augmented by further family reunifications.

The Government commitment entails:

- Establishment of Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) to provide a safe haven for persons seeking international protection;
- Establishment of a network of Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROC);
- Establishment of a cross-departmental Taskforce, chaired by the Department of Justice and Equality (DJE), to co-ordinate and implement logistical and operational aspects of the Programme;
- Asking relevant Housing Authorities in association with NGOs, to pursue all options to find suitable accommodation for those granted refugee status.

## **EU Resettlement and Relocation Programme**

In the EU, Resettlement means the movement of refugees from a country outside the EU to an EU member state. It involves the selection and transfer of refugees from a state in which they have sought protection to a state which has agreed to take them. These resettled refugees, or Programme Refugees as they are classed in

Ireland, obtain permanent residence status on arrival to the country, in line with many, but not all, EU member states. Programme refugees have the same rights and entitlement as EU citizens. Those arriving in Ireland are issued with a PPS no. and GNIB card almost immediately.

In the EU, Relocation means the movement of refugees from one EU member state to another. This is an expression of solidarity and burden-sharing, particularly with those countries at the borders of Europe that receive a high number of refugees. Under the Relocation Programme the 2900 additional people included in the Government quota will include people who have registered a request for asylum in another EU member state and who are relocated to Ireland where their request for asylum will be processed. Under the current programme in Ireland, assessments and decisions on refugee status will be made in the EROCs within weeks of arrival.

In the period 1992–2013, 88,000 asylum applications were received by the Irish Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner, with a high of 11,634 in 2002 reducing to a low of 946 in 2013. Numbers applying for refugee status have increased since then, to 1,448 in 2014 and 3,276 in 2015. Of the



4,000-person commitment made in 2015, 273 Programme refugees have arrived, with 190 housed in Monasterevin EROC and 83 in Dungarvan EROC. Another 216 are arriving in Autumn 2016/Spring 2017, to be followed by another 250 in 2017. Approximately 40 asylum seekers per month are currently arriving from Europe under the Relocation Programme and are being housed in Mosney EROC.

### **Educational entitlements**

Many people admitted under the current programmes have been living in dependent situations in refugee camps for a number of years, and have no experience of modern western society. Many have been the victims of violence and torture.

New arrivals are supported in the early stages to ensure they are aware of and in receipt of their statutory entitlements. They are linked to various services and receive general orientation training. Currently, Programme Refugee adults are entitled to an 8-week Orientation and Language Programme while resident in the EROCs. Children under the age of 18 participate in an induction programme to prepare them for mainstream education. Where possible this occurs in mainstream second level schools.

Following resettlement in the community, a full language and orientation programme is established for 20 hours per week for a period of more than 1 year. Children are enrolled in mainstream schools, some of which avail of additional learning supports provided by the DES, but not all receive this sanction.

### **FACILITATING MIGRANT INTEGRATION**

The degree and success of “migrant integration can be assessed by measurement of the *degree of parity or equality of outcomes* with

other members of the receiving society across a variety of domains of integration”. An individual can be described as ‘integrated’ within a society when they:

- achieve public outcomes within employment, housing, education, and health which are equivalent to those achieved within the wider host communities;
- are socially connected with members of a (national, ethnic, cultural, religious or other) community with which they identify, with members of other communities and with relevant services and functions of the state; and
- have sufficient linguistic competence and cultural knowledge, and a sufficient sense of security and stability, to confidently engage in that society in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship (Oliver, 2016).

Factors which challenge and impede integration include:

- the difficulties of labour market integration where improvements in educational attainment is often not reflected in better labour market participation. Refugees, particularly refugee women, suffer higher levels of unemployment than the native population, and employment is concentrated in un-skilled lower-paid jobs;
- while performance varies significantly by nationality and length of residence, children from lower socio-economic groups are vulnerable to higher rates of early school leaving and lower acquisition of qualifications;
- warehousing, the model of

housing large groups of migrants in a single location, discourages engagement with the host communities;

- host language acquisition, is key to integration but challenges exist, particularly for those arriving with low (and in some cases no) education levels;
- discrimination, racism, segregation, bullying, violence, stereotypes, and inequality.

### **Responsive and preventative strategies**

To develop interventions, you must look at all of the dynamics involved, including: community prejudices which may take the form of indifference or overt prejudice; health, welfare, financial and educational structures; legal structures; and social, cultural and psycho-social infrastructure. Building a sense of community will diminish perceptions of threat.

Social aspects significantly influence integration including parental choice and warehousing (both residential design and where migrants are housed). Community engagement is key to detecting extremism, but it is important to avoid stigmatising extremist communities. Community initiatives, like public debate and events which facilitate mixing outside immediate social groups, will help with challenging assumptions and achieving understanding.

Employment and education structures impact on integration. Schools do impact on children and youth integration, including mitigating the risks of extremism by developing a whole school approach to supporting migrant integration, with a zero tolerance approach to racism and discrimination. Schools can facilitate this by:



- Become a UNICEF “Rights Respecting School”<sup>1</sup>.

Parental engagement is key to student success in education, and this particularly applies to children of migrants. However migrant parents, particularly those from lower socio-economic groups and refugees, have lower levels of engagement with their children’s education and school.

Key points in achieving migrant parental engagement:

- Building family-school connections will lead to improved attainment and positive behaviour;

- Developing a model of inclusion and diversity in mainstream education;
- Developing responsive and preventative strategies, including legal, social and psychological infrastructures inside and outside school;
- Training for teachers to identify all types of racism including subtle, internalised or overt; teacher’s perceptions of the problem are just as important as the students when an incident occurs;
- Individual supports to students who may be at risk of discrimination including language supports and techniques for dealing with hostility;
- physical infrastructure: identifying hotspots and safe places for at-risk children and young people;
- RSC classes and life skills acquisitions, including relationship-building programmes, are important;
- Developing a whole school approach, including SEAL (Social Emotional Aspects Learning), Restorative Justice;
- Encouraging dialogue and developing media literacy, helping young people to understand and challenge media propaganda;
- Training for teachers and managers in dealing with discrimination in their classroom and in school;
- Creating an environment where students can feel safe;
- Creating a school culture where students learn to understand and be understood, and where they learn to respect diversity;
- Providing more language teachers in schools;
- Providing CPD for principals, directors, managers, teachers and classroom assistants;
- Parental language levels are key, but schools can modify their jargon and “coded” language;
- Schools can provide language classes for parents;
- Teachers experience difficulty in responding to migrant parents: psychological and practical barriers are felt by teachers;
- Schools need to inform themselves of the broader social context in which the children and their parents are living;
- Communications strategy, using translators and interpreters, to inform and include parents of migrant children;
- Ethnically diverse teachers;
- Teacher training on migrant integration and engaging migrant parents – Glasgow University is developing materials on this topic;

<sup>1</sup> [www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/](http://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/)



- Establish a school climate and philosophy embracing cultural awareness, celebrating diversity which is inviting to migrant parents;
- Community supports, including advocacy, role models, engaging with migrant organisations;
- Migrant parents on boards of management and parents' associations will help create an environment which facilitates wider engagement;
- Parents need to feel less foreign in the school than in other areas owing to the culture of inclusion and support in the school;
- School uniforms are effective in helping children integrate, diminishing the sense of difference;
- Teachers must be facilitated in developing intercultural competencies;
- Integrate languages in all programmes, adopt a whole school approach so that all teachers are language teachers.

## CURRENT EDUCATION PROVISION

### **Primary school**

In accordance with the DES Intercultural Education Strategy, *English as an Additional Language in Primary School* (EAL) is resourced in primary schools. While the primary school curriculum does not include a specific programme for EAL, many schools have adopted the programme, finding it “vital to the successful integration of ‘newcomer’ children into Irish society” (DES 2008).

The primary (and second level, it must be noted) school sector offers more choice and diversity with the development and expansion of Educate Together and Community National Schools (CNS). Community National Schools offer a multicultural, multi-belief environment for children to learn. The *Goodness Me Goodness You!* programme in CNS values all dimensions of the child's family and community life, including beliefs and religions.

### **Separated Children Service / Refugee Access Programme**

CDETb has developed a programme of education specifically focused on Separated Children Seeking

Asylum (SCSA) which aims to prepare newly-arrived young people for their new lives in Ireland, and in particular, to ease their transition into mainstream schooling. The Refugee Access Programme is an intensive transition programme for newly-arrived separated children lasting 12 weeks before children are placed in a mainstream school.

### **English as a Second Language for Adults**

ETBs provide free English as a Second Language (ESOL) to adult migrants arriving in a variety of ways, including asylum seekers, refugees and unemployed economic migrants, or those in low-paid jobs, through the Adult Basic Education Service (formerly Literacy Services). Additionally, ETBs with EROCs established to house Programme Refugees in their localities provide free 8-week Orientation and Language programmes to adult residents. If the families remain in the EROC on completion of the 8-week programme, they transfer immediately into the ESOL programmes to continue their English Language courses.

### **Fáilte Isteach**

Fáilte Isteach is a community project involving predominantly older volunteers welcoming migrants into communities through informal conversational English classes.

### **Volunteer Bureau**

The Volunteer Bureau of Ireland co-ordinates community voluntary initiatives aimed at building relationships between local community residents and residents of EROC.

## KILDARE AND WICKLOW ETB PROGRAMME OF MIGRANT EDUCATION

Following the establishment of a Refugee Resettlement Centre in the Hazel Hotel in Monasterevin in September 2015, Co Kildare KWETB was tasked with providing

a programme of orientation and language training for all residents. An Inter-Agency Steering Group was established, chaired by the Office of the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI), consisting of representatives from SOLAS, KWETB, Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), Kildare Co Childcare Committee (KCCC), TUSLA Education Welfare Service, HSE, Department of Social Protection (DSP), Garda Síochána, SOLAS and Kildare Leader Partnership. Funding is provided from SOLAS for provision to adults, and from the DES via co-operation hours for the primary school.

#### **Preschool provision**

Facilitated by Kildare Co Childcare Committee, preschool children are allocated places in a local crèche to allow adults attend the Orientation and Language programme. Some children obtained ECCE places while others access mainstream crèche places. Non-ECCE places are funded from Childcare for Education and Training Scheme (CETS). Children attend the crèche from 9:30 to 12:30 on Monday to Thursday for the 8 weeks.

#### **Primary school provision**

Children attend the school which is located in the Hazel Hotel EROC from 9:00 to 12:30 on Monday to Thursday for the 8 weeks. A transitional primary school programme is taught with a focus on English language attainment. An additional outcome is that the children and families get into the mindset of the Irish education system, fostering social and personal development and cultural integration. The intention of this programme is to:

1. Replicate the school day, albeit shortened to allow a timely and sensitive transition to attending school in a new cultural and social environment;

2. Introduce the children to the primary school environment and basic socialisation, including taking turns, sitting down, big and little breaks;
3. Begin the socialisation process in relation to living in Ireland;
4. Begin English language learning and other academic education as appropriate, depending on the abilities of the children;
5. Introduce the families to the routine of the Irish school day;
6. Foster a sense of happiness and security in the school environment.

Basic educational profiles are created for each student for their new schools to ease the transition and support the new schools in assessing the needs and levels of each student.

#### **Post-primary provision**

The DES provides teaching hours to a local secondary school to provide an English Language programme to the residents of post-primary school age, which also comprises an introduction to the school environment and curriculum. A transitional timetable is devised combining English as an Additional Language with non-academic classes where the students attend mainstream non-language-dependent classes (Construction, Art, Drama, PE, and Cooking) which helps to increase English Language proficiency.

#### **Adult Education provision**

An 8-week part-time Orientation and Language Programme for the adults resident in the centre takes place in the Kildare Town FETC. A

programme was devised based on the Dublin VEC Refugee Induction Programme.

The Orientation Programme consists of one hour per day (9:30 to 10:30), with an interpreter accompanying the class tutor. The purpose of the programme is to provide essential information needed to integrate and settle in Irish society. The programme was delivered under the headings:

1. Essential information including Child Protection, Road Safety, Law, Dress and Geography;
2. Food and Hygiene;
3. Money Management and Services;
4. Accommodation and Transport, including Landlord and Tenants Rules and Regulations, Driving in Ireland and Travelling Outside Ireland;
5. Education;
6. Towards Independence including Working in Ireland, Letters of Application and CV, Training Agencies, Irish Culture, Irish Government and Citizenship.

Special sessions are included, with invited speakers from the Garda Liaison Office, DSP/Community Welfare Officer, OPMI, TUSLA, Kildare Co Council and HSE. ESOL provision is streamed by English language levels ranging from very basic to elementary classes. Basic educational profiles are created for each student to ease their transition to their new communities and support the ETBs in the new communities in assessing the needs and levels of each student.



## CHALLENGES OF EDUCATION PROVISION IN THE CURRENT RESETTLEMENT AND RELOCATION PROGRAMMES

### General

- Tensions arising between residents who are living in very close quarters;
- Supports are required for people who have experienced trauma or violence;
- Social and cultural integration in a very new environment;

### Primary & Post Primary School

- Recruitment of part-time primary school teachers who can work during the traditional holiday breaks, i.e. July and August;
- Behavioural and psychological issues experienced by children who have experienced trauma;
- Many children have the additional challenge of never having attended any kind of school environment or having been out of school for up to five years;

- Most, if not all, of the children have very little or no spoken or written English;
- Ideally the 8-week Transitional Primary School Programme should occur in a school setting;
- Resources in schools receiving the children in the final communities;
- Access to interpreters for staff in the new schools.

### Adult Programme

- Cost of transport;
- Many need intensive and long-term English language tuition to begin integration;
- The lack of commonality between the Irish and Arabic alphabet inhibits progress in written English;
- Recognising Syria and Iraqi qualifications;
- Having lived in dependent situations for some years, many

families will struggle to adjust to running a household, including budgeting.

### Potential flashpoints

- The impact of events like the recent Paris attacks on Syrians and Iraqis, including the media reaction;
  - According to staff in the Resettlement Centre and adult tutors, there was evidence of a negative impact with this group;
  - The subject was not mentioned by anybody;
- The negative reaction of community members in the new communities, particularly in relation to the housing crisis;
- The additional trauma of being housed in a different community to friends;
- The direct provision rate of DSP pay is not suitable for families who arrive in the country with nothing;
- Many residents are escaping violence and have security issues in relation to people in Syria discovering their location. A complete social media ban must be implemented, including ETB websites.



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# EDUCATION FOR TRAVELLER CHILDREN:

## some findings from research with Traveller mothers

By Dr Martina Hegarty, former director of the North Kerry Senior Traveller Training Centre and St Anne's STTC, Killarney, and currently teacher of Maths at Killarney Community College.



*"With the Traveller young fellas they just let them slip through, like they were saying what's going to happen they'll end up on the dole, they'll end up getting scrap, that's their way of life, that's their culture, what's the point... just let them sit and do what they want...[they're] not worth the effort." The statistics are stark. Traveller infants are over three times more likely to die than infants in the general population.<sup>1</sup> The suicide rate in male Travellers is 6.6 times higher than the general population.<sup>2</sup> Over 90% of Travellers have not completed upper second level education.<sup>3</sup>*

In the 1960s the government began to introduce policies specifically related to Travellers. In the field of education, early policies reinforced and reflected the wider policy position of Travellers as a "problem" in Irish society and in need of help and remediation in order to be assimilated into the "normal" majority. In this way, Travellers were singled out within the education system as being in need of benevolent remediation in order to overcome the negative influences of their homes and culture. The goal of these early policies was to absorb Travellers into Irish society, but instead they served to isolate and

stigmatise Travellers in education, while further marginalising Travellers in wider society.

By the 1980s, recognition was being given to Traveller identity, but while officially the state had adopted a policy of integration, a persistent and accepted anti-Traveller sentiment was firmly established in Irish society. The Traveller voice was starting to be heard in the 1990s through the Traveller development groups. Rights legislation such as the Equal Status Act (2000) and the signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child supported the official emerging intercultural policies of the state. The Equality Authority recommended in 2006 that Travellers be recognised as an ethnic minority, but this has not happened.

In 1995 the Department of Education White Paper "Charting Our Education Future" was published on the key principles of pluralism, equality, partnership, quality and accountability. It called for the establishment of second level induction programmes "involving the family, the primary school where the child is enrolled, and the second-

level school to which s/he is about to transfer".

The White Paper recognised that Traveller children "have the same rights as all other children to have access to publicly funded institutions". The White Paper identified the rights of parents to "active participation in their child's education" including their right to be "consulted and informed on all aspects of the child's education" and their right to involvement as a group at all levels.<sup>4</sup>

Parents have responsibilities too. The White Paper called on parents to nurture a learning environment, co-operate with and support the school and other educational partners, and fulfil their special role in the development of the child. For the first time in Irish history, the Education Act (1998) enshrined in law that "the education system is accountable to students, their parents and the state for the education provided...and is conducted in a spirit of partnership between schools, patrons, students, teachers, other school staff, the community served by the school and the state."<sup>5</sup>

"the education system is accountable to students, their parents and the state for the education provided...and is conducted in a spirit of partnership between schools, patrons, students, teachers, other school staff, the community served by the school and the state."<sup>1</sup>

1 Department of Health and Children (2010)

2 Department of Health and Children (2010)

3 Central Statistics Office (2012)

4 Department of Education (1995)

5 Government of Ireland (1998) Education Act

The Department of Education and Skills policy for the education of Irish Travellers at primary and second level has as its central aim “the meaningful participation and highest attainment of the Traveller child so that, in common with all the children of the nation, he or she may live a full life as a child and realise his or her full potential as a unique individual, proud of and affirmed in his or her identity as a Traveller and a citizen of Ireland.”<sup>6</sup> But what does this statement mean? What, for example, comprises “her full potential as a unique individual”? Who decides what constitutes this “potential”? What do we need to do as educational professionals in a system which has such noble aims but is in fact accepting failure as an outcome for some? What is the lived experience of school for these young people and their families? What have we to learn from the experience of Traveller education as we develop a multicultural society in Ireland? What is and will be the lived experience and outcomes of schooling in Irish society for minorities today?

To briefly outline the research with which I was involved: In-depth interviews were conducted separately with ten Traveller mothers whose children were engaged with the system at a range of stages. Drawing heavily on qualitative methodologies, this research sought to hear and document the voices of these mothers in a safe environment, to make these voices accessible to practitioners and policy makers within the education sphere. It allowed them to name their own reality.

Drawing together the findings of this research, it is clear that Traveller mothers are interested in their children's education, irrespective of their own attainment levels at school. Moreover, they are interested in their

children's well-being. Crucially, and this point cannot be overstated, the mothers here will forego educational attainment in favour of their child's well-being, as they understand it. Traveller mothers do not trust the school to provide for the educational or emotional well-being of their children. They feel that, as in their own time, they are dependent on the good nature of key individuals to provide their children with an education and for their well-being in the school situation. This well-being is defined as academic regard, but also and more importantly for Traveller mothers, it is defined by social acceptance and inclusion. This definition of well-being resonates with mothers' experience of their own schooling. This situation of distrust leads to a state of 'hyper-vigilance', where Traveller mothers are sensitive to perceived mistreatment of their children, and sometimes of themselves, within the education system. Where mothers feel their children are mistreated, they largely believe this mistreatment is because they are Travellers. In some cases this perpetuates their sense of isolation and distrust of the education system. In other cases their dissatisfaction is directed towards their Traveller identity. In all cases in this research, mothers' instinctive reaction to perceived mistreatment was to remove their children from the teacher or the school, in an effort to find a place or individuals to whom they could safely entrust their children.

The understanding that parents bring to the system, from their own experience as children, or their experience as parents educating their children, influences their ongoing relationship with the education system. Their understanding of the system is based to a large extent on

their own memories of engagement with the system, often evoking feelings of shame and stigma, of being left out of classwork or play, or removed for 'remedial' learning. They carry with them a sense of having been disregarded academically and remember the associated public humiliation. They remember feeling vulnerable and powerless within the system, feeling they were dependent on the kindness or empathy of individuals they met within the system to make the experience of being in school a positive one.

The mothers in this research feel that their experiences and in turn, those of their children, are largely dependent on their Traveller identity, how the individuals they meet in the system feel about Travellers. This conspires with their lack of experience and practical knowledge needed to succeed within the education system, to thwart these mothers as they actively try to create a different experience for their children. This lack of success within the education system also conspires with the broader difficulty of changing their social trajectory, their acceptance in wider society. Despondency with the system can mitigate against success for other children in the same family.

While the research grapples with the vexed themes of agency, identity and power within our system, recommendations emerge early and succinctly. While the research was Traveller specific, the recommendations may apply to parents across other cultures.

At an obvious and immediate level, the recommendations demand an openness to the possibility that parents do not understand school policies and procedures. This may be the case for any parent who does not

6 Department of Education and Science (2002) Guidelines for Traveller Education in Second-Level Schools

have direct experience of education in this country. Clear communication and consistent implementation of procedures are needed.

The importance of understanding the system comes to the fore in relation to issues such as the points system, where parents wish to support their children in navigating their way beyond the second level system. It is never too early for parents to have a sense of the study commitment required and the differences in attainment needed to progress to various third level courses and training opportunities. This is particularly important early in second level, when students are choosing subjects and deciding the level at which they will take the subject in their exams.

It is important to recognise cultural primacy in the life of the child and the family. What we may see as a statement of disregard for the school, may in fact be a protection, a well-being issue for the parent and the child, which then may take supremacy over academics, over going to school. There is more successful engagement where parents feel their child is emotionally safe, welcome and valued on a day-to-day basis.

The research identifies signifiers of acceptance for Traveller mothers, ways they can assess how welcome and accepted their child is at school. Important among these is the setting of meaningful homework, signifying an interest on the part of the teacher in the child's academic wellbeing; and the grading of that homework showing that the teacher expects the child to succeed and cares enough to want the child to succeed. This is a measure for the parent of social inclusion.

Further, we as educators must not overlook the importance of the ownership of the trappings of



education, from books to lunchboxes, and uniforms to instruments, as signifying membership and parity within the class group.

An inclusive curriculum that values Traveller traditions as well as access to the full curriculum, especially to Irish and other languages, emerged as crucial signifiers to Traveller mothers of the regard in which their children were held, both academically and socially, which in turn is crucial to engagement.

Schools do not have happy associations for all parents. Our experience of the system in which we were educated feeds into the experience of education we want to construct for our children. Where, as was the experience of mothers in this research, parents find schools are threatening places, full of bad memories where their own self-worth and their sense of themselves as citizens and now parents becomes devalued, these parents may need extra supports from school personnel in accessing the school's policies and procedures.

The success of this engagement depends closely on the cultural sensitivity of the school personnel

involved. It is important that schools are creative in thinking up and implementing alternative ways to support parents who are already interested in their children's education. Meaningful, authentic, bilateral communication is essential to parents' understanding of the workings of the school and the school's understanding of the perspectives and prerogatives of the parents, all of which contribute to the quality of the education experience for the child. Linking with a community development group may create a first point of contact in reaching parents who, for many reasons, feel they can't come into the school.

*"I'd love to see one of mine finishing school, straight out,...just for one to go the whole way, I'd love it....I could see then the opportunity, see what they can do out of it....I says it every day, education is the only thing that's going to get them out of anywhere." – Every parent, irrespective of culture or creed, wants what they feel is best for their child. As education professionals, it behoves us to be bridge builders, so that the experience of school is a positive one for all stakeholders, and everyone has access to the advantages education brings.*





# Learning difficulties and the development of the adolescent brain

How learning difficulties can lead to behavioural disorders and substance and alcohol abuse in teens – and innovative on-line interventions to help identify and address them

By James Lee, CEO & Founder of Brain Care Ireland. Article abridged.

## SOME FACTS ABOUT LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

People with learning difficulties often have an average or above-average IQ, although when it comes to some mental tasks, many do not function well cognitively. In other words, they have the potential but are not able to realise it due to their learning difficulty or impairment. In most cases, successful interventions cannot be achieved in our traditional modus, which often occurs as infrequently as once a week for no more than half an hour. Traditional interventions are of little proven use unless the underlying problems are corrected first; grinds, for instance, are of little value at this stage.

In the case of a child with learning difficulties, what we see is the progression from home or crèche to primary school, where the child becomes academically lost, resulting

in low self-esteem and a lack of confidence and sense of self-worth. The child either withdraws from participation in class or becomes the class clown who jokes to cover up their learning inabilities. This bluster is a façade.

Moving on, we now have a child with learning difficulties who is open to being bullied, further destroying any remaining semblance of self-worth. The victim can enter a 'lost cause' scenario which, research shows, in itself can lead to substance and alcohol abuse, often accompanied by behavioural disorders. The bullied child can further freefall into depression, total lack of self-worth or self-esteem, and sometimes suicidal tendencies.

Research indicates that people with learning disabilities are more likely than the general population

to experience a mental health issue such as depression. Other factors such as fewer psychological and material resources to deal with adversity and lack of meaningful activities in their lives, can increase the chances of people with learning disabilities developing depression (*'Feeling Down'; improving the mental health of people with learning disabilities*, 2013). UK statistics indicate that around 6% of the mainstream population experiences depression in any one year (NHS), but studies suggest that as much as 20% of people with learning disabilities will experience depression (Sikabofori and Anupama, 2012). So there is a pattern to the journey from learning difficulties to substance and alcohol abuse and behavioural disorders.

It is clear that if we can find a way to address learning difficulties, we are

on the way to reducing the incidence of depression in people with such disorders and therefore reducing substance abuse and behavioural disorders.

### SOME FACTS ABOUT THE BRAIN

Other scientific research has found that a learning difficulty is a lifelong challenge; in most cases it can only be successfully overcome with interventions that are both 'frequent and intense', as pointed out by Dr Norman Doidge in his book *The Brain that Changes Itself*. Doidge, proclaimed as 'the world's leading researcher on brain plasticity' by Irish neuroscientist Ian Robertson, makes abundant reference to research completed by Dr Michael Merzenich on 'brain plasticity', which found that with the right cognitive interventions, we can alter the way the brain functions.

Merzenich maintained that there are two epochs of brain plasticity:

1. The infant 'critical period' when the brain sets up basic processing machinery;
2. Adult plasticity, during which the brain refines its machinery as it masters a wide repertoire of skills and abilities.

Merzenich found that the brain is organised (mapped) in line with the body; the parts of the brain associated with, say, our fingers, are adjacent to one another as they work closely together to effect the best functioning possible. He demonstrated that brain maps are dynamic and respond to competition for brain space. Brain plasticity is dynamic and can be influenced by use: brain use decides what kind of brain you have.

Merzenich's research demonstrates the 'use it or lose it' phenomenon

and that the brain is endlessly fighting for space. Should we stop using a certain part of our brain, the surrounding brain will take over this space to exercise another mental skill. A case in point is when we play online games. As we play, the part of the brain involved gets bigger and begins to occupy adjacent parts of the brain that are not being used so much, so it expands and we gain and lose different functionalities. This phenomenon is called 'competitive adult plasticity' and accounts, for instance, for the fact that as we get older and the 'critical period' has passed, we find it more difficult to learn another language, as English has become our dominant tongue.

### THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN

Adolescents undergo profound development and their brain is particularly adaptable and malleable. One of the major areas of the brain, the prefrontal cortex, responsible for decision-making, planning, inhibition, inappropriate behaviour and self-awareness, is not well developed in adolescents. Thus they have poor impulse control and self-consciousness, as well as a tendency to take risks, especially when with their peers. Extensive compulsive behaviour, such as online game-playing can result in 'synaptic pruning', with the synapses (brain pathways) that are being used being strengthened and the ones not being used killed off or 'pruned', to the detriment of the development of other skills. As other parts of the brain diminish in function, the teen can take on a 'zombie'-like existence.

Impulses are controlled by the limbic system which is involved in emotion and reward-processing and

is supersensitive in adolescents. In other words, it is the 'buzz centre' in the adolescent's brain and accounts for repeated actions that allow the brain to experience that 'buzz factor' again and again, whether it be a bully or a daredevil or an online game-player. Incidentally, there may be a biological basis for bullying in that the bully gains self-satisfaction from being aggressive. Bullies can often develop high self-esteem and confidence arising from the act of bullying itself and the disposition to get a chemical dopamine 'buzz' each time they bully. The brain possesses many different dopamine pathways, one of which plays a major role in the reward-motivated behaviour which lies behind many addictive activities.

Boys especially show enhanced activity in the limbic system. It has been found that teenage boys are especially resistant to the threat of punishment, but hypersensitive to the effect of risk to achieve greater dividends of value, which explains why boys are greater risk-takers than girls.

With use the limbic system can expand. At the same time, the prefrontal lobe does not fully mature until about 25 years of age (although it may take longer or never mature). Until the frontal lobe invades the limbic system, the tendencies of adolescents to be risk-takers will regularly take precedence.

The educational environment, whether school, college or a trade, has been proven one of the most important milieus in which to help develop the adolescent brain. Research has shown that the ideal age for maximum effect is between

"The educational environment, whether school, college or a trade, has been proven one of the most important milieus in which to help develop the adolescent brain."

15 and 18 years of age. Transition Year offers a fantastic opportunity to develop pupils' cognition, creativity and learning, as well as to address emotions, social attitudes, personality, well-being and health.

A study took place looking at 213 school-based social and emotional learning programmes involving more than 270,000 students from kindergarten to high school in the United States. The study revealed that students who participated in these school-based social and emotional learning programmes improved in grades and standardised test scores by 11 percentile points compared to control groups (*Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011*). They showed improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behaviour, and academic performance.

- Children with higher levels of emotional, behavioural, social, and school well-being, have, on average, higher levels of academic achievement and are more engaged in school, both concurrently and in later years.
- Children who are bullied are less engaged in primary school, whereas those with positive friendships are more engaged in secondary school.

- As children move through the school system, emotional and behavioural well-being become more important in explaining school engagement, while demographic and other characteristics become less important.

### BRAIN CARE IRELAND'S TELEMEDICINE PROGRAMMES

Brain Care Ireland has been working in the field of telemedicine for over ten years. 'Telemedicine' encompasses online programmes which can be interacted with, and which then rank performance and produce predictive analyses. These analyses can be used to inform the choice and methodology of any subsequent interventions and correction programmes.

Telemedicine programmes have achieved proven results in the area of learning difficulties. Despite being necessary to give every pupil the best start in life, interventions dealing with learning difficulties are usually labour-intensive and often prohibitively expensive to deliver. The Brain Care Ireland telemedicine programmes enable the delivery of interventions to many simultaneously, at low cost.

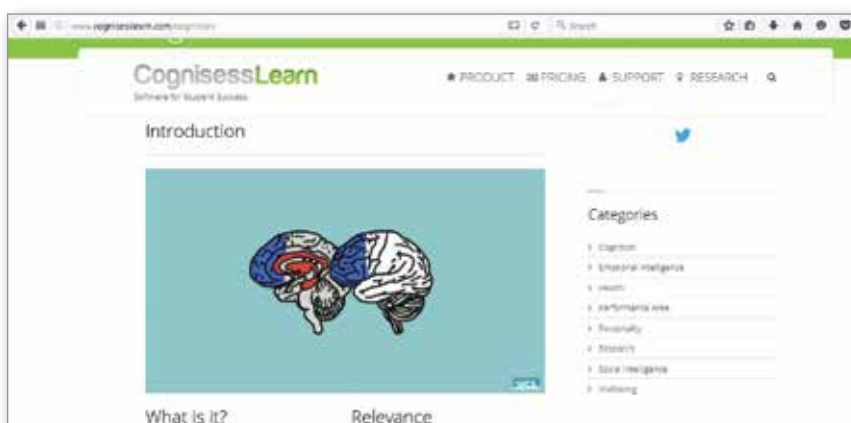
Arising from years of experience, Brain Care Ireland has launched two new programmes for Transition Year in schools in Ireland, developed in recognition of the need for cost-

"...these programmes can and do effect changes for the better in the brain, without harm, allowing the child to achieve their maximum possible potential"

effective interventions in the area of learning difficulties. 'Think Drive' and 'Learn' are targeted at young drivers in Transition Year. The initial baseline test takes just 13 minutes and generates a report ranking the pupil's ratings on twenty cognitions needed to be a good and safe driver and/or to improve academic performance. Threshold levels are determined by top Advanced Driving Instructors in Ireland, to ascertain how a young driver might drive in adverse conditions. While the participant can excel in many of the tests, low scores in important cognitive requirements such as Reaction Time, Focus and Concentration, and Memory, can indicate an increased risk of being involved in an accident. Should the participant fall below the set parameters, these weaknesses and learning difficulties can be focussed on and corrected in a follow-on four- to six-months online corrective programme. On completion, participants are issued with a certificate identifying their strengths and weaknesses, which can be further addressed by their driving instructor.

In summation, these programmes can and do effect changes for the better in the brain, without harm, allowing the young person to achieve their maximum possible potential and reducing the possibility of addiction to alcohol and drug as well as having a positive effect on behavioural disorders.

For further information, visit [www.braincarehealth.com](http://www.braincarehealth.com); email James Lee at [james@braincare.ie](mailto:james@braincare.ie); telephone 085 217 1800.



# The future of school-based ALCOHOL EDUCATION

The latest findings from research undertaken by Drinkaware Ireland into the most effective practices in delivering alcohol education in schools



**Dr Mark Morgan** is Cregan Professor of Education and Psychology at St. Patrick's College, and has just completed a term as co-director of Growing Up in Ireland, the government's national longitudinal study of children's development.



**Martha Sweeney** is Education Programme Manager with Drinkaware. Martha taught for many years in Post Primary education, and has delivered nationally the Department of Education's fifty hour Substance Abuse Prevention Programme (SAPP) course to teachers and principals.

**A**lcohol is a significant problem in Irish society, with the figures relating to underage drinking being of particular concern. While research shows that Irish students are not drinking any younger or more frequently than their European counterparts, they rank significantly higher than students from other countries in the amount of alcohol they consume in one sitting. The rate of binge drinking among adults in Ireland is second highest in the World Health Organisation (WHO) European Region.

Drinkaware's mission is to work with others to fundamentally and permanently change attitudes and behaviours so that drinking to excess and drinking underage become unacceptable. This will be achieved by raising awareness, creating understanding, and supporting behaviour change through evidence-led education and effective communications in three key areas: tackling underage drinking through our parents' campaign, reducing alcohol misuse and supporting alcohol education.

Consuming alcohol underage impacts in a negative way on young people's engagement with

school, among other aspects of life. Addressing the problem of underage and binge drinking requires a co-ordinated and collaborative approach. Drinkaware, an independent not-for-profit organisation with a vision of Ireland where alcohol is not misused, has undertaken significant research to establish what works in delivering effective alcohol education in schools. In 2015, Drinkaware commissioned Professor Mark Morgan to undertake research to identify the most effective practices in delivering alcohol education in schools.

## WHY IS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?

For several decades, research on school prevention of alcohol problems among young people has been carried out across the world but especially in Europe, the United States and Australia. The background for this work is the realisation that young people in every country tend to drink earlier than the legal drinking age. Because school is such an important influence, there has been a major drive to incorporate aspects of social and personal behaviour into the curriculum, as with SPHE (Social Personal and Health Education) in Ireland.

School approaches to prevention of problems with alcohol have developed and changed over the years. Initial thinking was that it would be adequate to give young people information on the dangers of alcohol. However, because a substantial amount of time usually elapses from first drinking to problems of addiction, the outcomes of these programmes were initially disappointing. More recently, programmes have focused on the social and personal skills that can help young people to resist the pressure to consume alcohol.

Evaluations of school programmes have become quite advanced. It is no longer sufficient to ask young people if they thought a programme was 'satisfactory' and to assume that all was well if they were in agreement. There is now a consensus that the highest scientific standards need to apply so that unjustified claims are not made. Now, many evaluations

"More recently, programmes have focused on the social and personal skills that can help young people to resist the pressure to consume alcohol."



use control groups involving the matching of an experiment group who experience the programme with a similar group of students who do not.

### HOW HAS UNDERAGE DRINKING IN IRELAND CHANGED?

While the number of young people in Ireland who report binge drinking has a greater similarity in recent times with other European countries, the larger amount consumed on a drinking occasion is important in devising prevention programmes. Another finding in research in Ireland was that much of the alcohol consumed was neither in their home nor on a licensed premises, but rather was in other settings like parks and vacant houses. The problem with this pattern was that these locations were not under any form of adult supervision.

There are indications that while boys drink more frequently and at an earlier age, these differences between girls and boys have declined over the last 15 years. Differences associated with social background are minimal in terms of frequency and amount of consumption. However, there are differences with regard to the locations in which drinking takes place, with disadvantaged young people more likely to drink in uncontrolled settings. In turn, this results in their drinking being more visible and may therefore create an impression of a relatively greater problem in some neighbourhoods.

"Differences associated with social background are minimal in terms of frequency and amount of consumption. However, there are differences with regard to the locations in which drinking takes place, with disadvantaged young people more likely to drink in uncontrolled settings."

### HOW SUCCESSFUL ARE SCHOOL PREVENTION PROGRAMMES?

For a variety of reasons, including different approaches, settings and age-groups, not all evaluations of programmes yield similar outcomes. What matters is the overall picture, looking at the pattern emerging in the very large number of studies and focusing especially on those studies with the most rigorous designs. The emerging outcomes are quite promising. With the best designed studies, very successful demonstrations of positive effects have been shown, especially for programmes with a broadly-based rationale.

Specifically, evaluations with strong designs (including control groups) have shown decreases in reported consumption by young people, not only in the immediate aftermath but for some time later. One of the most positive outcomes emerged in a study of the EU Dap Unplugged programme. The focus was on efforts to decrease the quantity of alcohol consumed on a given occasion, and involved six EU countries. In the follow-up six months later, the intervention group (aged 12-14 years) reported significantly fewer episodes of being drunk compared with a control group who received a standard school curriculum. Furthermore, this effect persisted in a subsequent survey carried out 18 months later.

It is noteworthy that results have shown that generic programmes (focusing on other behaviours as well as alcohol consumption), are

not as effective as those focusing exclusively on alcohol. Another important point is that virtually none of the evaluations showed evidence of counterproductive effects, that is, an increase in consumption as a result of the programme.

### WHAT FACTORS MAKE PROGRAMMES MORE EFFECTIVE?

While we can say with confidence that prevention programmes can have a substantial impact on the consumption of alcohol by young people, important questions remain about the specific features that make programmes effective so that the mistakes of earlier times are not repeated.

A central principle is that an emphasis on social influences is crucial in the successes that have been achieved. As found in other areas, a whole school approach has a much greater chance of success than isolated lessons taught by one or two teachers.

Another crucial factor concerns the style that guides the teaching of the programme. There is a consensus now that an interactive style of teaching involving student input is more effective than approaches that involve passive or didactic approaches. This finding has implications for other aspects of methodology. For example, if the involvement of peer leaders results in a higher level of interest and greater engagement, then their participation can be seen as enhancing the interactive features of the intervention. Similarly, if the basis for judgment regarding the age at which programmes should be introduced is around engagement and interaction, it is possible to devise a programme at virtually any age, if there is a matching of interests and competencies of students with the programme content.

Other important features that may enhance programme success include:

- Linking prevention programmes with other curricular areas, especially with areas that have a social and personal content.
- The aims of programmes should emphasise harm reduction as opposed to abstinence.
- The atmosphere of the programme should centre on a positive rather than a punitive or scary approach.
- The correction of erroneous beliefs and misconceptions since young people overestimate the quantity and frequency of peers' consumption.
- The programme should be delivered by school staff members with training in this specific area and with expertise to deliver the programme as planned, including

an understanding of the programme's rationale.

- There are possibilities of combining computer technology with conventional approaches, in the delivery of prevention programmes.
- A system should be put in place to ensure that the programme is being implemented as planned and that significant deviations do not occur on a regular basis.
- With regard to evaluation, schools should monitor the reactions of students, families and the school community.

#### THE VIEW FROM SCHOOLS

Anecdotal research carried out in 2015 by Drinkaware's Education Programme Manager Martha Sweeney with principals and SPHE teachers from ten schools across the country revealed some food for thought. Overwhelmingly, those interviewed did not feel a

whole school approach to alcohol education was supported, despite feeling that this would have more success and impact on students. It was felt that school alcohol policies should be reviewed in the context of prevention and education. A need for a user-friendly whole school alcohol education programme, including senior cycle SPHE, Transition Year and parent education, was identified. It was felt that this programme should be based on Irish research, linked to happy lifestyles and integrated with the new Wellbeing Programme. Additionally, this should be supported by teacher training, and involve challenging attitudes and developing life skills.

#### TEACHING AND INFLUENCING AGENTS

While there has been much research carried out both nationally and internationally around adolescent alcohol use, Drinkaware is mindful that the voices of young people are heard and included in any future educational developments. In



2016, [market research company] Behaviour and Attitudes was commissioned to carry out research with 200 Third Year students. The findings from this research are interesting for many reasons. On a national level, the research indicates that the three top tiers of teaching agents about alcohol use are (in order) parents, second-level school teachers and other family members. In terms of influence, parents (79%) and other family members (55%) again rank highly for students who are more likely to follow their advice about alcohol than any other group. The findings show that while teachers ranked second in terms of where students learn about alcohol, they were less influential when it comes to following advice about alcohol use (44%). Interestingly, the Gardaí are cited as the second highest influencing agent in relation to alcohol use. While SPHE class is identified as the dominant post-

primary method of teaching about alcohol use, in students' review of this teaching just one-third rank second-level school as having taught them very well about alcohol.

### KNOWLEDGE AND CONCERN

Just over half of students surveyed feel their knowledge of alcohol use is limited, with perceived self-knowledge weakest among boys. Seven in 10 students said alcohol use is an issue of concern for them, while the remaining students are 'not at all' concerned with alcohol use. Alcohol use and sexual activity are ranked relatively low in terms of health and social issues. When presented with factual statements relating to alcohol and its effects on health, wellbeing and society in Ireland, most students were unable to correctly identify the facts. In one instance, 70% of students were unaware that 1 in 5 adults do not drink alcohol. Crucially, almost all Third Year students

surveyed state that they are seeking out ways to learn how to stay safe and alcohol free, with a similar high majority wanting to learn about alternatives to alcohol for young people.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is evident from this research and analysis of past programmes that schools have a prominent role to play in alcohol education and as such, teachers should be provided with the knowledge, skills and professional development to enable them deliver an up-to-date, innovative and multi-faceted programme relevant to today's young people in Ireland. A focus on harm reduction and a whole school approach, including whole staff training and cross-curricular delivery, are critical to ensuring the success of such programmes.

As key influencers on a child's attitudes and beliefs towards alcohol, parents and the wider community should be involved throughout the programme. There is a clear need for students to receive current, accurate information around social norms relating to, and the effects of, alcohol use from a young age. It will also be vital for any future alcohol education programme to include opportunities for students to explore alternatives to alcohol and to acquire the personal and social skills to stay alcohol-free.

The aim of education is to prepare young people to socialise and to have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour to fulfil their individual and societal roles and live fulfilling and productive lives. A whole school evidence-led alcohol education programme can make a significant contribution to this aim being realised in the lives of young people.

Copies of all research outlined in this article are available at [drinkaware.ie](http://drinkaware.ie) or by emailing [info@drinkaware.ie](mailto:info@drinkaware.ie).



# NCSE publishes advice on supporting students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in schools

By Teresa Griffin, CEO National Council for Special Education (NCSE)



## INTRODUCTION

In July 2016, the NCSE published the first major review of educational provision for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) since the publication of the Report of the Task Force on Autism in 2001. In welcoming this review, Minister Richard Bruton TD noted the important contribution made by parents, teachers, school management bodies and all stakeholders, which has transformed the ability of schools to educate students with ASD.

The NCSE takes very seriously its responsibility to provide the Minister for Education and Skills with expert, independent, evidence-informed advice on special education. In preparing this advice, an extensive range of relevant national and international research was reviewed. In addition, the NCSE commissioned two specific studies: one to review literature on educating persons with ASD between 2008 and 2013 and the second to examine what is happening for students with ASD in mainstream and special settings. These research studies and policy advice, along with a guide for parents/guardians and students, are available on the NCSE website ([ncse.ie/policy-advice](http://ncse.ie/policy-advice)).

The NCSE consulted widely, holding over 30 meetings with educational partners and stakeholders, (including representatives from ETBI),

visiting 10 schools and inviting 16 presentations from parents, teachers and academics.

Seven principles informed the NCSE policy advice, as follows:

### Students with ASD:

**Principle 1:** Are welcome and able to enrol in their local schools irrespective of the severity of ASD and/or cognitive ability.<sup>1</sup>

**Principle 2:** Have an individualised assessment which informs teaching and learning and forms one part of an ongoing and cyclical process of assessment, intervention and review of outcomes.

**Principle 3:** Have access to education and care that is available on an equitable and consistent basis.

**Principle 4:** Have access to a wide-ranging curriculum that is relevant and appropriate to their needs.

**Principle 5:** Have access to available educational schemes and supports on the basis of their needs rather than disability category.

**Principle 6:** Have available resources used to maximum effect to drive improved outcomes and

State services work together to achieve this.

**Principle 7:** Have their parents' role as their natural and primary educators respected.

## KEY NCSE FINDINGS

**One in every 65 students (1.55%) in Irish schools is now diagnosed with ASD.**

While this prevalence rate is substantially higher than previously reported<sup>1</sup>, it is in line with more recent prevalence rates reported in the UK and US. The NCSE recommends that this prevalence rate should now be used for educational planning.

Almost 14,000 students with ASD attended school in 2014-2015 and the vast majority (86%) were educated in mainstream schools – 63% in mainstream classes; 23% in special classes in mainstream schools and the remaining 14% in special schools.

**Students with ASD are generally well supported in schools but further improvements are required, particularly in post-primary schools.**

Substantial investment in education since 2001 has brought about a significant improvement in the supports and placements available for students with autism to the point where in 2014-2015:

<sup>1</sup> **2013:** DCU study reported a prevalence rate of 1% among Irish children; **2001:** Task Force on Autism estimated a prevalence rate of .56% among the general population – based on international prevalence rates.



- €300m+ was invested in supports for students with ASD (approx. €21,400 per student);
- There is a good and improving range of placement options available - ca. 950 special classes and 20 special schools are in place specifically for students with autism;
- Ca. 2500 teachers are employed specifically to support students with ASD;
- 69% of students with ASD have access to SNA support.

Despite substantial growth and corresponding improvement in educational provision for students with ASD, the availability of appropriate mainstream and special placements continues to be problematic in certain areas of the country, particularly for those students with more complex learning and/or behavioural difficulties. As a result, the NCSE considers it should be given the necessary legislative authority to put a national continuum of school provision in place.

While generally there is good practice in primary schools and many post-primary schools, the post-primary model of provision needs further refinement. Transition to the greater organisational complexity of the post-primary system can cause problems for some students with ASD at a time when they may have increased levels of anxiety due to puberty and difficulties in social communication, and are striving for increased independence. Given the increased complexity of post-primary schools, greater levels of teacher/programme coordination are required to oversee the academic progress of students, the organisation of individualised timetables for students, and transitions planning.

Difficulties can arise in relation to the deployment of teaching resources in some post-primary schools whereby resource teaching or special class hours are used to fill teachers' timetables, regardless of their levels of skills, competence or knowledge in special education, and without taking the particular student's learning needs into account. The NCSE does not regard such practice as child-centred or an effective use of state resources and considers such practices should be discontinued.

More able post-primary students with ASD should be supported through resourced mainstream provision while only those with complex needs should be placed in a special class. In addition, the current special class model, comprising wide age and ability ranges, may not always be the most suitable for post-primary schools. Some post-primary teachers report feeling isolated and de-skilled in schools where special classes are organised as a segregated entity.

Students with ASD in post-primary special classes require access to a broad-based post-primary curriculum, either through being included in mainstream classes wherever possible, or by having a small number of specialist teachers allocated to teach their subjects at the appropriate levels to the special class. The number of teachers involved with the post-primary special class should be kept to the minimum necessary to provide students with access to a broad-based post-primary curriculum.

In August 2016, the NCSE published guidelines for Boards of Management and Principals setting out clearly how schools can set up and organise special classes to create a suitable learning environment to meet the needs of students enrolled. These guidelines are available on the NCSE website ([ncse.ie/guidelines-for-schools](http://ncse.ie/guidelines-for-schools)).

### **A flexible and responsive educational system is required in which teachers are trained in a range of evidence-informed interventions.**

The research is very clear that every student with ASD is different and responds differently to interventions. What is needed, therefore, is a flexible and responsive educational system which draws on and uses appropriately a range of evidence-informed interventions in line with each student's needs. Following an examination of the literature on educational interventions for students with ASD, the NCSE listed 34 evidence-informed interventions that may have some effect on some aspects of ASD for some students, e.g. modelling, exercise, reinforcement, early intensive behaviour intervention, cognitive behavioural therapy. Many of these interventions form the basis of good teaching.

While there is a lot of research in the area of autism, its quality is variable; it does not all provide a robust evidence basis for intervention and some interventions are recommended without having any evidence basis at all.

Teachers therefore must have the expertise to identify each student's needs and be able to select and use evidence-informed interventions appropriately. Interventions must then be carefully monitored over time to see if they are helping students to make progress, and educational programmes should then be adapted in line with this review.

Significant progress has been made in the past decade in providing good quality training to teachers, and many teachers are now well trained in ASD. However, more development of teacher knowledge, skill, understanding and competency is required. Many post-primary teachers



consider they are not adequately equipped to work with students with ASD either in mainstream or special classes, and they require further training programmes carefully tailored for the post-primary aged student and those students who have more complex needs.

Given the increased prevalence of students with ASDs in all education settings and the centrality of the teacher in their education, the NCSE considers it essential that all teachers have a knowledge and understanding of students with ASD, and of how general teaching principles can be applied to teaching these students.

Teachers also require to be supported well by adequately resourced multi-disciplinary teams and education support services so that they are enabled to respond to students with more complex needs.

**Access to the Extended School Year Scheme (July Provision) is inequitable and potentially unsafe.**

Mainstream post-primary students with ASD are grant aided for 40 hours home-based tuition during four weeks in July. The original purpose of the scheme was to

continue the student's academic programme to avoid the regression in learning that can occur during the extended holiday period. The NCSE found that the scheme is hugely valued by parents. However, there isn't a solid evidential basis which justifies the Department of Education and Skills limiting access to the extended school year (July Provision) schemes to certain categories of disability only, including ASD. Students with other disabilities may also benefit from such support.

In addition, the NCSE found that the operational aspect of the extended school year scheme can result in potentially unsafe environments for both students and staff, particularly where new staff members are recruited who are not familiar with the students' behavioural or medical needs.

**Parents are greatly concerned and anxious about post-school provision and support for students with ASD, especially those with more complex needs.**

While parents generally felt that their children were now well supported in school, they expressed great

concern about what they perceived to be a lack of appropriate planning for, and/or post-school provision and support for, their children when they leave school. Similarly while comprehensive transition planning processes are now in place between primary and post-primary schools, planning for transition out of the school system needs more attention. Post-primary schools need to develop further outwards links to specialist services and employment to facilitate this transition.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the NCSE found that the arrangements required for students with ASD include that:

- quality pre-schools;
- School-aged students are taught by skilled teachers, and other school personnel (school secretaries, caretakers, SNAs, bus-drivers and escorts) are trained to be autism aware;
- Students have equitable access to a wide range of educational placements and evidence-informed interventions;

- Assessment and educational planning is informed by multi-disciplinary teams that are consistently available;
- Schools are supported by adequately resources support services, e.g. National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and Inclusion Support Service (ISS);
- A full range of meaningful post-school work, educational and other placement opportunities are in place.

The NCSE made eleven recommendations designed to move the system towards ensuring that nationally, these arrangements are in place for students with ASD on an equitable and consistent basis. A number of those recommendations with most relevance for post-primary schools are outlined below:

#### **Greater investment is required in teacher education**

- Sufficient comprehensive programmes of professional learning in ASD must be funded, developed and made available for mainstream primary and post-primary teachers that are tailored to the particular needs of each cohort of teachers.
- Specialist roles and settings require qualified and experienced teachers. In special classes, teachers should have a minimum of three years' teaching experience (post-probation) to allow time for development and upskilling.
- The NCSE Inclusion Support Service should be sufficiently resourced to develop the capacity of schools to promote positive behaviour and to manage challenging behaviours if/when they arise.

#### **Government should provide for sufficient ring-fenced health supports.**

The HSE must be resourced to ensure it is in a position to provide adequate multi-disciplinary supports to students with complex special educational needs, including ASD, who require such supports.

#### **While acknowledging the extensive progress in school-aged provision for students with ASD, further improvement can be brought to the system by:**

- An additional allocation of teaching hours to post-primary schools for coordination of programmes;
- An expansion in psychological services for schools and a sufficiently resourced Inclusion Support Service;
- A re-framing of DES policy on the use of over-quota hours for resource teaching in post-primary schools so that only teachers with appropriate skills, knowledge and competencies are allocated resource teaching hours;
- Continuing professional development (CPD) for SNAs and other personnel working with students with ASD.
- Review of post-school options
- A cross-Departmental review of post-school education, training and adult services options, is necessary to ensure that sufficient and appropriate placements are available for students with ASD.
- Schools should draw up a post-school transition plan for students with ASD as part of their individualised education planning.

#### **Extended School Year Scheme (July Provision)**

The current extended school year (July Provision) scheme should be replaced with a safe, social summer day-activity programme that is available for all students with complex educational needs.

#### **CURRENT POSITION**

A number of significant developments have taken place since the submission of the policy advice to the Minister in December 2015:

- The Minister has established an Implementation Group (with NCSE representation) to consider how the advice might be implemented.
- A number of the paper's recommendations were encompassed in the proposals contained in the Programme for Partnership Government, May 2016.
- Multi-annual funding of the new DCYA-led Access and Inclusion Model can bring about considerable progress in the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream pre-schools.
- Given these developments, the NCSE expects that many of its recommendations will be implemented over the short- to medium-term. We look forward to continued cooperation with ETBI schools so that students with special educational needs, including those with ASD, can receive an education that enables them to achieve their potential.

# Using student feedback to support quality enhancement of education practice and provision



By Sean O'Reilly, project manager for the Irish Survey of Student Engagement.

In the spring 2016 edition of ETBI magazine, Dr Domnall Fleming wrote about the increasing acoustic of student voice in Irish schools. The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) is a national survey offered to students in state-funded higher education institutions. Dr Fleming's article prompted reflection on whether the approach to gathering student feedback being implemented in higher education could be transposed to the FET context or, perhaps, even to the post primary school context.

In 2013, a unique national collaborative partnership was put in place to develop and implement a national survey of students in Irish higher education. The initiative originated as a response to *The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*<sup>1</sup> which was published by the Department of Education and Skills in 2011 following extensive consultation.

The national strategy included a number of recommendations, including the development and implementation of a national survey of students. The strategy stated that:

*"Students have a major contribution to make in influencing the design of curricula, and in reviewing and providing feedback on them. All higher education institutions should have formal*

*structures to ensure that students are involved in curriculum design and revision"*

and recommended that:

*"every higher education institution should put in place a comprehensive anonymous student feedback system, coupled with structures to ensure that action is taken promptly in response to student concerns".*

The National Strategy continued:

*"Student representatives should be involved in the process for acting on student feedback, and this process should be transparent and accessible to all students. In addition, a national student survey system should be put in place and the results published."*

It acknowledged that higher education institutions had implemented a range of surveys (and other methods) to gather feedback from students over time but the strategy document noted that:

*"while substantial progress has been achieved..., students still lack confidence in the effectiveness of current mechanisms and there remains considerable room for improvement in developing student feedback mechanisms and in closing feedback loops".*

## OBJECTIVES

The stated central objective of the project is to develop a valuable source of information about students' experiences of higher education. Student engagement is critical to the success of the national project. Measuring student



1 [http://www.heai.ie/sites/default/files/national\\_strategy\\_for\\_higher\\_education\\_2030.pdf](http://www.heai.ie/sites/default/files/national_strategy_for_higher_education_2030.pdf)

2 (Coates, H. (2005) The value of student engagement in higher education quality assurance. Quality in Higher Education)



engagement with their learning and learning environments is regarded as allowing us to develop a deeper and fuller understanding of the student experience than is possible through student satisfaction surveys.

*"Learning is influenced by how an individual participates in educationally purposeful activities. Learning is seen as a joint proposition.... however, it also depends on institutions and staff providing students with the conditions, opportunities and expectations to become involved"<sup>2</sup>*

Results from the survey enable institutions to identify practice and provision that are effective, and informs discussion on aspects of existing practice that present particular issues or challenges. The results of the survey are intended to add value primarily at institutional level, while also informing national discussion and policy. There are specific advantages to a national survey, as it enables:

- Institutions to consider results for local student cohorts in the context of similar institution-types nationally,
- Countries to compare national results to those for equivalent surveys undertaken internationally.

The objectives for developing and implementing the survey were:

- to increase transparency in relation to the student experience in higher education institutions,
- to enable direct student input on levels of engagement and satisfaction with their higher education institution,
- to identify good practice that enhances the student experience,

- to assist institutions to identify issues and challenges affecting the student experience,
- to serve as a guide for continual enhancement of institutions' teaching and learning and student engagement,
- to document the experiences of the student population, thus enabling year on year comparisons of key performance indicators, and
- to facilitate comparison with higher education institutions and systems internationally.

The particular approach taken to develop and implement the survey may be of interest for other educational sectors. The approach adopted meets the needs of different stakeholders, even where these needs are sometimes perceived as competing or at odds with each other.

#### APPROACH TAKEN: PARTNERSHIP

The national collaborative partnership that was put in place to address the recommendation consists of state agencies (The Higher Education Authority, [www.heai.ie](http://www.heai.ie), Quality and Qualifications Ireland, [www.QQI.ie](http://www.QQI.ie)), participating institutions, institutions' representative bodies (Institutes of Technology Ireland, [www.theai.ie](http://www.theai.ie), and the Irish Universities Association, [www.iau.ie](http://www.iau.ie)) and the Union of Students in Ireland, [www.usi.ie](http://www.usi.ie).

Working groups addressed various strands of activity and all working groups were representative of participating organisations. The partnership approach adopted has proved highly effective and ensured that the expectations, concerns and aspirations of multiple stakeholders were addressed as the project was planned and implemented. This continues to be an essential element to the ongoing participation of institutions and of students. A

successful national pilot survey was implemented in 2013 and has been followed by national surveys in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

#### APPROACH TAKEN: BASED ON EFFECTIVE EXISTING PRACTICE

A specific working group researched existing practice internationally and determined that a survey focussing on students' engagement with their learning and learning environments would most effectively meet the objectives for the project. This was an important strategic decision which ensured that the ISSE moved well beyond a potentially simplistic survey of student satisfaction and that it explores the extent to which institutions and staff provide the conditions, opportunities and expectations for students to become involved *and* the extent to which students engage with those opportunities. Student engagement with college life is important in enabling them to develop key capabilities such as critical thinking, problem-solving, writing skills, team work and communication skills. Effective experiences challenge students to achieve their potential. Students who are challenged may not feel satisfied at all stages of their educational experiences. Indeed, the explicit desire to avoid a simple satisfaction survey (sometimes perceived as a 'consumer' approach) is central to the ISSE.

Student engagement is enhanced through involving students in educational processes that enable them to construct their learning and knowledge. Measuring engagement can provide a means to develop a fuller understanding of the student experience above and beyond that ascertained through student satisfaction surveys.

#### APPROACH TAKEN: RIGOROUS TESTING

Working groups conducted extensive

research into literature on student engagement and into existing practice internationally. Discussions were held with international peers and practice from the US and from Australia was regarded as particularly relevant. Institutional representatives with relevant expertise reviewed questions used in other surveys and drafted a questionnaire for potential use in Ireland. These questions were tested with students through focus groups and one-to-one interviews in nine institutions, representing a cross-section of students and of institution-types. Statistical testing was undertaken on the national data collected from the pilot survey. The results of this rigorous testing process demonstrated that the survey was reliable and, importantly, enabled stakeholders to develop trust in the project and to begin to engage with the results of the survey itself.

Implementation of the ISSE and utilisation of ISSE data have progressed at a significant pace because of the partnership approach taken and the underlying rigour.

## PRESENTATION AND USES OF THE DATA

One of the earliest challenges was to optimise the project to meet expectations of all stakeholders while also gaining credibility as an objective and robust instrument to support enhancement of teaching and learning.

Each of the co-sponsoring organisations and partners has different remits and, therefore, distinct aspirations and expectations for this project. State agencies have legitimate reasons to seek explicit measurable data that would inform quality indicators and provide an insight into the experience of students. Institutions have multiple possible uses for the data. These

range from uses of data in quality assurance processes to uses of data to enhance teaching and learning. Students have expectations that they will receive effective feedback and that appropriate action will follow. In addition, it is perceived that the wider public has an interest in the performance of higher education institutions and, therefore, that there may be some “external” interest in any results.

A detailed national report is published each year<sup>3</sup> which provides results for all students, for each year group (of first year, final year and students pursuing taught postgraduate programmes), for each institution-type (universities, institutes of technology, other institutions) and for broad subject areas, as well as other student groupings. This report meets the need for system-level data on the student experience of higher education in Ireland. The report does not include details for individual institutions.

Individual institutions receive anonymised results for their own students in a small number of different formats. In general, results are presented for the individual institution alongside similar institution-types and overall national results. These files are provided only to the individual institution to inform and support quality enhancement discussions and activities and are not made available elsewhere. The ability to review institution-level results in the context of similar institution-types and nationally is an important benefit to the use of a consistent survey instrument nationally. However, evidence to date demonstrates that there is greater variation within institutions than between institutions. Variation within institutions can be explored by individual institutions to identify issues for discussion

and to enable staff to learn from colleagues. Support for analysis of institution-level data is available on a confidential basis by request only.

## A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

In the 2013 pilot survey, a specific question was included asking students for their views on the survey itself. Examples of comments from students included:

*“The survey was pretty interesting and made me reflect on my own academic year and my performance during classes. Overall it’s a very good survey.”*

*“I think the survey is a great idea. It is very important to allow the students to voice their opinion and I would appreciate it if the survey is asked to every student before they complete their studies.”*

*“I think it would be important that the results would be made available not only to University staff but to students as well.”*

*“I’m happy with this survey so far, and I hope the information provided will actually lead to action, more so than just providing the college with information.”*

These comments indicate that students recognise and value the potential of a survey as one element for providing feedback on their experiences. The fact that more than 89,000 students from thirty Irish higher education institutions have participated in the ISSE from 2013 to 2016 suggest that a wealth of valuable insight is available if we can create the context that allows the potential to be realised while addressing the valid perspectives of multiple stakeholders. Further details of the ISSE are available at [www.studentsurvey.ie](http://www.studentsurvey.ie).

<sup>3</sup> For 2015 Report see: [http://studentsurvey.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ISSE-Report\\_2015-final-tagged.pdf](http://studentsurvey.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ISSE-Report_2015-final-tagged.pdf)

# Social Innovation Education - innovation and entrepreneurial learning for what matters



Rachel Collier (right) with Sister Stan

By Rachel Collier, Co-founder & CEO, Young Social Innovators

## SOME INSIGHT

In 2001, Sr Stanislaus Kennedy and I, seeking to put the engagement of young people in social issues firmly on the map of youth education and development in Ireland, established Young Social Innovators (YSI). At that time, there was no real system for teenagers, no nationwide impetus, momentum or importance given to this kind of engagement – depending on your school and teacher, you might be lucky. That just wasn't enough. Since then, over 120,000 young people have participated in and benefited from YSI programmes. Each year some 10% of teenagers now get involved in YSI at senior level, and we are just beginning a junior action programme.

## SOCIAL INNOVATION EDUCATION

YSI was first organisation to coin the term "social innovation education". Its learning supports the development of young people as caring, connected, creative, empowered adults. Coupled with this, the community benefits from their actions.

Working with very disconnected homeless young people in Dublin and establishing Focus Point in the 1980's (now Focus Ireland) gave us two huge insights that informed our thinking and the design of YSI and its pedagogy. Firstly, young people, given an opportunity, can use their

experience and creativity to change their situation. It is often through their experience and wisdom that they can overcome difficulty. Secondly, doing social innovation itself, such as developing Focus Point services for homeless people, provided us with incredible insight into how social change happens. Reflecting on both of these points helped us design a model of social innovation learning that now is widely used by young people and educators.

Some 525 second-level schools are in YSI's network of providers. YSI now offers innovation and entrepreneurial learning to 15,000+ teenagers each year. But it's much more than that, because at the forefront is YSI's purpose of empowering young people to create social good and contribute to the well-being of people and the environment. YSI involves young people in human-centred design thinking. Integrating 'social' benefit into innovation and entrepreneurial learning is important.

## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

It is not enough today to innovate for profit without truly considering social impact. Someone said to me recently that the millennial generation is more informed about global challenges than we were, suggesting that they are not satisfied working just to produce wealth for the few, but want to see that what they do and how they do it really matters. He believes that

this generation is quite prepared to challenge their employers in how they are achieving their goals.

That's interesting. Because I think there is a fear that social responsibility is seen as the soft stuff of doing good rather than the stuff of how we are getting things done; how our behaviour harms or does good to ourselves, to the communities we live in, and to the local and global environment. Doing good business now is doing business for good.

Our millennials are challenging us to make social responsibility an integral part of our modus operandi, in both our life and our work. The impact of this is helping to make social responsibility more central to our living and business behaviour. Socially responsible practices are now imperative, rather than an optional extra.

We, and particularly young people, see more clearly the global challenges, such as poverty, unemployment, mass migration

"Our millennials are challenging us to make social responsibility an integral part of our modus operandi, in both our life and our work."



A class of Young Social Innovators

"Educating critical and creative thinkers and innovators informed by shared human and global values is key to a better, fairer future. While YSI is engaging thousands in such learning I believe it can and should be available and offered to all students."

and homelessness, radicalisation, and climate change, which are, unfortunately, affecting all of us in more direct ways than before. We ignore these at the cost of social cohesion. Education has an important role to play here.

Our world needs innovators who care about humanity; who actually understand and contribute to the global goals set out in Paris. There are not many people, millennial or not, who disagree with the global goals which provide a roadmap to a more sustainable world. These goals provide a shared view of

how we can survive and live into the future, or not. Challenging, but achievable.

Social innovation education, we believe, can and does play a major and practical role in empowering young people to contribute, to find solutions, to understand that what they do counts, and to do things differently. This is why it is important. It connects the dots, the thinking, the learning about our world and how we can contribute, from a young age, to making a difference.

When a generation can hold a mirror up to employers and to all of us and challenge how we do things, we can be assured that socially responsible behaviour and practices will become the norm of 'how we do things around here'.

Educating critical and creative thinkers and innovators informed by shared human and global values is key to a better, fairer future. While YSI is engaging thousands in such learning I believe it can and should be available and offered to all students.

*The YSI model is now gaining global attention with training offered as far away as Canada and Zambia. Find more about YSI's programmes and young innovators on their website.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.youngsocialinnovators.ie/>



# ETBI Annual Conference 2016



Images from the ETBI 2016 Annual Conference

The ETBI Annual Conference, which took place this year in Killarney, is a prestigious event, the only occasion in the year when delegates from all of Ireland's sixteen Education and Training Boards gather to address topical issues with expert analysis and input. Delegates include members of the ETB boards and professional staff from their schools and education and training centres. Also invited are top-level officers from the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, as well as representatives from other education agencies and stakeholders, and business and community interests.

The theme of this year's Annual Conference, was "*Equity in Education*".

Day 1 featured a panel discussion on *equity in education: real or imagined? Interventions to make a difference*. The panel was composed of renowned journalist John Walshe, Dr Brian Fleming, author of the recently published *Irish Education 1922-2007: Cherishing All the Children?*, Dr Patsy Daly, Head of the Department of Special Education at Mary Immaculate College, Michael Barron, Executive Director of Equate, and Catriona O'Brien, Principal Officer with the Department of Education and Skills. This wide-ranging and informative session was much appreciated by delegates.

On Day 2, the Conference hosted a number of sessions covering topics of interest to a wide range of delegates and guests.

One session explored issues around the very topical subject of *mental health and well-being in our schools* with contributions from Eamon Gaffney, member of the board of Headstrong/Jigsaw, Ireland's National Centre for Youth Mental Health, and Seanie McGrath, retired Munster senior hurler and media analyst and pundit. Professor Niall Moyna, professor of clinical exercise physiology and Head of the School of Health and Human Performance at DCU, discussed competences for *21st Century living*. Delegates found all three speakers both entertaining and enlightening.

Ann O'Dwyer, Education Officer with Kerry ETB, examined a physical education project in Kerry ETB, *Scoil Gníomhach*, while Trevor Sweetman, Youth Officer with Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB, covered

*Youth Work, what it is and what is its impact.*

Another current issue, *entrepreneurship in post-primary and FET curricula*, was addressed by Professor Tom Cooney, Professor of Entrepreneurship in DIT, Michael Vaughan, hotelier and past president of the Irish Hotels Federation, and Joan Russell, course director of the ETBI Edison Entrepreneurship programme.

Brendan O'Dea, Deputy Director of the Teaching Council, considered issues arising from the imminent commencement of the Council's fitness-to-teach procedures for teachers.

In this year of the 1916 commemorations, John Coolahan,

Professor Emeritus of Education, NUI Maynooth, and Chair of the Arts in Education Charter Implementation Group, reflected on *Pádraig Pearse and the Irish school system*.

ETBI General Secretary Michael Moriarty addressed the delegates on the first day of the Conference. In his address, he welcomed the revised pay arrangements for newly qualified teachers and praised ETB management and staff for their commitment to working collaboratively to promote the values of ETB schools and colleges, which, he believed, informed the sector's attitude to Junior Cycle reform. He considered the divestment of denominational primary schools, and discussed the potential of ETBs to support and

lead cultural and societal change.

Rounding up the Conference on Day 2, Pat Gilmore, President of ETBI, and Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton TD addressed delegates and attendees.

In his address, Mr Gilmore commended the overarching goals of the Minister's Action Plan for Education to develop the best education and training system in Europe, and welcomed the commitments in the Plan to enhance apprenticeships and traineeships, to embed self-evaluation and quality in schools, to improve outcomes in DEIS schools and to break the cycle of disadvantage.



Images from the ETBI 2016 Annual Conference



However, Mr Gilmore said, funding was key to breaking the cycle of disadvantage, to delivering a learning experience to highest international standards, to driving Ireland to become a global innovation leader, and to making the Irish education and training system the best in Europe.

Mr Gilmore highlighted a number of issues that had been underfunded for a long time and needed to be addressed if the targets in the Plan were to be reached. Among them he listed the need for re-constituting and reforming the administrative structures and leadership capacity in schools, which had been stripped of personnel over the past eight years; the need to address serious shortages of second-level teachers in a range of subjects; the crucial matter of supporting student

well-being with professional development for teachers and the appointment of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) to lead and coordinate support for special educational needs students in schools; the need for significant improvement in the level of resourcing for guidance counselling in second-level schools as well as adult guidance services in Further Education and Training (FET) provision; and the need to lift the moratorium on the employment of training centre instructors and key programme managers in the FET sector.

Mr Gilmore concluded by referring to the 1916 proclamation which guaranteed religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and committed Ireland to cherishing all the children of the nation equally.

He exhorted Minister Bruton to “go to battle for enhanced resources for the education and training sector, in order to turn policy into practice, to turn aspirations into reality, to fill gaps left from years of underfunding, so that equal educational opportunities for all become a reality, and not remain just an aspiration.”

Minister Bruton in his address praised the work of the ETBs across all areas of provision, agreed to look into many of the issues which had been raised by Mr Gilmore, and committed his Department to working with the ETBs to ensure that they would be able to fulfil their remit.

*Speeches and presentation made at the Conference are available to download from the ETBI website.*



Images from the ETBI 2016 Annual Conference

## Honour for ETBI General Secretary Michael Moriarty

ETBI General Secretary Michael Moriarty was recently presented with the Albert Schweitzer Leadership for Life Award at the eighth annual International Youth Leadership Conference in St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co Kildare. The prestigious award was bestowed on Michael in recognition of his lifelong commitment to education and training and to working towards making the youth of today into the future leaders of tomorrow. ETBI is pleased to acknowledge the Albert Schweitzer Leadership for Life Award to Michael Moriarty for his tireless work and leadership in the area of education, training and structural reform.



ETBI General Secretary Michael Moriarty receiving the prestigious Albert Schweitzer Leadership for Life Award

## NEW ETBI APPOINTMENT TO SUPPORT PRIMARY LEVEL AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY NATIONAL SCHOOLS



Séamus Conboy, recently appointed ETBI Primary Support Officer

In September 2016, the new ETBI post of Primary Support Officer was taken up by Séamus Conboy. His primary role is in the support and development of the Community National School model.

Séamus trained as a primary school teacher and has worked in a Catholic school in Dublin and international schools in Kuwait and Kazakhstan. He

has been in the CNS model since his return to Ireland in 2009. Séamus is currently on secondment from his role as principal of Citywest & Saggart CNS.

Séamus has a keen interest in the unique and challenging ethos of the Community National School model and the ETB sector as a whole. He

completed a Masters in Intercultural Education in Trinity in 2015. His research focused on the question of religious/belief identity recognition in Irish multi-denominational primary schools. This work contributed greatly to the development of Citywest & Saggart CNS, in providing a space for children to be nurtured in every aspect of their identity, while at the same time challenging them to see the world from the perspective of others.

In his new role, he provides support and advice to ETBI and individual ETBs in relation to the CNS model. He is also building an awareness-raising structure for the CNS model that explains and promotes the unique ethos and educational philosophy underpinning the model. He also works closely with designated senior staff in ETBs in supporting the current CNS schools through the provision of CPD and advice.

To contact Séamus, email him at [seamus.conboy@etbi.ie](mailto:seamus.conboy@etbi.ie) or call him at 045 901 070.



# Retirement of Peter Kierans, CEO of LMETB

Best wishes to Peter Kierans, CEO of LMETB, as he signs off on 21 years. Here, he is led to retirement by his 1-year-old grand-daughter Maura Ascough, after his last day of work at LMETB.



## 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.



ETBI Training Schedule Autumn & Winter 2016-2017						
Title of training or public information session(s)	Provided by	Target audience & maximum number if any	Date(s) & times	Venue	Registration deadline if any	ETBI contact for further info & registration
PSR Seminar: New EU Directive, ETenders & Procurement Planning	ETBI	ETB Procurement/ Finance personnel	4th October 2016 10am-4.30pm	ETBI	16-Sep-16	gwen.moore@etbi.ie
Instructional Leadership Programme	ETBI	School Management and Teachers – max 120 per Cohort - 3 cohorts per year	October 10/11/12 <sup>th</sup> 2016	Mount Wolsley, Tullow, Co Carlow	January 31st for new cohort commencing (Cohort 9)	admin@instructionalleadership.ie
			October 12/13/14 <sup>th</sup> 2016			
			October 17/18/19 <sup>th</sup> 2016			
			March 1/2/3 2017			
			March 6/7/8 2017			
Edison – Entrepreneurial Education programme	ETBI	School Management and Teachers - Cohort 1	March 8/9/10 2017	ETBI Piper's Hill	n/a	joan.russell@etbi.ie
			10/11 <sup>th</sup> October 2016			
			23/24 <sup>th</sup> October 2016			
			7/8 <sup>th</sup> October 2016			
			11/12 <sup>th</sup> November 2016			
FET Conference 2016	ETBI	ETB FET professionals	2017 dates to be decided			
PLSS Learner Database Training	ETBI & SOLAS		Tues/Wed 22/23 November 2016	Killashee House Hotel, Naas		Pat O'Mahony
Child Protection Training for ETB Board of Management Members	Delivered in conjunction with the DES PDST Unit, JMB and ACCS	ETB Board of Management Members	Schedule available on ETBI website from beginning of October			
			25 <sup>th</sup> January 2017	Galway Education Centre	n/a	Niamh Ginnell
			28 <sup>th</sup> January 2017	Limerick Education Centre		
			4 <sup>th</sup> February 2017	Waterford Education Centre		
			11 <sup>th</sup> February 2017	Kilkenny Education Centre		
			25 <sup>th</sup> February 2017	Drumcondra Education Centre		
			1 <sup>st</sup> March 2017	Blackrock Education Centre		
			2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2017	Athlone Education Centre		
			9 <sup>th</sup> March 2017	Vienna Woods Hotel, Cork		
			14 <sup>th</sup> March 2017	Donegal Education Centre		
			15 <sup>th</sup> March 2017	Navan Education Centre		
ETBI Board of Management 'Train the Trainer' Programme	ETBI	ETB Trainers	September 7th 2016	ETBI Piper's Hill	n/a	Niamh Ginnell
Data Protection Training	Millett & Matthews Solrs in conjunction with ETBI, JMB and ACCS	Principals, Deputy Principals and ETB Administrative staff with responsibility for Data Protection	Wednesday, 28th September 2015 and Wednesday, 5th October 2016	Horse & Jockey and Clarion Hotel, Liffey Valley	n/a	Deirdre Keogh & Niamh Ginnell
Training for ETB Chairpersons	ETBI in conjunction with Governance Ireland	ETB Chairpersons and Chief Executives	Thursday, 13th October 2016	ETBI HQ	n/a	Niamh Ginnell
QQI Briefing on new Validation Policy and Criteria	ETBI and QQI	Staff involved programme development and validation	26th October 2016	ETBI Pipers Hill	21-Oct	tim.broe@etbi.ie
Workshop on Development of QA Procedures for New Apprenticeship Programmes	ETBI	ETBs leading new apprenticeship programme development	8th September 2016	Faite Ireland Offices Dublin	n/a	Marie.Gould@etbi.ie
QQI Briefing on new QA Procedures and Validation Policy for New Apprenticeship Programmes	ETBI and QQI	Staff involved in planning delivery of new apprenticeship programmes	31st August 2016	ETBI Pipers Hill	Now Closed	tim.broe@etbi.ie
Workshop on transferring FAS programmes to QBS	ETBI and QQI	Staff transferring former FAS programmes to QBS	7-Oct 11am-1pm	Athlone TC	n/a	tim.broe@etbi.ie

## PRESTIGIOUS INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOR BALLYFERMOT TRAINING CENTRE

The staff and management of Ballyfermot Training Centre (DDLETB) were delighted to be recently awarded with the title, 'International Centre of Excellence - Europe and the Caribbean 2016 - 2017' by international awarding body City & Guilds. Ballyfermot faced stiff competition for the award from hundreds of other centres across both Europe and the Caribbean, but came out clear winners due to its approach to training and the diversity of City & Guilds programmes that it offers.

Ballyfermot Training Centre is no stranger when it comes to being recognised for its outstanding performance in delivering City & Guilds programmes. Members of the training centre staff have been awarded 'Medals for Excellence' in their respective fields in 2014,

2105 and 2016, and most recently representatives of the training centre were invited to Buckingham Palace to meet HRH Princess Anne, where she presented Instructor Richard McCarthy with the President's Award for excellence in his field.

When asked to what he attributed Ballyfermot Training Centre's unprecedented success, Centre Manager Paul Fennelly replied, "What I believe separates Ballyfermot Training Centre from other training providers is the extent to which we strive for diversification of the City & Guilds product we deliver. While the centre has invested heavily in the construction field, including a comprehensive suite of courses in the sustainable construction area, we also provide City & Guilds

qualifications in IT, Social Media, Retail, Hospitality and Waste Management, as well as our new dynamic Pre-Apprenticeship programmes which were developed in partnership with City & Guilds, Ballyfermot is constantly looking at new, innovative ways to expand the portfolio of courses it offers through this awarding body."

He continued, "Most importantly, the centre prides itself in the learner experience it offers: be it learners, External Verifiers, or any individual that visits Ballyfermot Training Centre, we endeavour to ensure that all leave with an extremely positive view of how City & Guilds qualifications are delivered within our centre."



Paul Fennelly (centre) collecting the International Centre of Excellence - Europe and the Caribbean 2016 - 2017 Award on behalf of Ballyfermot Training Centre

# WATERFORD STUDENTS ATTEND INTERNATIONAL COMMEMORATION OF THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

The ceremony on July 1st at the Thiepval Memorial commemorated the people who died in France in World War I



By Noreen Reilly and Ger Lohan, St Paul's Community College in Waterford (WWETB)

**O**n June 28th last, twenty-five very excited students from St Paul's Community College in Waterford, accompanied by Principal Noreen Reilly and teachers Gerard Lohan and Mai O'Keeffe, flew to France to attend the International Commemoration of the Battle of the Somme.

This came about after teacher Ger Lohan entered the school into a national competition, a project funded by the British Council, and was awarded the honour of leading the only twenty-five students from Ireland to the Somme Ceremonies.

A century on, the Battle of the Somme is one of the most tragic battles of the First World War, in which more than one million men lost their lives. The Battle of the Somme began on 1 July 1916 and was fought along a 15-mile front near the River Somme in northern France. 19,240 British soldiers died on the first day - the bloodiest in the history of the British army. The British captured just three square miles of territory on the first day. At the end of hostilities, five months later, the British had advanced just seven miles and failed to break the German defence. In total, there were over a million dead and wounded on all sides, including 420,000 British of whom there were 1200 Irish men, about 200,000 from France and an estimated 465,000 from Germany.

The visit to France by St Paul's Community College students was the culmination of six months of dialogue and hard work with our partner school in France, which led to the creation of high quality art work.

On day 1 of their trip, the students visited Amiens Cathedral, then participated in a workshop where they saw real artefacts from the trenches and had the opportunity to try on a soldier's uniform. They then travelled to the Thiepval site for the first rehearsal for the Commemoration event.

On Day 2, they visited a Commonwealth War Graves Commissions Cemetery at Serre. This was a poignant moment for teacher Gerard Lohan whose great-uncle Private Joseph Monaghan was one of

the missing of the Somme. Student Graham Drohan's great-grand-uncle Fredrick Forysthe from Waterford, also killed in action during the Great War, was also remembered.

Following a picnic in a school in Albert, the group travelled to the Lochnagar Crater, the site where 60 tonnes of explosives were detonated under the German trenches on the morning of July 1st 1916, heralding the start of the "great push" launching the British offensive against the German lines. At this huge, grass-covered, unusual peace memorial, St Paul's students joined with the other 575 students to remember those lost at the Somme. Following a two-minute silence, a lone piper played "It's a long way to Tipperary", much to the delight of Principal Noreen Reilly, a Tipperary native herself.





On leaving the Crater, St. Paul's students were interviewed by Irish Times reporter Ronan McGreevey, who travelled from the Belgium border to meet them at the side of the road on the country lane leading to the Crater. It was then on to the Thiepval Memorial for a full dress rehearsal, where the students were greeted by Colonel Michael Kiernan, aide-de-camp to President Michael D Higgins, and other senior Irish Army officials who commended them for their enthusiasm, diligence and commitment to the project.

Further excitement ensued when thirteen of the students attended that evening as guests of the Abbey Theatre, their famous production of "Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching towards the Somme". At the theatre, the students were met by Minister for the Arts, Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Heather Humphreys, Frank McGuinness, author of the play they were about to see, Fiach Mac Conghail, Director of the Abbey, and Dr Bryan McMahon, Chairman of the Abbey Theatre. A wonderful theatrical experience which brought the events of a hundred years ago to life, was how students described their visit. At the end of the evening, Frank McGuinness signed copies of the programme and Fiach Mac Conghail introduced the students to the cast.

The remaining members of the group had the opportunity to meet the French Minister for Education while they were engaged with their partner schools in the Pop Up Museum Art work project.

Finally Friday July 1st dawned, and the excitement was palpable. Following a 6.30 am rise to assemble for an "airport-type" security check, student Ian Maher, the College's "ambassador" for the trip, headed off on the "ambassadors' bus" to meet members of the British royal family



at a private inaugural ceremony of a new museum at the Thiepval site. Ian met the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall, and also got an opportunity to speak with Prince Harry in person.

Meanwhile the remaining students and their teacher were on the first of a fleet of fifteen buses to be brought under police escort to the Thiepval Memorial site. En route they had a bird's eye view of the cannons that would be used in the ceremony. Ms Reilly, Mr Lohan and Ms O'Keeffe had the honour of leading the group of 600 students to the hospitality tent where they assembled into their respective groups prior to participating in the ceremony.

The members of the British royal family were joined by Prime Minister David Cameron, French President François Hollande, President of Ireland Michael Higgins, and other world leaders and dignitaries, to honour the victims of the brutal offensive which started in northern France one hundred years ago. During the proceedings, the girls laid a posy and the boys laid a wreath on the graves of the commonwealth soldiers interred in this solemn, lonely place. The ceremony was a moving and fitting tribute to those who lost their lives in this futile

battle, and the roar of the cannons and the lament of the lone piper from the Irish Guards brought home to all present what a terrifying, lonely place this must have been a hundred years ago for the young men who were slaughtered here. Ar dheis dé go raibh said.

The high-profile ceremony was broadcast live by BBC and RTÉ, and, to the delight of parents back home in Waterford, St Paul's Community College was mentioned and close-up shots of St Paul's students were broadcast.

After the ceremony was over, St Paul's students were greeted by President Michael Higgins and his wife Sabina. They were also greeted by Prince Harry, who told them: "It's important that you are here. There are all sorts of parts of history that are being forgotten. It's important for us to remember older history as well as more recent history. I'm actually quite jealous of you guys getting to spend five days here learning all about it. You will come back with a huge amount of knowledge."

Finally, after a visit to the Château at Versailles where the Armistice signifying the end of World War I was signed, and a brief bus tour taking in historical sites of Paris, including the Stade de France, the

Eiffel Tower, the Trocadero, the Arc De Triomphe and the Champs Élysées, it was off to the airport for the flight home, where the students were welcomed by proud parents who were delighted and appreciative of this unique and wonderful experience for their children.

Mr Lohan, who had been responsible for this great trip, said, "This has fulfilled an ambition of a lifetime. I am the first of my family to visit this solemn place where my great-uncle was lost. I feel a special connection with him today and am honoured and privileged to have attended the centenary commemoration. I look forward to visiting the other Somme battlefields in the months and years to come."

According to College Principal Noreen Reilly, "The memory of this significant event will remain etched in the hearts and minds of these privileged students forever. This was a fantastic opportunity for the students of St Paul's Community College, who had the honour of representing all Irishmen and women who lost their lives in World War I. It was a privilege to take part in this historic moment, to reflect on the futility of war and the need for peace. Forging lasting friendships among young people from Ireland, UK and France will, I believe, contribute to greater understandings and good relations for the future, hopefully ensuring that the mistakes of the past are



not repeated. We are grateful to the British Council for affording us the opportunity to represent Ireland and participate in this fully-funded five-day event in France."

It is hoped that these links will be a truly lasting legacy and testament to the many people of all countries and faiths who died during this terrible battle.

## 'All Children in the Circle' Conference in Donegal

Leading experts on inclusion in education were among the speakers at a major two-day conference on inclusion, 'All Children in the Circle', at the Radisson Hotel in Letterkenny. It was organised by the Donegal Education and Training Board and the Donegal Down Syndrome Association.

The speakers included Professor Sue Buckley, a world authority in the area of education and development for young people with Down Syndrome.

Gina Grant of the Donegal Down Syndrome Association said the conference, like the association, was about encouraging people to see the person and not the disability.

"This was a wonderful opportunity to look at what is best practice not just in Ireland but around the world, and see how we can do the best for all our young people," she said. "The focus is about making sure

that all children are 'in the circle' in education, and not left out in any way.

"One important strand of discussion was looking at how we can give local schools the resources and the skills to include children with special needs. The conference was also about giving parents and carers the information and the confidence they need to demand more for these children."

The conference was held over two days. Those attending on the Friday included educators, teachers, Special Needs Assistants, guidance staff and Special Educational Needs staff. Saturday's conference was geared particularly towards parents and carers.

Dr Martin Gormley, Director of Schools with Donegal ETB, said he was delighted with the turnout over the two days.

"This was an important conference for anyone involved in the education of our children, as well as their families and carers," he said. "There's a lot of research and other work going on in this field, and we need more opportunities like this to learn about it."



Dr Martin Gormley, Director of Schools at Donegal ETB, who was among the organisers of a conference in Letterkenny on inclusion, 'All Children in the Circle'

## VTOS Kilkenny Woodcarving Showcase

By Geraldine Moran, VTOS Co-ordinator, Kilkenny (KCETB)

Each year the VTOS Centre in Kilkenny hosts a showcase of participants' work in Art, Woodcarving and Digital Photography. The Centre recently held a very successful woodcarving exhibition entitled "Quality has no fear of time" at MacDonagh Junction. Emphasis was placed on creative thinking, and there was some brilliant woodcarving work on show, the end result of what their teacher Peter O'Carroll described as a "journey of blood, sweat and tears." VTOS Co-ordinator Geraldine Moran welcomed all guests including KCETB Chief Executive Cynthia Deane, Chairperson Cllr Mary Hilda Kavanagh, Education Officer Eileen Curtis, and Adult Education Officer Martha Bolger. They all concurred that this was a wonderful exhibition, where the competence and hidden talents of the VTOS participants were brought to fruition.



## YOUNG GTI GRADUATE IS A SUCCESSFUL APP DEVELOPER



Andrew Irwin is a graduate of Galway Technical Institute, from two programmes – Electronics QQI Level 5 and Networks & Software Engineering QQI Level 6. He attributes much of his success at third level in Computing & Software Development to the excellent results he achieved in these two programmes.



At 23 years of age, Andrew has developed a mobile app that can detect when you're driving and can put your phone on silent. The app can also send an automatic reply text to inform people that you are driving.

Called 'Drive Safe', the app has already been used 30,000 times in 117 countries since it was introduced to the Google Play Store 7 months ago. In the last month alone, the app has been used in 71 countries, including 400 towns and cities across the USA.

Andrew attributes a lot of his success to the applied learning approach adopted at GTI, where he acknowledges the unique relationship that teachers have with their students in terms of academic support and assistance throughout the year.

Andrew also completed three weeks' work experience in Poland as part of the Erasmus+ programme, which he says was a 'once-in-a-lifetime experience'. There he perfected and developed more skills which he will use in his final year at GMIT.

Keep an eye out for Andrew, he's clearly going places!



GTI graduate Andrew Irwin developed the 'Drive Safe' app

# CAVAN AND MONAGHAN ETB INTRODUCES A TUTOR MENTORING PROGRAMME

By Angela McCrossan & Patricia Martin – Mentoring Co-Ordinators, CMETB

“Mentoring is a supportive learning relationship between a caring individual who shares knowledge, professional experience and insights with another individual who is willing and ready to benefit from this exchange to develop his/her skills, confidence and abilities and to enrich his/her professional journey.” (Faure and Shea, 1994)

Cavan and Monaghan ETB (CMETB) has developed a new mentoring programme to offer support and guidance to new Adult Education tutors. Tutor Mentors, who are experienced tutors within the Service, are assigned to work with new tutors (Mentees) as part of their induction to the Adult Education Service in CMETB.

The purpose of this programme is to provide:

- a welcoming, nurturing environment for new tutors
- a strong effective model of tutoring and classroom management
- support regarding assessment procedures and administration requirements, in keeping with CMETB's and QQI's Quality Assurance requirements.

The initial step in the Mentoring programme was to invite existing tutors to apply to become Mentors. A panel of tutor Mentors was created through an application and interview process. Mentors on this panel are experienced tutors from a broad range of programme areas.

Within the Adult Education Service, two existing staff members have taken on the roles as Mentoring Co-

ordinators, one in Cavan and one in Monaghan. They are responsible for overseeing and managing the programme, providing the initial training to Mentors, setting up a Mentor with a new Mentee, and liaising regularly with them during their Mentoring relationship. Mentors are required to provide support and guidance and to encourage Mentees to take responsibility for the delivery of their programme.

Mentors are assigned up to sixteen hours to mentor a new Mentee over a three-month period. At their first meeting, the Mentor and Mentee agree a schedule of meetings and set out the goals and objectives the Mentee wants to achieve from the programme. Subsequent meetings follow the goals and objectives set, e.g. guidance on writing briefs, giving constructive feedback to learners, classroom management, how to assess learners in line with national standards, etc. The programme offers phone and

email support between meetings, if the Mentee has any questions. The programme also includes two observations. The Mentor attends the Mentee's class for observation in the early stages of programme delivery and again during the later stages, and provides feedback to the Mentee. In turn, the Mentee has the opportunity to attend the Mentor's class for the purposes of observing good practice.

Since Mentoring was introduced in Autumn 2015, all new Adult Education tutors in CMETB have been given the opportunity to access the programme. The feedback from all involved has been very positive, especially the Mentees, who say that they feel supported and more confident in delivering programmes. The Mentoring programme is a very valuable and worthwhile project and CMETB looks forward to its continued development.



Suzanne Smith, Mentor and Brigid Teevan, Mentee



# TRANSITION YEAR STUDENTS POP-UP ON THE HIGH STREET

## Colaiste Chraobh Abhann moves enterprise forward!

By Ruairí Farrell, Business Teacher and Year Head at Colaiste Chraobh Abhann in Kilcoole, Co Wicklow (KWETB)

“It is unbelievable to think that at 16 years of age, I set up a shop on a busy main street,” remarked Brian Short, who, along with four of his Transition Year classmates, turned an empty unused building into a thriving shop and in doing so provided a platform for other young entrepreneurs. “It has bought our learning of business beyond the classroom and into the real world.”

In 2015, Transition Year students in a community college in Co Wicklow launched an exciting new initiative to take on the high street by establishing their own ‘Young Entrepreneur pop-up shop’. The shop gave the students a platform to sell the products they had designed as part of a Transition Year mini company activity on the main street, alongside large retailers such as Tesco and Centra. The pop-up shop initiative is a new venture

at second level, with the KWETB students breaking new ground in enterprise education.

Colaiste Chraobh Abhann in Kilcoole, Co Wicklow, has an extensive enterprise education programme for students, and in November each year, the college organises a ‘Spirit of Enterprise Week’ to expose all students to the world of enterprise and encourage them to consider possible careers in business. All Transition Year students, with the support of the Local Enterprise Office, design and develop their own mini businesses. However this enterprising bunch took things to a whole new level.

Through local industry visits, the students noticed that there were some vacant premises which they believed had potential to be retail

outlets, with the prospect of good footfall and passing traffic. The students negotiated the use of a retail premises with a landlord for a period of one month. They spent two weeks completely redesigning the premises by getting signs printed and erected and fitting the shop out with shelving units and display boards. They sourced a cash register and began advertising the launch of their shop on social media and in the local newspapers.

The five students in the management team had total responsibility for the operation of the premises, including the coordination of the day-to-day activities of sales, marketing, production and finance. They devised work rosters to ensure there was enough staff in the shop each day. They also ensured adequate finance and budgeted for cash flow. After



Minister Simon Harris cuts the ribbon for the Colaiste Chraobh Abhann pop-up shop

weeks of planning, the shop was ready to open for business.

The management team invited key influencers in the locality to the launch function. Members of the local business community, local politicians and representatives from the LEO and Chamber of Commerce were present to support the students and acknowledge their work. "I left the event feeling inspired and encouraged," remarked Minister Simon Harris TD, who officially declared the shop open for business and congratulated the students on their endeavours. Caroline McHale (PDST) acknowledged that she was "blown away by the creativity and innovation displayed by the students."

After the pressure and organisation of the opening night, the ten-day opening period kicked off in earnest. While their teachers and mentors took a step back, the student management team took time out of school to run the shop on a daily basis by themselves. The students received great publicity in local newspapers and radio stations. RTE News visited the shop to film its operation, and one student who displayed his product in the shop was invited to go on the Late Late Show with Ryan Tubridy, where his innovative product 'Headphone

Helpers' was featured. This product is a simple and innovative band made from silicone that goes around a user's neck and is used to prevent your earphones from falling to the ground and getting dirty, damaged or tangled around the users legs.

When customers came to the shop they were intrigued by the enticing displays and the variety of products which were presented on the shelves. Products included those aimed at children, such as an interactive children's book to promote literacy and creativity, a fun educational board game to promote the use of Irish, and creative fairy doors to excite any child. Products were also stocked for more mature audiences, such as home blended teas, decoupage candles, and pamper packages with face scrubs and bath bombs – all made individually by the young 15- and 16-year-old entrepreneurs!

The management team ensured stock levels remained high while also answering customer queries and maintaining adequate staffing levels on a day to day basis. A key element of success in retail is marketing and promotion and the students excelled in these areas also. They conducted leaflet drops in local areas and were extremely active on social media. To

conclude its ten days of operation on the Main Street, the shop ran a Christmas-themed market on the final day to entice families to visit the shop and do some Christmas shopping and avail of some last-minute promotions before the doors were closed.

"The pop up shop initiative gathered huge momentum over the course of its operation. Feedback from members of the public was very affirming for the students, and with a feature on RTE News and an endorsement in the Government's National Skills Strategy 2025, it was clear that the students' innovation and hard work had really paid off," commented Ruairí Farrell, their Business teacher.

The bottom line for any business or young entrepreneur is always profit, and the students certainly were rewarded. When the doors were closed and the till receipts were counted, the shop had raised in excess of €5000, which by anyone's standards is a very impressive figure for a group of young Transition Year students! Aside from the financial benefits, the students learned valuable skills in business teamwork, innovation and tenacity in order to make the shop a major success in the community.



Colaiste Chraobh Abhann TY students proudly standing outside their pop-up shop

# ADULT EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE ASSOCIATION AT THE HIGHER OPTIONS CONFERENCE



By Shane Rooney, Chair of AEGAI ([www.aegai.ie](http://www.aegai.ie); @aegaireland)

The Adult Educational Guidance Association of Ireland (AEGAI) was delighted to take a stand for the first time at the Higher Options Conference, in September 2016. They joined forces with their colleagues in the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) to promote the vital role of guidance within second level and the Further Education and Training (FET) sector.

The Adult Guidance Association represents guidance counsellors and information officers working in the Adult Educational Guidance Services (AEGS) funded by SOLAS and located in the 16 ETBs. The AEGAI organisation represents the views of its members and works to ensure the continued development of professional Adult Educational Guidance in Ireland.

The AEGS provide a fulltime, all year round, comprehensive guidance and information service

to all those over 16 years of age not engaged in education, training or work. In 2015 alone, over 50,000 adults availed of the AEGS service.

With the roll-out of the SOLAS FET Strategy in tandem with the Government's Jobs Strategy, it has never been more important to promote all the course choices and career options available to young people and adults. The Higher Options Conference has traditionally focused solely on CAO third level courses.

But it is essential, with the ever-changing needs of the economy, that young people and adults are made aware of the range of apprenticeships and traineeships available to them within the ETB PLC colleges and FET centres.

The 25 newly-launched apprenticeships, including those in Financial Services, Software Development, Logistics, and

Hospitality, providing qualifications from Level 5 to Level 9 on the NFQ, offer wonderful opportunities to those students whose inclination is towards a skills-based vocational training course, rather than an academic degree course. Along with the existing standard-based apprenticeships in construction, electrical plumbing, aviation etc., these new apprenticeships will provide exciting and rewarding career opportunities for those who choose these alternative routes.

There is such an array of course choices for young people and adults that sometimes it is hard for the potential learner to know where to begin. The recent launch of [fetchcourses.ie](http://fetchcourses.ie) can certainly help alleviate some of the load, but it is the Adult Educational Guidance Services all around the country that offer their skills to help individuals make sense of their options in order to plan their future journeys.



The AEGAI Stand at the Higher Options Conference



## HOW TO MAKE YOUR 'PERFECT PITCH'!

Sometimes it doesn't come easily, but the ability to sell yourself is important – whether that's at a job interview or a meeting with the bank manager.

So what's the advice of one of the country's leading experts in this area, Catherine Moonan? Catherine works with the popular RTÉ One television programme 'Dragon's Den'. She spoke to around 300 adult job-seekers from across Donegal at a 'Perfect Pitch' seminar in Letterkenny, organised by Donegal ETB.

- Her advice in summary for that one minute 'pitch':
- Think about your audience
- Tell a story, and make it simple, interesting and memorable
- Have a 'wow!' opening, make three main points, and summarise
- Finish with a thank you and a request ('give me the job!')
- Be passionate – and practice your pitch.

The seminar in the Mount Errigal Hotel in Letterkenny was aimed at helping job-seekers present themselves and their business ideas

at job interviews, to possible customers and to agencies and organisations, such as banks. One of the organisers, Dearbhla Kelly, said that many of those taking part were trying to find jobs or set up businesses after taking further education and training courses.

She said: "Seminars like 'Perfect Pitch' are aimed at helping those people make the most of their new skills and expertise and get that job or that business loan that could change their lives."



Organisers and guest speakers at the 'Perfect Pitch' seminar: (from left) Dearbhla Kelly, Donegal ETB; Crona Gallagher, Adult Education Officer, Donegal ETB; Patrick Murray, Tusla (Child and Family Agency); Lorraine Murray, Apprenticeships Manager, Donegal ETB; Martin McElhinney, General Manager, McElhinney's, Ballybofey; Catherine Moonan, Pitch Coach; Patrick McCabe, Ferm Engineering, Donegal Town; Ann Foxe, Principal, St Patrick's NS, Lurgibrack, Letterkenny; Vinny McGroary, Finance Manager of Training Services, Donegal ETB; and Lynn Mc Laughlin, Fortius HR, Inishowen



# Skills for Work Ironcraft Programme at LCETB Cappamore

## Findings from an impact review to ascertain the progression of learners and the socio-economic impact of the programme

Ironcraft Skills programmes have been delivered on the LCETB Cappamore Campus since 2014 under a variety of funding mechanisms, initially through Skills for Work and self-financing provision, and more lately through a City and Guilds accredited full-time PLC programme, the only one of its kind nationwide.

The Ironcraft and Blacksmithing course is delivered in three modules: Introduction; Tool Making; and Decorative Forging. The course outline is as follows:

Demonstrating the skills and knowledge of safe work practices in the use and care of forges;

Skills-based element focusing on basic decorative ironcraft and working with metal;

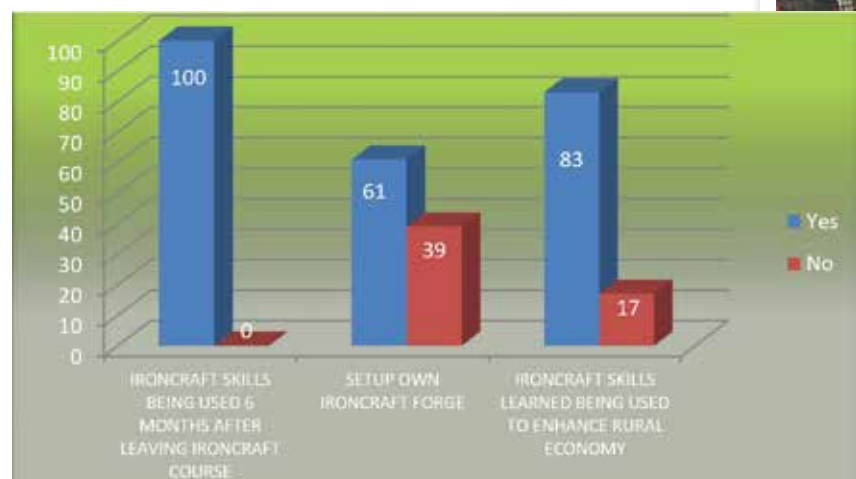
Understanding the Health and Safety Hazards, Risks and Controls associated with the process and

Diagram 1. Key findings (in percentage) of 2016 impact Review of LCETB SfW Ironcraft Programme

accident reporting within a high risk environment, and the importance of workplace ergonomics.

An impact review was conducted in June 2016, with a 100% response rate, to ascertain the progression of learners and the socio-economic impact of the programme in terms of self-employment opportunities or savings opportunities within current self-employment, the retention of heritage skills within the local rural community, and the renovation of local heritage ironcraft amenities. To date, three courses have been

delivered to a total of 18 learners (14 males and 4 females), from diverse backgrounds, who have completed various Ironcraft rotations. Questions were asked of participants on their use of their ironcraft skills (six months after leaving the programme), as well as on the economic impact of the programme for individuals but also for the local rural economy. Diagram 1 highlights the key findings in percentage terms from the feedback from the 18 participants on the SfW Ironcraft programme.



# Cuairt ar Choláiste Chineál Eoghain ó ghrúpa Tír na mBascach

Le Stephen Doherty, BOO Dún na nGall

Bhí lá mór i gColáiste Chineál Eoghain nuair a tháinig sé páiste is tríocha agus beirt cheannairí ó dTír na mBascach i rith mí Iúil. Is grúpa páiste iad atá ag fanacht le clainne i gcontae an Doire i rith an tsamhraidh. Bheartaigh said teacht ar thuras Inis Eoghain agus fanacht san brúóige sa Mhuileann Tullach Árbhan i mBun Cranncha. Thug said cuairt ar chúpla suíomhanna, mar shampla, Sráidbhaile Ghorta san Ísle Doagh. Chuir Coláiste Chineál Eoghain ranganna Gaeilge, céilidh, agus dioscó ar fáil óna deich a chlog ar maidin go dtí leath i ndiaidh a haon déag san óiche. Bhí daltaí ó Choláiste Chineál Eoghain agus Tír na mBascach ag labhairt agus ag canadh agus ag damhsa trí mheáin na Gaeilge, Bascach, agus Béarla i rith an lae. Buíochas mór d'Oihiana agus Leire, na ceannairí, Michael, Angela, Martin, Fred, agus Michelle ón Mhuileann, Ianire agus Leire ón Eirnaict agus Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall, agus Lorraine, Brigid, agus Sarah, na múinteoirí. Buíochas mór fosta ar cheoltóirí agus

damhsóirí Choláiste Chineál Eoghain agus ar DJ Mícheál.

It was a great day for Coláiste Chineál Eoghain when 36 young people and two leaders from the Basque Country visited us. The group stayed with host families in south County Derry during the summer. They decided to visit lovely Inishowen and stay at the Tullyarvan Mill Hostel in Buncrana. They visited a number of sites including the Famine village in the Isle of Doagh. Coláiste Chineál Eoghain provided Irish language classes, a ceilidh, and

a disco from 10 in the morning to 11.30 that night. Students from Coláiste Chineál Eoghain and the Basque Country spoke and sang and danced in Irish, Basque, and English. A big thank you to Oihiana and Leire, the two leaders, Michael, Angela, Martin, Fred, and Michelle from the Mill, Ianire and Leire from Eirnaict and Donegal County Council, and to Lorraine, Brigid, and Sarah, the teachers. Also a big thank you to the musicians and dancers of Coláiste Chineál Eoghain and our own DJ, Mícheál.



Cuairt ar Choláiste Chineál Eoghain ó ghrúpa Tír na mBascach

# MOHILL COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS VISIT BRUSSELS

By Ezekiel Stevens and Lauren Keighran, Fifth Year students at Mohill Community College (MSLETB)

In May 2016 Councillor Enda Stenson invited our school to enter the European Alliance (EA) group Secondary Schools Competition with a view to selecting two students to accompany teacher Evonne Maxwell to Brussels in June. It was an essay competition on the topic of 'Food Waste', and on the basis of those essays, two successful and happy candidates were selected, and thus represented our region in Brussels.

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) was formed in 1994, its main functions being to represent regions in the EU, as the majority of EU laws and rulings are implemented on either regional or local levels.

We promised ourselves before our trip to take in as much as possible of this visit to a city synonymous with modern democracy and power as it is rare that a door into a world like this is opened to you.

The first day we were left to explore the city. We took advantage of this free time by visiting the centre of the city, the Grand Place, and all the small side streets, which were full of northern European charm. We also wandered away from the centre and took in the real Brussels.

The next day we were welcomed by Stanislaw Szwabski, President of the EA group. Represented in the meeting room were schools from Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Italy, Slovakia, Romania, and of course Ireland, accompanied by our local representative, Enda Stenson. Each school had the task of presenting some information about their region, giving the students the opportunity to share information, and thus we

learned a lot about peripheral EU regions first-hand. It was an eye-opening experience to see how other countries' education systems worked and to be united in one room sharing a piece of each of our countries which we all proudly represented.

After talking with the CoR members and having lunch together we travelled to the European Parliament for a highly informative tour. When the TV cameras scan the Parliament Chamber for a particular news item, one gets a quick glimpse of the interior, but to be in this room in person, seated as a Parliamentarian, something of the sheer responsibility of the role of Parliamentarian almost overwhelms – but not so much that we cannot see ourselves there at some point in the future! For an hour we joined the CoR in a plenary session located in Charlemagne. The motion of the debate was the future viability of the steel industry in Europe. As the discussion was multilingual we had to use the translation channels to understand. After the discussion there was a vote on amendments before the session closed. We saw first-hand how the voting system works at these high-level Plenary Sessions, which in itself was fascinating, as this usually happens behind closed doors.

After the discussion we met Phil Hogan (EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development), Mairead McGuinness (Vice-President of the European Parliament) and Markku Markkula (President of the European Committee of the Regions).

We and the other winners of the CoR competition joined the President of the CoR Stanislaw Szwabski for dinner.

We are firm believers in the European Project, and together as proud representatives of Leitrim and Mohill Community College, have seen its magic, so many different nationalities debating and making decisions together. By seeing its scale, we can just about comprehend the logistical issues that it must face every day, so full credit to everyone who keeps this project alive.

We are grateful to Councillor Enda Stenson for affording us this opportunity, to our teacher Ms Evonne Maxwell for giving up three days of summer holidays to accompany us, and to our Principal Ms Una Duffy for much of the behind-the-scenes co-ordination.



Taking a seat in the European Parliament: Councillor Enda Stenson, teacher Evonne Maxwell, and Fifth Year students Ezekiel Stevens and Lauren Keighran



# Music Generation Young Ambassadors from Carlow, Cork City and Mayo join U2's The Edge for performance in the Sistine Chapel

By Aoife Lucey, Communications Manager, Music Generation

A choir of seven Music Generation Young Ambassadors joined U2 guitarist The Edge in making history as they performed live at the Sistine Chapel, Rome, on Saturday, 30 April 2016. This momentous occasion marked the first ever performance by a contemporary artist at the Vatican venue.

The choir, which was specially formed for the concert, included four singers from Carlow ages 13 to 16 – Abbie Kelly (Straboe), Cillian Dooley (Carlow), Katie Brennan (Pollerton) and Joe Jennings (Nurney). Abbie, Cillian, Katie and Joe are each members of the Aspiro Choir in Carlow and also participate in Music Generation Carlow programmes, supported locally by KCETB and Carlow County Council.

They were joined by Music Generation Cork City participants Claudia Sheehan and Nicole Alcock, who are students at Terence McSwiney Community College, Hollyhill. Both Claudia and Nicole are provided with music lessons and voice coaching in their school as part of the Sound OUT programmes, which are run by tutors Gráinne McHale and Aoibheann Carey-Philpott. Music Generation Cork City is locally funded by Cork ETB in partnership with Cork City Council, local and community organisations.

The choir also included 16 year-old Naoise Hughes from Cong, County Mayo, who has been a voice student at the Music Generation Mayo Ballinrobe tuition centre for the past two years. Music Generation

Mayo is managed by Mayo Music Education Partnership, led by MSLETB in partnership with Mayo County Council Arts Office, Mayo County Community Forum, Local Community Development Committee and The Mayo Education Centre.

Each of the seven young singers were invited to take part in this once-in-a-lifetime event as Music Generation Young Ambassadors – a programme that offers hundreds of young musicians valuable opportunities to perform at national and international events each year. At this life-changing event they performed a cover of Leonard Cohen's *If It Be Your Will*, as well as versions of U2 songs *Yahweh*, *Ordinary Love* and *Walk On*, together with The Edge on acoustic guitar and vocals.

In the weeks leading up to the concert, all seven choir members came together to rehearse under the direction of Musical Director and Arranger, Dawn Kenny.

Speaking of the performance, Music Generation National Director Rosaleen Molloy said: "I would like to congratulate these wonderful young people on their stunning performance. It has been such a privilege for Music Generation to have been invited to be part of this prestigious event together with The Edge – a remarkable opportunity for all seven young musicians to bring their talents to an international stage. Truly they have done Music Generation, their counties and their whole country proud. We look forward to following their bright musical journeys over the coming years."



Music Generation Young Ambassadors pictured with The Edge at the Sistine Chapel



# YOUNG MUSICIANS MAKE A BIG NOISE!

World conference, presidential visit, world premiere, All-Ireland Fleadh – it's been a busy few weeks for the Donegal Music Education Partnership.

The DMEP runs music tuition for around 500 children and young people in Donegal, and also has around 250 involved in performing groups. It is part of Donegal ETB.

Martin McGinley of the DMEP said: "It's been a fantastic time for us. We've been so fortunate to have these brilliant performance opportunities. They've helped to showcase the wonderful work going on in music education in Donegal and across the country, and also the role of the ETBs in making that happen."

Nine young musicians and singers from Donegal joined with five from Sligo in a performance at the world

conference of the International Society for Music Education in Glasgow. The performance at the National Piping Centre was a showcase of the work of Music Generation, Ireland's national music education programme. The group got a standing ovation from conference delegates from around the world.

The Donegal Chamber Orchestra played for President Michael D Higgins on his first official visit to Letterkenny. President Higgins had a chat with orchestra conductor Victor Yelamo, the well-known cellist who is originally from Malaga.

Victor said: "In the excitement I spoke to him only in English. I meant to say some words in Spanish to him as he's a fluent speaker."

The DMEP was involved in the world premiere of 'Home to Ballybeg', a

suite of pieces composed by Manus Lunny in honour of the late Brian Friel. The performance at An Grianán Theatre in Letterkenny featured internationally-renowned musicians, including Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh of Altan, flute-player Michael McGoldrick, who tours with Mark Knopfler, and Van Morrison drummer Liam Bradley. It was a highlight of this year's Earagail Arts Festival. Composer and conductor Vincent Kennedy composed arrangements for a DMEP string section, and the concert also featured the Donegal Youth Orchestra and Donegal Youth Choir.

Ennis in County Clare and the All-Ireland Fleadh was the final summer stop for the DMEP. The Partnership helped bring together a group of teenage Donegal traditional musicians to play in the Music Generation concert on the Supersmac's stage.



The group of Young Ambassadors for Music Generation, Ireland's national music education programme, pictured during rehearsals for their trip to Glasgow to play at the world conference of the International Society for Music Education. The young musicians were drawn from the Donegal Music Education Partnership, part of Donegal ETB, and Music Generation Sligo. Also in the pic are Sarah Murphy, back left, and Seamus Devenny, tutors from Wall2Wall Music.

# Youthreach conquers the Edinburgh Fringe

## Ballyfermot Youthreach students reach the giddy heights of performing at the Edinburgh International Fringe Festival

By Chris O'Rourke, Ballyfermot Youthreach

A lot can happen in three years.

Three years ago Unknown Theatre began in Ballyfermot Youthreach. A courageous group of young people, most of whom had never set foot in a theatre before, never seen a play or attended a drama class, decided to take a leap into the unknown. Young people designated as early school leavers, whose life experiences or backgrounds are such that theatre may not at first be appreciated, may not even be welcomed, or may be actively resisted. Through Unknown Theatre, they wanted to prove that they had something to say, could say it in their own way and in their own voice, and at a standard comparable to anything else out there worth an audience's time and money.

It began with a taster series of six workshops, Thursday mornings in The New Theatre, with a young cast ranging in ages from 16 upwards. There they laughed, played, cried on occasion, improvised and devised their scenes and stories. In July 2014, *Streets and Stories*, the inaugural production by Unknown Theatre, was performed to critical acclaim. A year on they returned with *If Walls Could Talk*, which also received huge critical acclaim, and subsequently toured a number of venues in Ireland, before returning in July to The New Theatre by popular demand, and playing to sold out houses. In between, there have been prestigious awards, including The Olympia Theatre Rising Star Award, standing ovations, full houses, and successful

auditions for Dublin Youth Theatre. Now, to cap it all off, Unknown Theatre has just completed a hugely successful run at the 2016 Edinburgh Fringe Festival!

They hadn't planned to go to Edinburgh. But everyone who saw the show said they should. And The New Theatre wanted to help. So off they went: Taylor Davis, Luke Weekes, Zoe Kelly, Chelsea Butterly, John McCarthy, Aishling Hickey, Ciara Gavin, Conor Quinn and Danni Hannon; meeting at the airport at four am on an August Sunday morning. For the next four days Unknown Theatre performed in the largest international theatre festival in the world. And they did not look out of place. They were there on merit, holding their own, standing head and shoulders with all the other shows they saw. They belonged there and they gave an excellent account of themselves and Youthreach.

Unknown Theatre came about in response to a need. Many conventional drama programmes don't address this need. These students often have a different energy, a different way of doing things; and words like "safe place" don't have the same meaning they might for others. They need to lead, to take you to where they want to go, to show you while discovering for themselves what they are capable of, discovering the power of theatre by making theatre on their own terms.

Three years ago, who would have thought it? A bunch of Youthreach kids, with no previous experience, performing at the Edinburgh Fringe.

Just shows what can happen and what Youthreach students are capable of!

"Through Unknown Theatre, they wanted to prove that they had something to say, could say it in their own way and in their own voice, and at a standard comparable to anything else out there worth an audience's time and money."



Ballyfermot Youthreach performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival

## St Ailbe's Junior Ladies Football Team secure impressive Munster win



Principal Ruaidhri Devitt, Principal of St Ailbe's School in Tipperary Town, writes of his great pride in the St Ailbe's Junior Ladies Football Team, who won the Munster Football Final against Coláiste Craiobhin Fermoy, with a score line of 7-06 to 3-07. He tells us they played with unbelievable passion and heart throughout the game, especially in the second half.

## Outstanding summer sporting successes for Bantry students

By Donal McGrath, Cork ETB

Two students from Coláiste Pobail Bheanntaí have made their mark in a hectic summer of Irish sport. Emma Spillane from Bantry captured her fifth consecutive All-Ireland Ladies Football medal as she helped Cork to retain their minor title while Glengarriff's Darragh McElhinney capped a gold medal winning performance at the SIAB Schools International Track & Field Meeting with a trip to the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

As part of the Irish Schools team that travelled to Kent in England, Darragh took the SIAB 1500M title on the finish line after a scintillating final hundred metres. Following on from this stunning victory, Darragh was invited to be a training partner for Irish Olympian Arthur Lanigan-O'Keeffe and enjoyed a once-in-a-lifetime experience as he travelled to Rio to assist in the athlete's preparations for competing in the Modern Pentathlon event.

Emma was a key member of the Cork Minor Ladies' Football team that was crowned All-Ireland champions at Glennon Brothers Pearse Park Longford after a 2-19 to 4-9 win over Dublin. The victory was Emma's fifth All-Ireland success. Having been part of Cork's minor win in 2015, Emma's burgeoning medal count now encompasses All-Ireland Under-16 titles from 2014 and 2013 as well as

an Under-14 win in 2012.

Looking ahead for these two capable students, Emma will be focussing on 6th Year and her preparations for the Leaving Certificate in 2017, while Darragh will turn his talents toward participation in the diverse opportunities offered by the Transition Year programme at Coláiste Pobail Bheanntaí.



Coláiste Pobail Bheanntaí students Darragh McElhinney and Emma Spillane being congratulated on their sporting accomplishments by Principal Dr Kevin Healy and Deputy Principal Denis O'Sullivan



## Local Training Initiative programme in Tipperary selected for European research project

A Tipperary ETB-funded Local Training Initiative called “Making Connections South Tipperary” has been selected as one of 32 programmes across Europe, and of only two in Ireland, to be included in a project researching best practice in working with disadvantaged learners and vulnerable groups.

Tipperary ETB works with a number of groups offering Local Training Initiatives (LTIs) to students who may not otherwise have the opportunity to access educational services. This programme, which was established in 2008 in conjunction with the Waterford Regional Youth Services, provides

education and support services to twenty-eight learners.

Making Connections is a Local Training Initiative (LTI) programme based in the Wilderness Youth and Community Centre in the town of Clonmel, Co Tipperary. It works with adults who have experienced difficulties with substance/alcohol misuse, associated mental health difficulties and/or homelessness.

Making Connections aims to re-introduce participants back into adult education and delivers QQI Level 3 training in a holistic learner-centred approach. Learners attend on a flexible part-time basis and take part in a variety of modules leading

to a Major Award in Employability Skills. Participants are referred to the programme through a variety of local agencies and services, such as drug counsellors, community-based drugs workers, probation services, women’s refuges, homeless services and mental health services. This ensures that each individual is fully supported whilst engaged on our educational programme.

Making Connections won an AONTAS Star Award in 2015, and following this, the EU-funded **On the Move Project**<sup>1</sup> invited them to take part in the research project. The research aims to identify how to reach those that are remote from education.



The Making Connections programme won an AONTAS Star Award

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.onthemove-project.eu/>



# Introduction to Woodcraft and Boatbuilding

## An inspiring KCETB Community Education Service project in Kilkenny

By Martha Bolger, Adult Education Officer, Kilkenny and Carlow ETB

U-Casadh is an inspiring social enterprise project which has been providing community-based support and mentoring for marginalised individuals and their families since 2008. U-Casadh has been funded by the KCETB Community Education Service (Kilkenny) for a number of years to work with men in the Ferrybank locality. The Boatbuilding Project was designed around the identified issues and needs of U-Casadh's participants with a Community Education ethos – it addresses educational gaps, it encourages taking responsibility for one's own learning and progress, improving numeracy and literacy, developing self-esteem and making a contribution to the community. The venture provides a focal point around which a range of community benefits can develop, including motivational learning opportunities that enrich people's lives and improve earning potential.

Inspiration was sought from the Illen Boatbuilding School in Limerick, which has developed and refined the traditional twenty-

three-foot Gandelow boat. These sturdy, elegant, clinker built boats, perfected for river racing, complement an existing local boat, the "Suir Cot". The traditional boatbuilding project aimed to develop woodworking and design skills, as well as communication and team building skills, in each participant. It served to commence the re-establishment of the once-strong ties between the community and the rivers, and it is hoped that this interest will build into economic benefits for those communities, through local and tourist activity.

Fifteen participants attended the project and they were encouraged to develop pro social values, by working on their own and as part of a team. They became adept

in the use of boatbuilding skills whilst learning the rich maritime history of the southeast of Ireland. In addition, participants were afforded the opportunity to learn to row and to qualify in river safety and to row the boats they have constructed on the River Suir. The completion of the project will also benefit the community, as a rowing race has been organised between Meithel Mara, Illen and U-Casadh boatbuilding schools.

This annual race on the River Suir will, in time, raise the profile of rowing in South Kilkenny (and Waterford) as a healthy enjoyable pastime and provide a much-needed boost to the maritime life of the city. Other programmes are currently being planned with U-Casadh and The Community Education Service.



# Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in Ireland



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