



Quality Framework Initiative

For Youthreach &
Senior Traveller Training Centres

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Contacts	4
Foreword	6
Abbreviations	8
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
SECTION 1: THE QUALITY FRAMEWORK INITIATIVE	
Introduction	16
Background	17
Context	17
Phases of the Quality Framework Initiative	18
The Quality Framework	19
The Quality Assurance Processes	20
SECTION 2: THE PILOT PHASE	
Introduction	24
Preparation for the Pilot Phase	24
Initiating the Pilot Phase	27
SECTION 3: FEEDBACK FROM THE PILOT PHASE	
Collection of Data	30
Overall Feedback	31
SECTION 4: FEEDBACK ON THE INTERNAL CENTRE EVALUATION PROCESS	
General Comments from all Stakeholder Groups	38
Feedback from Co-Ordinators/ Directors	39
Feedback from VEC Management	44
SECTION 5: FEEDBACK ON THE CENTRE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESS	
General Comments from all Stakeholder Groups	48
Feedback from Co-Ordinators/ Directors	49
Feedback from VEC Management	54
SECTION 6: END OF PILOT PHASE FEEDBACK SESSIONS	
Outline of Feedback Session	58
Stakeholder Feedback	58
Learner Workshop	61
SECTION 7: FEEDBACK FROM FACILITATORS	
Introduction	64
Mid-way Review	64
End of Pilot Phase Review	64
SECTION 8: RECOMMENDATIONS	
The Quality Framework	68
Internal Centre Evaluation Process	68
Centre Development Planning Process	69
Roll-Out	69
National Developments	70

Foreword



I welcome the Report on the 2003/2004 Pilot Phase of the Quality Framework Initiative for YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Centres.

The Quality Framework Initiative was launched in 2000 as a result of a recommendation from the YOUTHREACH 2000 consultative process. Four years later a Quality Framework has been developed together with a set of Quality Standards and Guidelines for both the Internal Centre Evaluation and Centre Development Planning processes. The Pilot Phase involved testing these Quality Standards and quality assurance processes.

The Quality Framework provides staff and management with the tools to work together to continuously improve the service they provide for learners. But it is more than a framework for managing centres. It is also a framework for managing change.

As this is a model for continuous improvement rather than a model for compliance, all centres, regardless of their stage of development, can begin to engage in quality assurance processes and aim to develop a culture of quality.

I look forward to the roll-out of the Quality Framework with the education partners and I am sure that this report will provide a basis for planning future developments.

I would like to thank all those who were involved in the Pilot Phase and whose contributions will shape further improvements to the guidelines, in particular the learners, staff, management and facilitators directly involved with the forty-four participating centres.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sile de Valera". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sile de Valera, Minister of State

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Foreword



I am very pleased to welcome the Report on the 2003/2004 Pilot Phase of the Quality Framework Initiative for YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Centres.

The Quality Framework Initiative is an important development for Vocational Education Committees and for centres in seeking to develop and implement a quality assurance model that will lead to continuous improvement in the service offered by centres in a way that meets the needs of learners, staffs and management.

The Initiative provides a comprehensive framework for centre based planning and evaluation that is directly comparable to the School Development Planning Initiative. Of equal significance, as a quality assurance system it satisfies FETAC's requirements under the Qualifications Act 1999.

I am particularly conscious of the extensive phased process which has underpinned the Initiative and the considerable input from all stakeholders and congratulate all those who have sought to further this process.

Whilst future discussions on the Quality Framework Initiative will, from a management perspective, focus on the rolling out of the quality assurance process to centres and our member VECs, I feel that this report, in essence, provides a very positive starting point.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Michael Moriarty'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'M'.

Michael Moriarty, General Secretary

IRISH VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Abbreviations

AEO	Adult Education Organiser
CDP	Centre Development Planning
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DES	Department of Education and Science
EO	Education Officer
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
ICE	Internal Centre Evaluation
IT	Information Technology
IVEA	Irish Vocational Education Association
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
QFI	Quality Framework Initiative
STTC	Senior Traveller Training Centre
VEC	Vocational Education Committee

Executive Summary

THE QUALITY FRAMEWORK INITIATIVE

Introduction

The Quality Framework Initiative (QFI) for YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Centres (S.T.T.C.) was established in November 2000. The aim of the initiative is to develop and implement a quality assurance model that would lead to continuous improvement in the service offered by centres and in a manner that meets the needs of learners, staff and management.

The quality assurance model that is being developed encourages partnership and collaboration between all stakeholder groups. It highlights the importance of developing systems for carrying out all the key activities within the centre as well as the need to develop policies and procedures in order to establish best practice and ensure consistently high standards of service.

The development of the Quality Framework was mainly influenced by the YOUTHREACH 2000 consultative process and the requirements of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999.

The development of the Quality Framework can be broken down into a number of distinct phases. The Exploratory Phase (Nov. '00- Jan '01) led to the Consultation Phase (May '01- April '02). This was followed by the Development Phase (May '02-July '03) during which a set of Quality Standards were developed and the component parts of the



Quality Framework was agreed. These included the processes of Centre Development Planning (CDP), Internal Centre Evaluation (ICE) and External Centre Evaluation. Detailed guidelines were developed in relation to Centre Development Planning and Internal Centre Evaluation.

The Pilot Phase

The Pilot Phase (September '03- July '04) involved the testing of the quality assurance processes and guidelines in 44 YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Centres. The Pilot Phase involved the selection of centres in co-operation with Vocational Education Committees (V.E.C.s), the selection and training of facilitators and the establishment of an administration system to process payments associated with the Pilot Phase.

The Pilot Phase began with four Regional Information Sessions that were attended by representatives of the various stakeholder groups. Centres began to engage in CDP in October '03 and ICE in January '04 although most centres opted to engage in ICE during the period May- July '04.

Centre Development Planning

Twenty-four centres piloted Centre Development Planning (15 YOUTHREACH and 9 S.T.T.C.s). The aim of the planning process was to develop a 3-5 year plan based on a review of the Quality Standards through consultation with all key stakeholder groups. A facilitator was available for five days to guide and support centres through the process.

Internal Centre Evaluation

Twenty centres piloted the Internal Centre Evaluation Process (14 YOUTHREACH and 6 S.T.T.C.s). This process involved carrying out an evaluation of nine out of the twenty-nine Quality Areas. The process was carried out over two consecutive days and involved the participation of key stakeholders. A facilitator was available for both days to support and guide participants through the evaluation process.

“Encourages partnership & collaboration between all stakeholder groups”

Overview of the Support Provided to Centres in the Pilot Phase

- *Documentation*
 1. *Quality Standards*
 2. *Guidelines for Internal Centre Evaluation*
 3. *Guidelines for Centre Development Planning*
- *Regional information sessions*
- *Trained facilitator allocated to each centre*
- *Funding provided to cover lunch, room and equipment hire*
- *Quality Framework Co-Ordinator*

FEEDBACK FROM THE PILOT PHASE

Collection of Data

A range of questionnaires and feedback sessions were used to gather information and feedback from those who participated in the Pilot Phase including staff, Co-Ordinators, Directors, V.E.C. Management, Boards of Management, community representatives, learners and facilitators.

This report attempts to outline the experience of the Pilot Phase for those who were involved as well as to highlight the key issues and recommendations arising.

Levels of Participation

A total number of 1379 stakeholders participated in the Pilot Phase. This included 816 learners, 493 staff, 24 members of V.E.C. Management, 34 members of Boards of Management and 65 community representatives. The level of participation by V.E.C. Management was lower than expected.

FEEDBACK INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT

General Issues

The development of a Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives

Many centres did not have an agreed and documented Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives in place at the start of the Pilot Phase. Work of this nature is particularly important for the CDP process. Stakeholders recommended that all centres should work towards having these in place prior to future engagement in CDP.

The payment of part-time staff

Concerns were raised about the inconsistent practice relating to paying part-time staff for engaging in the quality assurance processes. Approximately half of the centres that engaged in the Pilot Phase paid part-time staff for the hours normally timetabled while half paid part-time staff for additional hours on top of hours normally timetabled.

The venue for the ICE and CDP processes

The vast majority of staff teams opted to use their own centre as a venue for engaging in ICE and CDP, as recommended in the guidelines. Alternative accommodation was sought when large numbers of stakeholders were involved.

The level of centre-based administration support

There is no consistency in the manner in which administration support is apportioned between administration support based in centres and administration support based in a V.E.C. Office. A small proportion of centres have no centre-based administration support.

Internal Centre Evaluation Issues

General experience for stakeholders

The general response to the ICE process among stakeholders who participated in the Pilot Phase was extremely positive. Most appreciated the supports provided and the opportunity to examine centre practice in a systematic and collaborative manner. A small minority had concerns with regard to the documentation of policies and procedures, the evaluation of programmes by learners and an expectation that the work load for staff would be increased.

Quality areas selected for evaluation

Each centre selected 9-10 of the 29 quality areas to evaluate. Across all centres all quality areas were evaluated with the exception of Staff Recruitment. The areas most commonly selected include Health and Safety, Staff Development and Training, Code of Behaviour/ Conduct, Programme Design, Literacy & Numeracy and Work Experience.

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Completion of an Evaluation Report

The majority of Co-Ordinators/Directors completed an Annual Evaluation Report following the ICE process which was submitted to local management. The content of the report varied from centre to centre but all included an outline of the outcomes of the evaluation process. Many Co-Ordinators/Directors had difficulty documenting the activities of the centre over the previous year and the statistical information on learner participation and achievement in the centre. This reflects the lack of a systematic approach to recording key information.

Involvement of learners

Generally learners did not participate in the two-day evaluation process, although a small number did. In the main, evaluation by learners took place prior to the evaluation session either on an individual or group basis. The results from the learner evaluation was collated by a member of staff and fed into the two-day session.

Co-Ordinators/ Directors views on the ICE process

Co-Ordinators/ Directors were satisfied with most aspects of the ICE process including the Guidelines and the Regional Information Sessions. They agreed that staff are more aware of the need to deliver a quality service and that in general it had been a motivating and teambuilding exercise for those involved. Considering the low level of participation by V.E.C. Management, Co-ordinators / Directors did not think that Management were more aware of the work of the centres following the ICE process. They did expect that ICE would take place in the centre on an annual basis and that learners would be given opportunities to evaluate the programmes delivered in the centres.

V.E.C. Management views on the ICE process

Only a small number of Management participated in the ICE process and therefore a small number were in a position to give their views on the experience. Those who did were very positive about the process and its usefulness. They agreed that the ICE process

did provide V.E.C. Management with a mechanism to engage with centres in a more meaningful way. Some felt that they were already familiar with the workings of the centre and were very supportive but agreed that a more systematic approach would improve reporting relationships. They supported the notion that other centres would engage in ICE on an annual basis. These views suggest that alternative methods for engaging V.E.C. members should be examined.

Centre Development Planning

General experience for stakeholders

The feedback from stakeholders was generally positive. Most found the process to be a worthwhile and productive exercise. The review process set out each centres' progress toward meeting all 29 quality standards. All centres agreed and documented an action plan. A number of respondents found the CDP Guidelines to be confusing and found the learner review to be inappropriate. The workload involved in completing the plan caused difficulty for some. However completing the plan was rewarding and many stated that they enjoyed the experience of working together as a team.

Quality areas selected for CDP

Action plans contained a broad range of areas; however, a number of quality areas were prioritised for action across the majority of centres. These included the areas of Initial Assessment, Induction & Review, Staff Development & Training, Literacy & Numeracy, Programme Design and Code of Behaviour. These areas were selected because it was perceived that improvement to these areas was within the control of the stakeholder group. This was aided by the availability of certain guidelines or supports at national level that would enable the stakeholders to achieve their goals.

Involvement of learners

Although there were high levels of learner involvement in the CDP process the method of engagement was not appropriate. The majority of learners engaged in the review process as a

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Each centre selected 9-10 of the 29 quality areas to evaluate
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group, the results of which, were fed to the planning team. A small number of centres included learners on the planning team.

Co-Ordinators/ Directors views on the CDP process

In general, Co-Ordinators found the guidelines clear and easy to follow but less so than was the case with the ICE Guidelines. Many reported that they had depended more on the guidance of the facilitator than the Guidelines. In general, they agreed that CDP increased the level of awareness among staff of the need to provide a quality service. The process was motivating for most staff and it helped to increase the sense of teamwork in the centre. Where a planning team was established it was reported that members of staff not involved in the planning team felt excluded while members of staff on the planning team felt that they were doing all the work.

The workload in drawing up the plan seemed manageable for the majority of Co-Ordinators/ Directors but not so for everyone. Some highlighted the problems associated with editing, layout and the physical work involved in producing the plan.

There was some anxiety in relation to the implementation of actions. Many stated that the involvement of Management was important and that there was a greater chance of actions being implemented where a member of Management was part of the implementation team or where support and encouragement were provided. The importance of regular monitoring and annual evaluation was acknowledged.

Generally Co-Ordinators were positive about future engagement in quality processes. They were confident that centres would engage in ICE on an annual basis and that learners would be given opportunities to evaluate the programmes.

V.E.C. Management views on the CDP process

There was a higher level of involvement by V.E.C. Managers in CDP than there was in ICE. This included the involvement of Adult Education Organisers, Regional Co-

Ordinators, Education Officers and Chief Executive Officers. Members of Management found the process to be worthwhile, informative and focused. Many reported that they had a good working relationship with centres prior to the Pilot Phase but they highlighted the need for Management to engage with centres in a systematic way and acknowledged that the quality assurance processes provided a framework for such engagement. The majority of those involved recommended that other centres would engage in CDP as a move towards continuous improvement.

End of Pilot Phase Feedback Session

Two feedback sessions were held at the end of the Pilot Phase involving representatives of key stakeholder groups. Stakeholders participated in workshops where they were asked to consider some of the key issues arising from the Pilot Phase.

Learners also participated in the Feedback Session. Not only did learners provide information on their experience of the Pilot Phase they also tested a range of activities that were designed to engage learners in the evaluation and planning processes.

Feedback from Facilitators

Two feedback sessions took place with the facilitation team. One was held mid-way through the Pilot Phase and one at the end. The team of facilitators not only had the task of implementing the Guidelines they also looked for potential improvements to the Guidelines and the process. A list of recommended changes was collated from their feedback.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Quality Framework

- The Quality Standards and the Guidelines for Internal Centre Evaluation and Centre Development Planning should be re-developed. In doing so, due consideration should be given to F.E.T.A.C.s quality assurance policy and procedures.
- The external evaluation aspect of the Quality Framework requires further



Highlighted the need for Management to engage with centres in a more systematic way



development in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science Inspectorate.

- The centralised selection and training of facilitators is recommended as an essential aspect of the Initiative.
- Centres together with local management should select suitably trained facilitators from a list provided by the Quality Framework Co-Ordinator.
- Centres should continue to receive the supports necessary to assist them to engage in the ICE and CDP processes.
- Regional Information Sessions should continue to be provided for centres engaging in ICE or CDP for the first time.
- Stakeholders participating in quality assurance processes should continue to have an opportunity to evaluate their experience. Such evaluations should be fed back to the Quality Framework Co-Ordinator to ensure the continued relevance of the guidelines and processes.
- Arrangements for the payment of part-time staff who engage in ICE and CDP processes should be agreed by the Department of Education and Science and the Vocational Education Committees/ I.V.E.A.
- The apportioning of administration support between centres and V.E.C. Offices should be agreed between the Department of Education and Science and the Vocational Education Committees/ I.V.E.A.

Internal Centre Evaluation Process

- Internal Centre Evaluation should occur in all centres on an annual basis.
- More detailed guidelines are needed in relation to the evaluation of programmes by staff and learners in order to comply with F.E.T.A.C. requirements.
- The wording of the evaluation criteria needs revision to ensure that meaning is clear.

- The process for engaging learners in the evaluation process needs to be revised. A selection of evaluation activities need to be developed as well as good practice guidelines for engaging in consultation with learners.
- The question of how V.E.C. Management and Boards of Management representatives can best participate in the ICE process requires further examination. A range of options may need to be developed.
- The evaluation process should involve the examination of evidence in order to confirm if procedures and policies are actually in place. This will require additional preparation work by centre staff in advance of the evaluation.
- Systems for ensuring the on-going implementation of the short-term action plan require development.
- Clearer guidelines are required on how the evaluation of the implementation of actions fits into the annual evaluation process.

Centre Development Planning Process

- A process of Centre Development Planning should take place in centres as required, but no more frequently than every 3-5 years.
- CDP guidelines should include clear information on how to develop a Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives.
- Centres should not engage in a CDP process unless they have a recently developed Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives in place.
- The guidelines, generally, need to be re-organised with further clarification and additional information provided in relation to a number of areas.
- The process for engaging learners in the planning process needs to be revised. A selection of review activities need to be developed.



Centres should continue to receive the supports necessary to assist them to engage in the ICE and CDP processes



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- The question of how V.E.C. Management and Boards of Management representatives can best participate in the CDP process needs further examination. A range of options may need to be developed.
- Stakeholders engaging in a review process should only review the quality areas that relate to their experience of the programme.
- Separate reviews should be carried out with the various stakeholder groups.
- The review process should involve the examination of evidence to confirm if procedures and policies are actually in place. This will require additional preparation work by centre staff in advance of the review.
- Guidelines for monitoring the implementation of actions need to be developed.

Roll -Out

- The rolling out of the Quality Framework to all YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Centres should be agreed through discussion between the Department of Education and Science, The Irish Vocational Education Association, The Association of Chief Executive Officers and Education Officers and the National Co-Ordinators for YOUTHREACH and for Senior Traveller Training Centres.
- It is recommended that each Vocational Education Committee becomes involved in the Quality Framework Initiative. It is also recommended that V.E.C. Management should ensure that all centres are working towards improvement using the Quality Framework model.
- Management should include the Quality Framework Initiative as part of their induction programmes for new Co-Ordinators and Directors.
- The Quality Framework should be seen as a framework for interaction between centres and V.E.C. Management in that it

introduces a clear system for reporting and consultation between centres and V.E.C. Management

- Management should have clear expectations for centre performance based on the Quality Standards, which should also identify for management the kinds of supports centres require.
- Additional facilitators should be recruited and trained. Special effort should be made to encourage staff from centres to apply for the position of facilitator as this would result in significant capacity building at local level.

National Developments

In addition to the developments that would be the responsibility of the Quality Framework Co-Ordinator a number of other developments are recommended that would greatly assist the embedding of the quality system. They include the following:

- A co-ordinated approach to the development of the relevant policies and procedures by the DES and the I.V.E.A.
- The re-development of Operational Guidelines for centres.
- The development of an IT based record keeping system for centres that would also support the quality system.
- A training programme for Co-Ordinators/ Directors to enable them to develop the necessary leadership skills to promote and encourage quality assurance within centres.

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section one

The Quality
Framework
Initiative



1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Quality Framework Initiative is attempting to develop a culture of quality within YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Centres. It has to be acknowledged that innovation and improvement had always been hallmarks of the sector prior to the Quality Framework and there is no doubt that examples of excellent practice are evident throughout the system. There is significant learning to be gained from the expertise that has developed over the years. The Quality Framework is an attempt to harness this body of knowledge in order that all centres might benefit.

Quality is about a process of continuous improvement and therefore a never ending journey. All quality is relative. Each day the service being offered to learners in a centre is getting relatively better or worse, but never stands still. This means that staff and management have to be open to learning. A staff team that thinks it has all the answers and has solved all the problems is closed off from further learning. Traditionally Managers, Co-Ordinators and Directors were expected to have all the answers. The Quality Framework encourages these stakeholders to become part of the learning team within the centre. This calls for replacing the boss-management approach with the lead-management approach.

Lead management encourages the full participation of staff in decision making and problem solving. This can be challenging for boss-managers who do not want to give up control. The attitude and commitment of the centre Co-Ordinator and Director are paramount in developing a culture of quality within the centre but whether or not they wish to do so is a matter of choice.

The Quality Framework encourages teamwork and collaboration and recognises that each stakeholder has a part to play. Staff teams together with management are best placed to solve their own problems and come up with their own solutions. The solution is not always about having more time and more resources but how centres manage what they have.

Quality assurance is about improving relationships and building understanding among stakeholders which will lead to a more satisfying professional experience.

It is generally when staff feel most under pressure that they need to stop what they are doing, step back from the problems and look at the overall systems that are in place or those that need to be put in place. The Quality Framework highlights the need to take time out for work of this nature. It allows for time to review, plan, evaluate and monitor in a manner that includes all the key people in the decision making processes. Staff could continue to work with their “nose to the grindstone” but by doing so things will never change. This brings to mind the old adage; *If I always do what I’ve always done, I’ll always get what I always got.*

The Quality Framework has to be a realistic and practical tool. If it is not then it is useless. Staff teams are far too busy to waste time on something that ultimately is of no use. The amount of time spent engaging in quality processes has to be realistic and set out in such a manner that fits into the normal running of the centre. This means that the Quality Standards should truly reflect what most consider being the key elements of a quality centre. The stages of evaluation and planning need to be clear and simple. Each step of the process needs to be purposeful. Overall, the quality assurance process need to be a positive experience for all involved. Not only should it achieve the task of setting out clear actions for improvement, it should also contribute to the development of the staff team. Ultimately, it should bring about a tangible improvement in the service that is provided to learners in the centre.

The Quality Framework is a work in progress. The Consultation, Development and Pilot Phases were aimed at developing a quality assurance system that would be capable of meeting all of the criteria outlined above. There has been significant learning from the outcomes of the Pilot Phase and this feedback will shape the further changes that are now to be made to the Quality Standards and

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quality assurance processes. It is anticipated that the re-developed Quality Framework will be rolled out to all YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Centres in the coming years and in the spirit of continuous improvement, there will always be a need to reflect on its usefulness and relevance as a quality assurance model.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Programmes are key elements of the Department of Education and Science response to educational disadvantage in Ireland. Senior Traveller Training Centres were first established in 1974 and YOUTHREACH centres in 1989. A common feature in the development of both strands was the notion that centres should develop in response to the needs of the client group in a particular area as opposed to implementing a programme prescribed at national level. Although operational guidelines for both programmes were outlined in the *YOUTHREACH Framework of Objectives*, they were of a general nature and therefore did not limit the innovative potential of the programme. Flexibility and diversity have always been encouraged. Despite the resulting innovation, it is clear that all centres did not develop at the same rate. While extremely high standards of provision are evident in all strands of the programme, standards of practice are inconsistent throughout the country.

This was one of the issues addressed in 'YOUTHREACH 2000- A Consultative Process'. The process was launched by the National Co-Ordinators in 1999 and was an attempt to examine the purpose of the programme and how it should evolve to meet the challenges of the next decade. Following a broad consultation process and a detailed review of practice, the report on the outcomes included twenty key recommendations. One of the recommendations proposed the need for the development of a quality framework for the programme, including 'quality indicators' and 'quality assurance processes'. The notion was further promoted in *A Consultative Report*

Designed to Contribute to the Future Development of Senior Traveller Training Centres. This report was a follow up to the YOUTHREACH 2000 consultative process and focused specifically on Senior Traveller Training Centres.

The Quality Framework Initiative for YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Centres was established by the Further Education Section, Department of Education and Science and the National Co-Ordinators, in November 2000. This development occurred at a time of great change in terms of education related legislation and government policy.



1.3 CONTEXT

The growing awareness of new legislation and how it was about to impact on centres was a major influence on the development of the Quality Framework and the quality assurance processes.

The Qualifications Act 1999, Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Education Act 1989, Vocational Education (Amendment) Act 2001 and Children Act 2001 will continue to drive change in the education system for years to come.

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 specifically requires that a provider of a programme of education and training shall establish procedures for quality assurance for the purpose of further improving and maintaining the quality of education and training that is provided.

“ standards of practice are inconsistent throughout the country ”

Therefore every effort has been made to ensure that the Quality Framework for YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Centres incorporates the Further Education and Training Awards Councils quality assurance requirements. Even since the Pilot Phase began F.E.T.A.C.'s thinking in the area of quality assurance has moved on and these changes will be incorporated in the re-development of Quality Standards and guidelines following the Pilot Phase.

The Education (Welfare) Act requires that all children of school going age shall receive a certain minimum education. Under this Act the National Educational Welfare Board was established and the function of the Board is to ensure that each child attends a recognised school or otherwise receives a certain minimum education. For the purpose of the Act, a child may obtain a minimum education in a programme of education, training, instruction or work experience prescribed by the Minister. It is anticipated that under this legislation YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Centres would be prescribed as programmes of education. As this move had not yet occurred, it is still unknown what changes will accompany such prescription. However, the development of clear guidelines setting out the responsibilities of designated programmes of education would prove beneficial for all concerned.

The Education Act spells out the accountability of the education system to students, their parents and the state for the education provided. Of particular importance is the prospect that under this Act, the Minister may "designate a place to be a centre for education". Again it is anticipated that YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Centres will be designated centres for education under this Act. The entitlements and responsibilities for centres that will follow from this move may cause further changes within centres.

Another important aspect of the Education Act is the promotion of best practice by the Inspectorate not only in schools but also in centres for education. The functions of the

Inspectorate shall be to support, advise and visit centres for education and evaluate the standards in such centres, including the evaluation of the organisation and operation of centres for education and the quality and effectiveness of the education provided.

The Vocational Education (Amendment) Act sets out the responsibility of a Chief Executive Officer to prepare and submit a five year education plan through consultation with teachers, students and parents, including those associated with centres for education. The Centre Development Planning process and the development of centre plans should feed into the overall Education Plan for a V.E.C.

YOUTHREACH centres wishing to become day centres under the Children Act are subject to inspection for suitability by the Probation and Welfare Service. The notion of quality, standards of good practice and accountability are further promoted in a range of national policy documents such as *The White Paper on Adult Education and the National Development Plan*.

The development of a Quality Framework has the potential to support centres through times of change allowing them to incorporate the new responsibilities placed on centres in the light of recent legislation.

1.4 PHASES OF THE QUALITY FRAMEWORK INITIATIVE

This initiative began in November 2000 and involves a number of phases. The Exploratory Phase concluded in January 2001 with the production of a report that recommended how the initiative might be advanced. This was followed by a Consultation Phase (May 2001-April 2002), which involved in-depth consultation with key stakeholder groups. The report on the Consultation Phase was circulated in April 2002 and included a proposed structure for the Quality Framework, draft Quality Standards and a number of recommendations in relation to the future direction of the initiative.

The Development Phase (May 2002-July



The development of a Quality Framework has the potential to support centres through times of change



2003) involved the redrafting and finalisation of the Quality Standards and the development of Guidelines for Centre Development Planning and Internal Centre Evaluation. This laid the groundwork for the Pilot Phase (September 2003-July 2004).

The Pilot Phase involved the piloting of Centre Development Planning and Internal Evaluation processes in a number of YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Centres.

This report outlines the feedback collated from learners, centre staff, Co-Ordinators, Directors, local V.E.C. Management and Boards of Management following the completion of the Pilot Phase.

On completion of the Report on the Pilot Phase the Quality Standards and Guidelines for Internal Centre Evaluation and Centre Development Planning will be re-developed in preparation for the eventual roll-out of these quality assurance practices across all YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Centres.

Phases of the Quality Framework Initiative	
PHASE	DATE
Exploratory Phase	Nov '00 - Jan '01
Consultation Phase	May '01 - April '02
Development Phase	May '02 - July '03
Pilot Phase	Sept '03 - July '04
Reporting and Re-development Phase	Sept '04 - Jan '05
Roll-Out Phase	Jan '05 - Dec '06

1.5 THE QUALITY FRAMEWORK

The Quality Framework that has been developed is based on the consultation that took place with various stakeholders. It forms the basic structure of the quality assurance system and comprises four interconnected building blocks (see diagram).

The Quality Framework:



1. Quality Standards
2. Centre Development Planning
3. Internal Centre Evaluation
4. External Centre Evaluation

Quality Standards are at the core, as they inform the other key aspects of the framework. Stakeholders are encouraged to work towards continuous improvement through engagement in the processes of planning and evaluation. Centres should carry out an Internal Centre Evaluation annually and should engage in the Centre Development Planning process every 3-5 years where appropriate. External Centre Evaluation is not yet operational but is included in the model at this stage as it is seen to be an essential part of the overall approach to quality assurance. The Department of Education and Science Inspectorate will have responsibility for the quality of education provided in Centres for Education under the 1998 Education Act. It is therefore anticipated that the Inspectorate would have a role in the external evaluation of centres.

“
Opportunity to review centre practice, identify gaps, highlight priorities and select areas for improvement
 ”

1.6 THE QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES

Implementing a quality assurance system in a YOUTHREACH or Traveller Training Centre involves a process of continually working towards improvement in order to meet the needs of learners, staff and management.

The Quality Standards clarify what should be in place in centres while allowing for local flexibility in the way stakeholders chose to achieve standards.

The Centre Development Planning process provides stakeholders with an opportunity to review centre practice, identify gaps, highlight priorities and select areas for improvement. The plan is generally implemented over a period of three to five years and progress towards the achievement of goals is monitored and evaluated. The centre development planning process involves a focus on the key elements of the programme that are not yet in place or the areas of work that require a high degree of re-development.

Centre Development Planning Process:



The Evaluation Process:



On an annual basis key aspects of the programme are evaluated. The **Internal Centre Evaluation process** involves the participation of learners, Directors/Co-Ordinators, staff and local management. The Quality Standards outline 29 quality areas and the guidelines for centre evaluation recommend that a centre would evaluate 9-12 quality areas each year to include an evaluation of the implementation of the centre plan. Annual centre evaluation should involve a two-day session where stakeholders compare centre performance against the Quality Standards using certain evaluation criteria. Centre evaluation provides an opportunity for stakeholders to examine the value of the work that takes place in centres and acknowledge the achievements of trainees, Co-ordinator/ Director, staff and Management. Areas for improvement are identified and actions are planned. Actions

arising from the evaluation process are generally implemented in the short term; however, some of the actions are referred for inclusion in the centre development plan. An important aspect of annual centre evaluation is the collation of evidence. The guidelines for centre evaluation outline the various forms of evidence that may be gathered in relation to each quality area.

External Evaluation involves the evaluation of centre performance by someone outside the organisation. This allows for an external and unbiased view to be expressed and provides an opportunity for the recognition and affirmation of good practice.

The cyclical process of planning, evaluation, implementation of actions and monitoring as informed by the Quality Standards forms the basis of the quality assurance system in Senior Traveller Training and YOUTHREACH Centres.

“
a centre would evaluate 9-12 quality areas each year to include an evaluation of the implementation of the centre plan
”

2

section two

The Pilot Phase



2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Pilot Phase involved the testing of two quality assurance processes, Internal Centre Evaluation and Centre Development Planning. Although centres started to engage fully in these processes from October 2003, a great deal of pre-planning and preparation work took place from February 2003. During this period the focus was on providing stakeholders with information, selecting centres and recruiting and training facilitators.

2.2 PREPARATION FOR PILOT PHASE

2.2.1 Informing Stakeholders

From February to July 2003 the Quality Framework Co-Ordinator made a number of presentations on the Quality Framework to centre Co-Ordinators, Directors and staff. The purpose of such presentations was to raise awareness of the Pilot Phase that was about to commence and to provide further clarity with regard to the Internal Centre Evaluation and Centre Development Planning processes. This would allow centres to make decisions with regard to their participation in the Pilot Phase.

In March 2003, letters regarding the Pilot Phase were sent to all the key stakeholders including Co-Ordinators, Directors, staff, Adult Education Organisers, Education Officers, Chief Executive Officers and other key organisations such as the Irish Vocational Education Association and Teachers Union of Ireland.



By May 2003 the Quality Standards redrafting process was complete and had involved the participation of representatives of the key stakeholder groups outlined above. The document was printed and distributed to all of the stakeholder groups not only in anticipation of the Pilot Phase but also in order to provide centres with a document that outlined agreed good practice and was seen by many as a starting point for future centre development.

In September 2003 the Guidelines for Internal Centre Evaluation and Centre Development Planning were complete and again these Guidelines were printed and distributed to all stakeholder groups.

2.2.2 Selection of Centres

In May 2003 all YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Centres were invited to apply for participation in the Pilot Phase in co-operation with local management. Based on applications received, 46 centres were selected to participate. Twenty four centres opted to pilot Centre Development Planning and 22 centres opted to pilot Internal Centre Evaluation. A total of 20 Vocational Education Committees were involved.

Each of the 20 V.E.C.s were informed of the names of centres that had applied to participate and were asked to confirm their support for the participation of each centre. All 20 V.E.C.s responded favourably and in July 2004 each of the participating centres was notified that they had been selected.

Forty six centres were selected to participate in the Pilot Phase. This included 17 Senior Traveller Training Centres and 29 YOUTHREACH Centres. This represents 37% of the total number of centres (90 YOUTHREACH and 35 S.T.T.C.s). The names of participating centres and Vocational Education Committees are outlined in the next table.

“
A total of 20
Vocational
Education
Committees
were involved
”

Centres Selected to Participate in the Pilot Phase		
V.E.C.	CENTRE	APPLIED TO PILOT
Co. Carlow VEC	1. St Catherine's Training Centre, Carlow	ICE
Co. Clare VEC	2. Shannon Youthreach	ICE
Co. Clare VEC	3. Miltown Malbey Youthreach	ICE
Co. Clare VEC	4. Kilrush Youthreach	ICE
Co. Clare VEC	5. St Joseph's Training Centre, Ennis	CDP
Cork City VEC	6. Knocknaheeny Youthreach	CDP
Cork City VEC	7. Dean St, Youthreach, Cork	ICE
Co. Cork VEC	8. Ballincollig Youthreach	ICE
Co. Cork VEC	9. Fermoy Youthreach	CDP
Co. Cork VEC	10. Youghal Youthreach	CDP
Co. Donegal VEC	11. Lifford Youthreach	CDP
Co. Donegal VEC	12. St. Fiachra's Training Centre, Letterkenny	ICE
Dublin City VEC	13. Bonnybrook Youthreach	CDP
Dublin City VEC	14. Ballymun Youthreach	CDP
Co. Dublin VEC	15. Blanchardstown Youthreach	CDP
Co. Dublin VEC	16. Lucan Youthreach	ICE
Galway City VEC	17. Sandy Road Training Centre, Galway	ICE
Co. Galway VEC	18. St Brendan's Training Centre, Loughrea	ICE
Co. Galway VEC	19. St Benin's Training Centre, Tuam	ICE
Co. Galway VEC	20. Tuam Youthreach	ICE
Co. Galway VEC	21. Ballinasloe Youthreach	ICE
Co. Galway VEC	22. Madonna House Training Centre, Ballinasloe	ICE
Co. Galway VEC	23. Letterfrack Youthreach	ICE
Co. Kerry VEC	24. Killarney Youthreach	ICE
Co. Kerry VEC	25. Listowel Youthreach	CDP
Co. Kerry VEC	26. An Tochar Adult Education Centre, Causeway	CDP
Co. Kerry VEC	27. St Anne's Senior Education Centre	CDP
Co. Kildare VEC	28. Leixlip Youthreach	CDP
Co. Kildare VEC	29. Athy Youthreach	CDP
Co. Kilkenny VEC	30. Kilkenny Youthreach	CDP
Co. Laois VEC	31. St. Canice's Training Centre, Portlaoise	ICE
Co. Laois VEC	32. Mountmellick Youthreach	CDP
Co. Limerick VEC	33. Fealeside Training Centre, Abbeyfeale	CDP
Co. Limerick VEC	34. Riverside Training Centre, Rathkeale	CDP
Co. Limerick VEC	35. Hospital Youthreach	ICE
Co. Louth VEC	36. Tara Education Centre, Dundalk	CDP
Co. Louth VEC	37. Drogheda Youthreach	CDP
Co. Meath VEC	38. Ashbourne Youthreach	CDP
Co. Meath VEC	39. Youthreach Foundation Centre, Navan	ICE
Co. Meath VEC	40. Navan Travellers Training Centre	CDP
Co. Meath VEC	41. Kells Youthreach	CDP
Co. Offaly VEC	42. St. Colmcilles' Traveller Training Centre, Tullamore	CDP
Co. Offaly VEC	43. Birr Travellers Training Centre	CDP
Co. Roscommon VEC	44. Roscommon Education & Development Centre	CDP
Co. Sligo VEC	45. Sligo Youthreach	ICE
Co. Wicklow VEC	46. Wicklow Youthreach	ICE
Total No of V.E.C.s 20	Total No of Centres 46	22 for ICE, 24 for CDP

“

**24 centres
opted to pilot
CDP and 22
centres opted
to pilot ICE**

”

2.2.3 Selection of Facilitators

In May 2003 a set of guidelines was drawn up in relation to the recruitment and working arrangements for centre staff who would be engaged as facilitators during the Pilot Phase. Staff from all centres were invited to apply for the role of facilitator. In addition, centre Directors/Co-Ordinators were asked to nominate external (freelance) facilitators who may have successfully worked with staff teams in the past.

In July 2003 suitably qualified and experienced facilitators were called to participate in an Orientation Day which was part of the selection process. Each candidate was asked to prepare and facilitate a 20 minute session with the other candidates acting as group participants. Each session was observed and scored and arising from that process 8 facilitators were selected from Senior Traveller Training and YOUTHREACH centres as well as an additional 6 freelance facilitators, bringing the total number of facilitators recruited to 14.

2.2.4 Training of Facilitators

A training programme and set of guidelines for facilitators were drawn up in August 2003

in advance of the training programme for facilitators which took place during September- October 2003. Separate two day training sessions were provided for those facilitating Internal Centre Evaluation and for those facilitating Centre Development Planning. The training programmes were very experiential in nature and benefited greatly from the contributions made by each participant. Even at this early stage it was clear that the facilitation team was committed not only to the task in hand but also to the on-going improvement of the process and the guidelines. This was further evidenced throughout the Pilot Phase.

2.2.5 Establishment of an Administration System

The Pilot Phase involved the processing of claim forms from facilitators as well as the centres who were allowed to claim support for room and equipment hire and meals. An administration system had to be set up in advance of the Pilot Phase. Claim forms and guidelines for centres and facilitators based on the In-Career Development rates for fees, travel and maintenance had to be developed. This system was established with the kind support of Co. Louth V.E.C.

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Separate two
day training
sessions were
provided for
those
facilitating
”

Facilitation Team for the Pilot Phase	
NAME	BACKGROUND
Beattie, Anne Marie	Freelance Facilitator
Brosnan, Karen	Freelance Facilitator
Corrigan, Mary	Staff Member - STTC
Cullen, Patricia	Staff Member- Youthreach
Dunne, Susan	Freelance Facilitator
Flood, Eilis	Staff Member Youthreach
Gillespie, Donal	Staff Member- Youthreach & STTC
Hainsworth, Marie	Freelance Facilitator
Harper, Liz	Freelance Facilitator
O' Brien, Shivaun	Quality Framework Co-Ordinator
O'Leary, Lorraine	Staff Member Youthreach
Ryan , Eileen	Staff Member Youthreach
Whelan, Ashley	Staff Member Youthreach
White, Maura	Staff Member Youthreach
White, Pat	Freelance Facilitator

2.3 INITIATING THE PILOT PHASE

2.3.1 Regional Information Sessions

The Pilot Phase began with a series of Regional Information Sessions which took place in four locations: Roscommon, Killarney, Nenagh and Dublin. For each centre participating in the Pilot Phase the following stakeholders were invited.

- *Chief Executive Officer of the V.E.C.*
- *Education Officer of the V.E.C.*
- *Adult Education Organiser (where appropriate)*
- *Regional Co-Ordinator*
- *Board of Management Representative (where appropriate)*
- *Centre Co-Ordinator/ Director*
- *2 members of the staff team*

The Regional Information Sessions were well attended (127 participants). 11% of those attending represented management with the remainder representing centre staff.

The purpose of the Regional Information Session was:

- *to provide information in relation to the Pilot Phase;*
- *to outline the Internal Centre Evaluation and Centre Development Planning Processes;*
- *to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to discuss the preparations that were necessary at local management and centre level in advance of the evaluation and planning sessions.*

2.3.2 Piloting Centre Development Planning

For the purpose of the Pilot Phase a particular model of centre development planning was proposed. The aim of the centre development planning process was to develop a 3-5 year centre plan through consultation with key stakeholder groups. The guidelines outlined the process in great detail and the facilitators were trained to work in accordance with the guidelines.

In this particular model each centre had access to a facilitator for 5 days, but planning teams were expected to carry out work on the plan separate to these 5 days. For most centres in the Pilot, the process started in October 2003 and continued up to June 2004. All participating centres had completed two of the 5 days before December 2003. All centres that engaged in the Centre Development Planning process completed a centre plan.

2.3.3 Piloting Internal Centre Evaluation

As with the Centre Development Planning a particular model of evaluation was being piloted. It was recommended that the Internal Centre Evaluation process would involve the key stakeholders and would take place over two consecutive days. A facilitator was allocated to the centre and he/she guided the stakeholders through the process.

In advance of the two-day process stakeholders had to select areas for evaluation, carry out a learner evaluation and gather evidence. The outcomes of the evaluation session were documented and formed a key part of the annual evaluation report that was to be completed and presented to Management.

2.3.4 Overview of the Support Provided to Centres

- *Documentation*
 1. *Quality Standards*
 2. *Guidelines for Internal Centre Evaluation*
 3. *Guidelines for Centre Development Planning*
- *Regional information sessions*
- *Trained facilitator allocated to each centre*
- *Funding provided to cover lunch, room and equipment hire*
- *Quality Framework Co-Ordinator*

“
The Regional Information Sessions were well attended
”

3

section three

Feedback from
the Pilot Phase



3.1 COLLECTION OF DATA

Questionnaires and Feedback Sessions were used to obtain information from those who had participated in the Pilot Phase. Different questionnaires were distributed to the various groups as follows:

- Questionnaires for those who had directly participated in the Centre Development Planning Process including local V.E.C. Management, Boards of Management, Co-Ordinators/ Directors, staff and learners and community representatives. These were distributed by the facilitators on the last day of the CDP process and returned to the Quality Framework Co-Ordinator. They related to the individual's experience of the CDP process. A total of 162 questionnaires were returned from this group. The feedback was mainly qualitative in nature.
- Questionnaires for those who had participated in Internal Centre Evaluation including local V.E.C. Management, Boards of Management, Co-Ordinators/ Directors, staff and learners and community representatives. These were distributed by the facilitators on the last day of the ICE process and returned to the Quality Framework Co-Ordinator. They related to the individual's experience of the ICE process. A total of 183 questionnaires were returned from this group. The feedback was mainly qualitative in nature.
- Questionnaires for Co-Ordinators/ Directors who had participated in the ICE and CDP processes. These were distributed by the Quality Framework Co-



Ordinator in advance of an interview which was carried out over the phone and was based on the questionnaire. A total of 43 Co-Ordinators/Directors provided feedback which was both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

- Questionnaires for Vocational Education Committee Management who had participated in the Pilot Phase. These were distributed by the Quality Framework Co-Ordinator in advance of an interview which was carried out over the phone and was based on the questionnaire. It proved difficult to interview the entire target group and approximately half completed the questionnaire and returned it by post. A total of 10 questionnaires were returned from this group. The feedback was both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

The following table summarises the number of returned questionnaires/completed interviews.

Number of Respondents			
	INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS	CO-ORDINATORS/ DIRECTORS	VEC MANAGEMENT
CDP	162	24	8
ICE	183	19	2
Total returns	345	43	10

“
Feedback was both qualitative and quantitative in nature
”

In addition to the questionnaires, feedback was also collected during a number of feedback sessions as follows:

- Two feedback sessions took place with the team of 14 facilitators. The first was held half way through the Pilot Phase and the second was held on completion of the Pilot Phase.
- Two national feedback sessions were held at the end of the Pilot Phase in two different locations to facilitate feedback from representatives from all stakeholder groups. On both occasions the learner feedback sessions ran concurrently but separately to other stakeholder feedback sessions. A total of 124 stakeholders attended these feedback sessions.

3.2 OVERALL FEEDBACK

3.2.1 Introduction

Part of the feedback collated from the telephone interviews with Co-Ordinators/

Directors was of a general nature and some of the same questions applied equally to centres that piloted ICE or CDP. The focus of the overall feedback is on the levels of participation by stakeholders in the Pilot Phase, the development of Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives prior to the Pilot Phase, the payment of part-time staff while engaging in the CDP/ICE processes, the venue that centres used for engaging in the ICE/CDP processes and the level of centre based administrative support available to centres during the Pilot Phase.

3.2.2 Overall Levels of Participation by Stakeholder Groups

The following table sets out the level of participation by centres and V.E.C.s. The table at the bottom of this page outlines a general overview of the levels of participation by the various stakeholder groups during the Pilot Phase.

Level of Participation By Centres and VEC's			
	YOUTHREACH	S.T.T.C.S	TOTAL
Number of Centres selected for Pilot	29	17	46
Number of Centres participated in Pilot	29	15	44
Number of Centres Piloting ICE	14	6	20
Number of Centres Piloting CDP	15	9	24
Number of Centres Nationally	90	35	125
Number of V.E.C.s participated in Pilot			20
Number of V.E.C.s Nationally			33
Number of Facilitators Engaged in Pilot			15

Level of Stakeholder Participation			
STAKEHOLDERS	ICE	CDP	TOTAL
Total number of Stakeholders that participated in Pilot	507	872	1379
Number of Learners in participating Centres	587	887	1474
Number of Learners that participated in Pilot	292	524	816
Number of Staff in Participating Centres	221	272	493
Number of Staff that Participated in Pilot	199	241	440
Number of V.E.C. Management that participated in Pilot Phase	4	20	24
Number of Board of Management Reps. that participated in Pilot	2	32	34
Number of Community Reps. that participated in the Pilot Phase	10	55	65

“Two national feedback sessions were held at the end of the Pilot Phase”

The level of participation by staff and learners in both the ICE and CDP process was high. This provided an excellent team building opportunity. In the CDP process it had been anticipated that most centres would opt to form a planning team involving a small number of staff. However, a greater proportion of centres opted for planning groups involving all staff, resulting in higher levels of staff participation in CDP across the 5-day process.

It was evident that the majority of centres made good efforts to involve learners in the ICE and CDP processes. Only 3 centres did not involve learners in the ICE process and all centres piloting CDP involved learners in the review process.

Involvement by V.E.C. Management, including Chief Executive Officers, Education Officers, Adult Education Organisers, was lower than anticipated considering the involvement of V.E.C. Management at each stage in the development of the Quality Framework. Although the table above states that 4 members of Management participated in the ICE process, this involved 8 centres as some members of Management worked with more than one centre during the Pilot Phase. Similarly for the CDP process, 20 members of management participated but this involved 18 centres.

Participation by Management in the ICE process was particularly low. In general, where Management did attend they were only able to attend for a short period of time (e.g. half-one hour) and during this time while they offered support and encouragement they did not actively participate in the discussion and decision making process.

Interviews with Co-Ordinators reported that in some cases V.E.C. Management was not informed about the ICE process because staff were anxious about the involvement of any stakeholders external to the centre, particularly where an evaluation was occurring in the centre for the first time. The majority of Co-Ordinators/ Directors however

had invited Management to participate and were particularly disappointed when this did not happen. Lack of participation by Management suggested to some centre staff that the V.E.C. did not consider the work of the centre to be important.

There was a higher level of participation by Management in the CDP process. Due to the fact that it was a five-day process there was greater opportunity for participation and those who did participate tended to attend for longer periods of time and contributed more than was the case in the ICE process.

Feedback from Management suggests that there are opposing views on the appropriate level of participation by Management in the review process. Some argued that it is appropriate that Management be familiar enough with the workings of a centre to be in a position to complete a review sheet; others reported that Management would not be in a position to know the internal workings of centres in such detail and that a more general review tool could be used with Management.

There were also relatively low levels of participation by Board of Management and Community representatives in the ICE process mirroring the participation by V.E.C. Management. Participation by Boards of Management representatives was higher in the CDP process. However, while 32 members of Boards of Management participated in the CDP they were only engaged in 9 centres. Similarly, 32 community representatives were involved in CDP but in only 16 centres.

3.2.3 Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives

The need for centres to have up-to-date, clearly thought out and documented mission statement, aims and objectives is widely recognised. Not only do these assist staff to be clear about purpose in their day-to-day duties, they can also be used as a starting point in the evaluation and planning processes. Generally the development of mission statement, aims and objectives is in itself a staff development process and for



there are opposing views on the appropriate level of participation by Management



those centres that do not have these in place it can indicate a lack of clear vision and purpose. It may also suggest that the staff may not be used to working as a team through similar team building and staff development processes. For this reason each participating centre was asked to indicate whether a Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives were in place prior to the Pilot Phase. The table below sets out the situation with regard to 43 centres.

Although most centres in the Pilot have an agreed and documented Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives these documents are more than two years old and require revision. There remains a small number of centres that did not have a Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives agreed and documented even though many are long established. This reflects the various approaches to running a centre. Some like to start from the realm of ideas, guiding principals and the fundamental concepts behind the work. Others prefer to work from a more hands on practical approach where the purpose of the centres is defined by the specific aspects of the work rather than any overall vision.

Many Co-Ordinators/ Directors stated that in the busy cut and thrust of running a centre, the development or re-development of a Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives is one of the less important tasks when compared to the more urgent and often crisis situations that have to be dealt with. In many ways this reflects some of the attitudes that existed at an earlier stage in the development

of the QFI where staff in centres felt that they were “too busy” dealing with the short-term reactions to the more immediate problems and did not have the time to look at the bigger picture and make decisions about the direction of the programme.

An increasing awareness of the need for quality processes, clearer vision, evaluation, forward thinking and more effective long-term problem solving has resulted in centres and V.E.C.s allocating time and resources to work of this nature.

The ICE and CDP processes have already resulted in a large number of centres planning to engage in the process of developing or re-developing a Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives. It was recommended that in the future, these would be in place prior to centres engaging in a CDP or ICE process. It had been anticipated that this work could be incorporated in the 5-day CDP process but it is clear that this would not allow sufficient time to satisfactorily complete the work.

3.2.4 Payment of Part-Time Staff

Through each phase of the Quality Framework Initiative the question of payment for part-time staff engaging in the quality assurance process was highlighted as an issue of concern for centre staff. There was anecdotal evidence to suggest that this issue was dealt with in a variety of ways at local level. In the absence of a national directive outlining how centres are to deal with the issue, it was interesting to investigate how centre Co-Ordinators/ Directors dealt with the question of payment to part-time staff

Mission Statement, Aims & Objectives – Level of Development									
Item	No. of centres with none in place		No. of centres with item in place but not current (less than 2 yrs old)		No. of centres with item current (less than 2 yrs old)		No. of centres that have developed or are planning to develop item arising from Pilot Phase		
	ICE	CDP	ICE	CDP	ICE	CDP	ICE	CDP	
Process Piloted	ICE	CDP	ICE	CDP	ICE	CDP	ICE	CDP	
Mission Statement	4	5	10	15	5	4	6	15	
Centres Aims	7	6	9	13	3	4	7	13	
Centre Objectives	7	9	9	12	3	3	7	14	

participating in 43 centres during the Pilot Phase and this is outlined in the table below.

It is clear from the results that there is no consistency in the payment of part-time staff who engage in non teaching work in the centre. For part-time teachers who were involved in ICE and CDP, approximately half were paid for the hours normally timetabled and half were paid for additional hours worked on top of hours normally timetabled. It appears that the decision to pay or not to pay is generally at the discretion of the V.E.C.; although some Co-Ordinators/ Directors reported that additional hours would not be available within the pay budget to cover such costs.

However the problem is to be resolved, it is clear that the involvement of all staff is vital to the development of a quality system within centres. It is important that part-time staff are at least invited to participate in ICE and CDP processes as exclusion would only result in problems for the on-going development of the staff team.

3.2.5 Venue for the ICE and CDP Processes

The guidelines for ICE and CDP had recommended that centres should be used where possible as a venue for the two-day and five-day processes. Out of nineteen respondents that piloted ICE, eighteen reported that the centre was used as a venue for the two day process and only one centre had opted to use another facility. In this instance a meeting room in a hotel was used due to the unsuitability of any room in the centre for work of this nature.

Of the 24 respondents that piloted CDP, 22 reported that the centre was used as a venue for the CDP process. However in 6 cases an external venue was required for some of the 5-day process particularly where large numbers were present. This generally occurred on day 1 and day 5. Two respondents reported that the centre was not suitable as a venue for the CDP process and an external venue was used for each of the five days. In selecting from external venues, hotel meeting rooms and community venues, such as the local Partnership or Library, were used.

3.2.6 Level of Centre Based Administrative Support

The level of administrative support based in the centre does have a significant affect on the ability of the centre to implement quality standards. This is particularly relevant to the quality areas of planning, evaluation, communication and links with the community, transparency, accountability and public relations, administration and financial management, record keeping, recruitment of learners and admission as well as learning assessment and certification.

The Department of Education and Science guidelines recommend that in the case of Senior Traveller Training Centres 15% of the overall budget (pay and non-pay) be allocated to administration support with an allocation of 15% of the non-pay budget in the case of YOUTHREACH centres. There are no guidelines, however, in relation to how this budget is apportioned between administration support based in the centre

“
The involvement of all staff is vital to the development of a quality system in centres
”

Payment of Part-time Staff				
	No. of centres that pay part-time staff for hours normally timetabled while participating in ICE or CDP processes.		No. of centres that pay for additional hours on top of hours normally timetabled while participating in ICE or CDP processes.	
PROCESS PILOTED	ICE	CDP	ICE	CDP
No of Centres	9	13	10	10

and administration support based in the local V.E.C. Office/s.

The table below outlines the various levels of administration support based in 43 of the centres that participated in the Pilot Phase.

Looking at the overall numbers it is evident that 8 of the centres that participated in the Pilot Phase had no administration support based in the centre. Seven centres had between 7-10 hours/week, twelve centres had between 11-18 hours/week, five centres had between 19-20 hours/week and ten centres had 35 hours /week administration support based in the centre. From an examination of the number of trainees allocated to centres it was evident that the level of centre based administration did not necessarily relate to the number of learners allocated to a particular centre.

An example of this is can be seen from an examination of a number of centres each with an allocation of 24/25 learners. The number of hours that an administration support was available in these centres included 0 hrs/week, 5 hrs/ week, 8 hrs/week, 9 hrs/week, 11 hrs/week, 13.5 hrs/week, 15 hrs/week, 20 hrs/week, and 35 hrs/week.

It was clear from the results that centres have varying levels of administration support based in the centre and it follows that they also have varying levels of capacity to meet all the quality standards.



“
Centres have varying levels of administrative support
”

Centre Based Administrative Support											
Number of hours admin. support per week	0 hrs/wk		5-10 hrs/wk		11-18 hrs/wk		19-20 hrs/wk		35 hrs/wk		Total no. of centres questioned
	ICE	CDP	ICE	CDP	ICE	CDP	ICE	CDP	ICE	CDP	
PROCESS PILOTED											
No of Youthreach Centres	5	0	2	4	3	4	2	3	1	4	28
No of STTCs	3	0	0	1	0	5	1	0	2	3	15
Overall No of Centres	8	0	2	5	3	9	3	3	3	7	43

4

section four

Feedback on
the Internal
Centre
Evaluation
Process



4.1 GENERAL COMMENTS FROM ALL STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Based on the questionnaires completed by stakeholders involved in the Pilot phase the following comments outline the general feelings that were expressed at the end of day two, on completion of the ICE process.

“Very helpful process, strengthens team work”

“For a process which was expected to be nightmarish, turned out to be very understandable and do-able”

“There was so much focus on what we were doing well, that was encouraging”

“Very positive experience, I learned a lot about the centre”

“Worthwhile and focusing”

“As well as getting the work done it was a most enjoyable two days”

“At first I was unsure how valuable it was but at the end it was worthwhile”

“It has renewed my enthusiasm for teaching”

“I enjoyed the process, it was good to look at what we do from a more objective point of view”

“Very clear vision of what I have to do”

“Process very open and very constructive”

“Feel energised and enthusiastic after the two days”

“Very informative, good working as a team and not just looking at your own area”

“An extremely worthwhile exercise that should be part of every centre’s yearly timetable”

From the feedback, it is clear that it was a positive experience for the majority of participants. Out of 183 respondents only 3 reported that it was not a good experience. It was clear that, for some, this was the first experience of carrying out a structured and systematic evaluation of work in the centre. Several respondents stated that they were anxious about the process prior to the event but were pleasantly surprised.

An evaluation can be a daunting process for any staff team particularly when individuals fear criticism or conflict. The ICE process does not focus on the individual but looks in a more holistic way at the collective responsibility of the staff team together with local Management. The ICE process is also about highlighting the good work of the centre. Areas for improvement are listed and are dealt with through a collaborative problem solving approach. Solutions are agreed and actions are decided. The entire process is meant to be a focused, inclusive and team building experience. Based on the comments from respondents it appears that this was achieved.

For many staff the process of listing evidence was a new experience. Some stakeholders voiced concern about the prospect of spending time producing evidence while others felt that the evidence should not simply be listed but should be available for inspection during an evaluation session.

It has renewed my enthusiasm for teaching



4.2 FEEDBACK FROM CO-ORDINATORS/ DIRECTORS

4.2.1 Overall Comments

Co-Ordinators/ Directors were asked to give overall comments about the ICE process. Some of the comments are outlined below.

“I found the entire process worthwhile and the most valuable finding is that we the staff now realise that we are accountable to our learners to provide a quality education.”

“We discovered that we were doing good work but had never stopped to acknowledge this before.”

“Overall the process was very valuable and has made staff more aware of the need for quality and their contribution to it.”

“ICE was a positive experience thanks to the relaxed manner of our facilitator.”

“very crammed days, very heavy, too many areas selected”

“Excellent facilitator, the fact that she works in a centre really helps”

“The actions mean a lot of work for the Director and full-time people”

“The ICE was very worthwhile and the facilitator was excellent, but the follow up in the main is dependant on the fulltime people who, in a small centre, are fully tied up with learners. In addition there is no administration support and no care taker. It is going to be very difficult to follow up”

“the fact that it is a quality framework common to all centres makes it important”

“Helps improve greater understanding among staff about why the co-ordinator wants things to be done in a certain way”



4.2.2 Quality Areas Selected for Internal Centre Evaluation

The quality areas to be evaluated were selected by centre staff. It was recommended that centres select nine areas to evaluate and that this selection would be made through a consensus decision making process. The table below lists the number of centres that chose to evaluate each of the quality areas. There is a very broad spread of areas selected. It is interesting to note that none of the centres opted to evaluate the area of Staff Recruitment. This may point to the fact that local Management are more involved in recruitment of staff than centre Co-Ordinators /Directors. The area of Equality scored low which reflects the absence of guidelines for centres relating to equality legislation. Centres are not in a position to evaluate their practice in this area when most centres do not have systems in place to deal with the Equality issues.

The areas of Health and Safety, Staff Development and Training, Code of Behaviour/ Conduct, Programme Design, Literacy & Numeracy and Work Experience were among the areas most commonly selected for evaluation, suggesting that these were areas that had undergone some development in the past and were of interest to staff as a focus for further improvement in the immediate future.

“
**Feel energised
& enthusiastic
after the two
days**
”

“
it was an
excellent
opportunity to
document the
work and
progress of the
centre
”

Quality Areas Selected for ICE		
SECTION	QUALITY AREAS EVALUATED	No. of Centres
Section One Organisational Management	1. Ethos	8
	2. Planning	5
	3. Monitoring	3
	4. Evaluation	3
	5. Communication and Links with the Community	4
	6. Transparency, Accountability and Public Relations	3
	7. Administration and Financial Management	5
	8. Record Keeping	6
	9. Health and Safety	12
	10. Premises	8
	11. Equipment	7
Section Two Personnel and Development	12. Staff Team	7
	13. Staff Recruitment	0
	14. Staff Development and Training	10
	15. Staff Support	5
Section Three Learning Environment	16. Social Environment	6
	17. Code of Behaviour/ Conduct	13
	18. Equality	2
	19. Interculturalism	3
Section Four Programme	20. Programme Design	10
	21. Programme Delivery	3
	22. Recruitment of Learners and Admission	9
	23. Initial Assessment, Induction and Review	9
	24. Learning Assessment and Certification	4
	25. Support Structures for Learners	3
	26. Literacy and Numeracy	10
	27. Social Personal and Health Education	3
	28. Work Experience	10
	29. Progression	8

4.2.3 Completion of an Evaluation Report

The guidelines for Internal Centre Evaluation recommended that arising from the evaluation process an annual report would be collated and forwarded to local management. The guidelines had suggested that a number of areas would be included in the evaluation report. Co-Ordinators / Directors were asked about their compliance with this aspect of the

evaluation process. Thirteen out of nineteen had either completed the report or were in the process of completing the report. Six said that they were not completing an evaluation report. For those who did or were in the process of completing an evaluation report the areas contained within the report are set out in the table below.

Content of an Evaluation Report					
	Centres questioned	Mission Statement Aims and Objectives	Outline of the Evaluation Process	Information on the Activities of the Centre Over the Past Year	Outcomes of the Evaluation Process
No of Centres	19	7	12	10	13

From the feedback it appeared that it was the centre Co-Ordinator/ Director who completed the report and submitted it to local V.E.C. Management and Boards of Management. All of those who did complete the report included the outcomes of the evaluation day, which incorporated an outline of what the centre was doing well, areas for improvement and a short term action plan that addressed the areas for improvement. This aspect of the report was made easy through the assistance of the facilitator who had typed up the outcomes of the evaluation session and had returned this information to the centre Co-Ordinator/ Director for inclusion in the report.

Most Co-Ordinators/ Directors included an outline of activities that took place in the centre over the past year; however some found this aspect of the report difficult. Much of this information was quantitative in nature and many centres did not have IT based systems for recording statistical information on learners and staff in an easily accessible way. Therefore, information on levels of participation by learners in various programmes and activities, and on numbers of learners who completed the course, left the centre early or progressed, had to be collated manually.

Those who completed the report felt that it was an excellent opportunity to document the work and progress of the centre and that it is motivating for staff to see that their work and progress is recorded in this format. Directors/ Co-Ordinators who have been in the practice of producing annual reports stated that there is great satisfaction in reflecting on the development of the centre through the use of annual reports. They are also excellent resources for the induction of new staff. In addition, their usefulness relates to their use

as a tool for the promotion of the centre and raising awareness of the work of the centre with local management.

A small number of respondents felt that the completion of the report was a time consuming exercise that would not result in any benefits for the centre. One respondent clearly stated that if Management were not looking for the report then none would be produced. This suggests the importance of local Management having clear expectations for not only the performance of centres but also the mechanisms that should be used for engaging with centres.

4.2.4 Involvement of Learners

The involvement of learners in the evaluation process was widely supported among all stakeholder groups. The Guidelines for Internal Centre Evaluation outline a number of ways that learner involvement can be achieved but the final decision on how learners were to be included was made at centre level. In carrying out this research Co-Ordinators/ Directors in nineteen centres were asked to outline the methods selected to engage with learners. The following table sets out the main recommended methods and the number of centres that opted for each method.

From the results it is evident that some centres opted to use more than one methodology. Some centres attempted both individual and group evaluation. While collating the results of the evaluation and feeding this into the evaluation session was a new experience for many staff, most found it to be a very useful and informative exercise.

Only two centres involved learners in the evaluation session. Staff commented that it was not appropriate to have learners present

“
The involvement of learners in the evaluation process was widely supported
 ”

Learner Involvement in ICE				
Methods of Engagement	Learner rep./s attended evaluation session	Group Evaluation	Individual Evaluation	No learner evaluation took place
No of Centres	2	9	9	3

during the evaluation of staff related and management related quality areas as this interfered with the level of open and honest discussion.

The evaluation questionnaire outlined in the guidelines was generally used without amendment. Several respondents recommended that other methodologies should be used to engage with learners as the use of questionnaires has its limitations. As staff get used to the process of engaging in evaluation with learners they may become more focused on the questions that they need to ask and therefore develop questionnaires and methodologies that are more specific to the needs of the centre and more appropriate to the learners.

The feedback session with learners at the end of the Pilot phase provided excellent information on how the process could be improved from a learner's point of view. This is further outlined in Section Six of this report.

4.2.5 Co-Ordinators/ Directors Views on the ICE Pilot Phase

All Co-Ordinators/Directors were asked about specific aspects of the Pilot Phase. This part of the questionnaire was set out in the form of a series of statements relating to the ICE process. Respondents were asked to select from a four-point rating scale of responses including

1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree, 4= strongly agree.

Based on 19 respondents the average score for each statement is set out in the table below (4 being the highest score).

The results show that on average Co-Ordinators/ Directors either agreed or strongly agreed with each of the areas except when it came to the question of the V.E.C./ Board of Management being more aware of the work that takes place in the centre as a result of the ICE process. Most disagreed with this statement because of the low levels of

“
The process
did increase
the sense of
teamwork
”

Co-ordinators / Directors Views on ICE	
VIEWS ON INTERNAL CENTRE EVALUATION PROCESS	AVERAGE RATING
The guidelines were clear and easy to follow	3.6
Sufficient information was provided at the regional information session to allow the centre to prepare for the ICE process	3.6
The staff in the centre are more aware of the need to provide a quality service following the completion of the ICE process	3.7
The ICE process has increased the sense of teamwork in the centre	3.4
The ICE process was a motivating process for the centre staff	3.5
The V.E.C./ Board of Management are more aware of the work that goes on in the centre as a result of the ICE process	2.6
The workload involved in the ICE process was manageable	3.4
I expect that the specific actions will be implemented as set out in the short term action plan	3.6
I expect that a process of Internal Evaluation will occur in the centre on an annual basis	3.7
I expect that learners will be given opportunities to evaluate the programmes delivered in the centre on an annual basis	3.6

participation by these groups in the ICE process while some Co-Ordinators/ Directors reported that these groups are already well informed about the work of the centre and the ICE process did not change that. Others suggested that Management would be better informed of the work of the centre on receipt of the evaluation reports. Some suggested that reports could be presented to relevant individuals allowing opportunities for discussion and amendment.

In general, the guidelines were found to be clear and easy to follow, apart for the need to re-examine the evaluation by learners. There were a number of comments recommending changes to the Evaluation Criteria and the Quality Standards on which they were based. Some found the language unnecessarily complex and the layout of standards and criteria not user friendly. It was suggested that the evaluation criteria were too quantitative in nature and more qualitative criteria would better reflect the work of the centre.

While the Regional Information Sessions appeared to be a good model for preparing centres for the evaluation process, they were held months before many centres actually engaged in the ICE process. While this time was allocated to allow centres make preparations and collate evidence many found that the time span was too great.

The majority of respondents stated that staff, in general, are more aware of the need to provide a quality service. Respondents commented on the greater awareness of the notion that learners are customers and centre staff and local management are there to provide a service which the learners have a right to evaluate. This represents a significant change in thinking for many individuals within the programme.

Co-Ordinators/ Directors agreed that the process did increase the sense of teamwork and was a motivating process for centre staff. Some of the comments made by staff about ICE being a daunting prospect were echoed again by Co-Ordinators/ Directors who felt that they were opening themselves up to potential

criticism. Once stakeholders were allowed to explore their fears the process proved to be motivating. This was mainly due to the fact that no individual was being evaluated but rather the processes, systems, policies and procedures that were in place. All stakeholders were encouraged to participate. Fears were explored and a group contract was drawn up to ensure safe a safe environment. Collective responsibility was encouraged along with a shared and practical approach to problem solving. The stakeholders had total control over the number of actions that were to be undertaken and who would carry these out within reasonable timeframes.

The team building opportunities within the process are clear, however a number of respondents stated that the ICE process is not a magic wand either. It cannot change people who do not want to be changed and there existed team members who were unmotivated by the process and did not want to share in finding a solution to the problems. A specific problem in this regard related to the issues of paying part-time staff for non-teaching work and resistance by staff to participating in non-teaching work.

Although the average score indicated that Co-Ordinators/ Directors agree that the work load was manageable, the average score was slightly lower than it was for the other statements. This indicates that some did find the work load difficult, mainly in relation to the completion of the evaluation report. Others reported that it was manageable at a cost to the centre pay budget, particularly where staff were being paid to participate in the ICE process and paid to implement actions.

Respondents generally agreed that the actions set out in the plan would be implemented. Again this may be due to the fact that staff made decisions about what areas they were in a position to deal with and those that could be dealt with at another time. Some centres are including the monitoring of actions as an item on the agenda at monthly staff meetings thus ensuring that the plan is not forgotten. A small number did state that they had selected too many areas for evaluation and felt

“
generally
agreed that the
actions set out
in the plan
would be
implemented
”

“swamped” by the amount of actions selected for implementation. It is common for centres to be over ambitious during a first evaluation; over time staff teams will learn to set more realistic expectations for themselves. It was very evident from the interviews that smaller centres expected to have greater difficulty in achieving their goals with smaller resources in terms of people and budgets. It may be more appropriate for smaller centres to work towards achieving quality standards at a slower pace than larger centres.

It appeared that most Co-Ordinators and Directors were positive about the future prospect of holding an evaluation session on an annual basis. It is clear that the centres that participated in the Pilot are eager to maintain the momentum that has been established and it is important that these centres continue to receive the support to do so. However, one respondent stated that she was left with the pressure of having to “make” staff implement actions and this did not encourage her to opt for another evaluation session next year.

Although the evaluation of specific programmes and courses did not occur during the Pilot Phase, stakeholders were challenged to think about this option for the future and many centres agreed to establish systems that would facilitate the evaluation of programmes by the learners. Some respondent did express concerns about the fears among staff in relation to this possibility. Many were not used to the idea of learners being asked if they were satisfied with the manner in which a particular programme was being delivered in the centre.

Teachers are anxious that they would have to pass on the results of the evaluation to the centre Co-Ordinator/ Director or Management. The QFI recommends that the information be used by the teacher to improve his/her own practice and to ensure the relevance of the programme in terms of the content and how it is delivered. However, there is awareness among staff that in the future all FETAC certified programmes will

require that learners be given opportunities to evaluate programmes. Details of this type of evaluation by learners are still to be worked out.

4.3 FEEDBACK FROM VEC MANAGEMENT

4.3.1 Overall Comments on the ICE Process

Only those members of V.E.C. management who participated in the ICE process were invited to complete questionnaires. Some of the overall comments are outlined below.

“The ICE process is a very valuable tool for affirming and acknowledging past and current work while looking forward to change and improvement”

“ICE does help to formalise the process and it makes it easier for centres to report to management”

4.3.2 Views of V.E.C Management on the ICE process

Although the participation of V.E.C. Management in the two day ICE process was very low, questionnaires were distributed to those who had participated. Of the four individuals who participated two returned questionnaires or completed the questionnaire through telephone interview. Members of Management were asked about their views on the ICE process and as with Co-Ordinators/ Directors the questionnaire was set out in the form of a series of statements relating to the ICE process. Respondents were asked to select from a four-point rating scale of responses including **1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree, 4= strongly agree** with each of the statements.

Based on 2 respondents the average score for each statement is set out in the table below (4 being the highest score).

“
Over time staff teams will learn to set more realistic expectations for themselves”

Management Views on ICE	
VIEWS ON INTERNAL CENTRE EVALUATION PROCESS	AVERAGE RATING
The guidelines were clear and easy to follow	4.0
Sufficient information was provided at the regional information session to allow the centre to prepare for the ICE process	4.0
The staff in the centre are more aware of the need to provide a quality service following the completion of the ICE process	4.0
The ICE process has increased the sense of teamwork in the centre	3.5
The ICE process was a motivating process for the centre staff	3.5
The V.E.C./ Board of Management are more aware of the work that goes on in the centre as a result of the ICE process	2.5
The amount of time required to complete the evaluation process was appropriate	3.5
I expect that the short term actions will be implemented as set out in the plan of actions	3.0
I expect that a process of Internal Evaluation will occur in the centre on an annual basis	3.5
I expect that the centre will produce an annual report for the V.E.C.	3.5
I expect that learners will be given opportunities to evaluate the programmes delivered in the centre on an annual basis	2.5
I am more aware of the work that goes on in the centre since my involvement in the ICE process	2.5
The V.E.C. will support the implementation of the short term action plan	4.0
I recommend that other YR and S.T.T. centres within the V.E.C. system should engage in a process of ICE	4.0
The centre submitted an evaluation report to the V.E.C. following the ICE process	2.0
The quality standards and the quality assurance processes provide V.E.C.s with a mechanism to engage with centres in a more meaningful way	4.0

“Management attended sessions as they wanted to show support for the work of the staff in the centres”



Respondents felt that the process was a motivating and team building experience for staff. Members of Management attended sessions as they wanted to show support for the work of the staff in the centres. There was awareness that staff in centres wanted the involvement of Management and Management wanted to be seen to be “taking more of an interest”. It was clear that those involved wanted to support the implementation of the short-term action plans that arose from the ICE process.

Those who participated felt that they already had a great awareness of the work of the

centre but that the quality assurance processes provided V.E.C. Management with a mechanism to engage with centres in a more meaningful way. They expected that ICE would occur in the centres on an annual basis and that an evaluation report would be produced. There was strong support for the notion that other centres should engage in the ICE process.

4.3.3 Alternative methods of engaging Management in ICE

Management were asked to suggest alternative ways in which they could engage with centres in the ICE process. It was suggested that there would be on-going meetings with the centre Co-Ordinator/ Director to evaluate the programme, rather than an annual evaluation. In addition, Management could form part of an implementation team to support the execution of the plan or meet with staff to discuss processes. Management could assess training needs at local level, organise training days for staff based on the quality areas, and co-ordinate the development of policies and procedures among centres at local level.

5

section five

Feedback on
the Centre
Development
Planning
Process



5.1 GENERAL COMMENTS FROM ALL STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Based on the questionnaires completed by stakeholders involved in the Pilot phase the following comments express the general feeling that were expressed at the end of day-five, on completion of the CDP process.

“This is a very worthwhile process for systematic improvement and change within the centre”

“I found the process to be clear, logical and inclusive”

“The process gives a much clearer idea of how the centre operates”

“Extremely interesting and will benefit centre as a whole”

“Some things difficult to understand”

“Very simple process- keep it that way”

“A lot of work put into it, but the process was excellent, very clear and simple”

“Helps to view the centre in a more holistic way”

“Occasionally confusing, generally useful”

“It is important to recognise the good will of the staff in the process”

“Small steps made the process manageable- painless”

“Writing down our plans is a great motivator not just talking about things”

“This process has and will benefit me in my work”

“A real learning process”

“It made us work as a team, we weren’t used to that. I liked it!”

“I realised that we had good working practices in the centre”

“Challenging and informative process but need participation from management”

“Rewarding, delighted that so many were involved and willing to share the tasks”

“It has been excellent for the centre”

“Good to have plan completed -highlighted what work we do in the centre and consolidated our plans for the future”

“Helped focus on issues that needed to be addressed”

“I found it a hugely interesting and productive exercise”

“Adds to the professionalism of the organisation”

“
Helps to view
the centre in a
more holistic
way
”

5.2 FEEDBACK FROM CO-ORDINATORS/ DIRECTORS

5.2.1 Overall Comments

In giving feedback Co-Ordinators/ Directors were asked to comment on their overall impression of the CDP process. The comments are outlined below.

“The process re-affirmed centre work, feel we are doing well”

“New staff are fascinated with history of the centre”

“Disappointed with lack of involvement from C.E.O.”

“The process highlighted the needs of centres, particularly in terms of an appropriate management structure. The external evaluation by the DES Inspectorate is still important”

“Those who were involved are more aware”

“It was daunting to start but went well”

“The centre had been in a rut, the CDP provided a shake up”

“It was great to discover that most things were in place”

“Very positive, very focused, well organised”

5.2.2 Duration of Plan

The CDP guidelines suggest that centres would develop a plan, setting out actions that are to be implemented over a 3-5 year timeframe. The Pilot Phase tested this guideline, as stakeholders were free to work out a timeframe that best suited the working of the centres, the resources available and the level of compliance with the quality standards prior to the Pilot Phase. Out of 24 centres there were 4 that developed a 2 year plan, 18 that developed a 3 year plan and 1 centre that developed a 5 year plan.

Opting for a 2 year plan was in some cases related to the urgency attached to achieving standards and the capacity of the staff team to take on numerous tasks in addition to delivering the programme to learners. Some Co-Ordinators/ Directors felt that it was inappropriate for the centre to look beyond two years due to the level of change that is experienced in this sector.

At the other extreme, a five-year plan was deemed suitable for a centre that was planning for eventualities that go beyond the scope of the Quality Standards. In this case the centre in question was at a stage where long term planning was appropriate.

5.2.3 Quality Areas Selected for Centre Development Planning

In order to select areas for action, stakeholders in each centre had to carry out a review of all twenty-nine quality areas. In doing so they had to agree on the quality standards that were being met and those that required further work. The areas for further work were then prioritised and a list of areas for action was drawn up. The following table outlines the number of centres that selected each of the quality areas listed for inclusion as an action in the centre development plan.

“
Helped focus
on issues that
needed to be
addressed

”

Quality Areas Selected for Action in CDP Process		
SECTION	QUALITY AREAS	No. of Centres
Section One Organisational Management	1. Ethos	8
	2. Planning	12
	3. Monitoring	12
	4. Evaluation	15
	5. Communication and Links with the Community	10
	6. Transparency, Accountability and Public Relations	10
	7. Administration and Financial Management	7
	8. Record Keeping	10
	9. Health and Safety	13
	10. Premises	8
	11. Equipment	8
Section Two Personnel and Development	12. Staff Team	13
	13. Staff Recruitment	6
	14. Staff Development and Training	19
	15. Staff Support	10
Section Three Learning Environment	16. Social Environment	8
	17. Code of Behaviour/ Conduct	14
	18. Equality	7
	19. Interculturalism	5
Section Four Programme	20. Programme Design	16
	21. Programme Delivery	8
	22. Recruitment of Learners and Admission	10
	23. Initial Assessment, Induction and Review	18
	24. Learning Assessment and Certification	4
	25. Support Structures for Learners	10
	26. Literacy and Numeracy	17
	27. Social Personal and Health Education	7
	28. Work Experience	13
	29. Progression	13
Additional Areas Selected by Stakeholders	30. Introduce LCA	2
	31. Move Centre	3
	32. Health Promoting YOUTHREACH	2
	33. Youth Participation	2
	34. Working with Learning Needs	2

“
The centre had
been in a rut,
the CDP
provided a
shake up
”

The CDP process encourages stakeholders to review all of the 29 Quality Areas as well as any other additional areas that may be important in the future development of the centre. Stakeholders were free to decide on the number of actions to be undertaken.

While the results show that the various action plans contained a broad range of areas there were a number of areas that were prioritised across the majority of centres. These included the areas of Initial Assessment, Induction and Review, Staff Development and Training, Literacy and Numeracy, Programme Design

and Code of Behaviour/ Conduct. The popularity of some of these areas may relate to other developments that were happening at national level.

For example, stakeholders are aware that a Senior Psychologist has been appointed to the Further Education Section to address the areas of guidance, counselling and psychological services in YOUTHREACH centres. Part of her work is the development of guidelines for centres on initial assessment, induction and review. This has created an expectation among stakeholders that in the near future such resources will become available and therefore staff will be in a position to put systems in place for the initial assessment and induction of learners.

Similarly, there is awareness among stakeholders of the work of the National Adult Literacy Agency (N.A.L.A.) in the development of guidelines for an integrated approach to delivering literacy at centre level. Because these guidelines exist and supports are in place, stakeholders can confidently plan to implement actions in this area.

Conversely, there are quality areas for which there is currently a lack of guidelines for centres at national level. These areas were not commonly selected as areas for action, the areas of Equality and Interculturalism for example.

These results clearly show that the development of certain quality areas is limited by the lack of relevant guidelines or supports that would assist centres in pursuing the development of a particular quality area.

5.2.4 Involvement of Learners

As with ICE, the involvement of learners in the CDP process was widely supported among all stakeholder groups. The guidelines for CDP outline a number of ways that learner involvement can be achieved but the final decision on how learners were to be included was made at centre level. In carrying out this research Co-Ordinators/ Directors were asked to outline the methods selected to engage with learners. The following table sets out the main recommended methods used by twenty four centres in the Pilot Phase and the number of centres that opted for each method.

Up to 10 centres opted to include learners in the planning group, however in many cases the learners dropped out simply because they were “lost” or due to the complexity of the tasks that had to be achieved by the planning group. In a small number of cases learner involvement in the planning group was successful, more so when the learners involved were adults. Six out of ten centres that had a learner representative/s on a planning group were S.T.T.C.s.

Some centres opted to use more than one methodology. The majority opted to carry out the learner review with a group of learners, other centres tried to carry out reviews with individual learners.

While the level of learner participation was high the use of a questionnaire as the only method of gathering information proved unsuccessful. As with the ICE process, strong recommendations were made by all stakeholder groups to re-develop the learner review process.

“
Those that
were involved
are more
aware
”

Learner Involvement in CDP				
Methods of Engagement	Learner representative part of planning group	Learner Review (as a group)	Learner Review (individually)	Attended Presentation of Plan
No of centres	10	20	11	1

“
The CDP process was a motivating process for the centre staff
 ”

Co-ordinators / Directors Views on CDP	
VIEWS ON THE CENTRE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESS	AVERAGE RATING
The guidelines were clear and easy to follow	3.3
Sufficient information was provided at the regional information session to allow the centre to prepare for the CDP process	3.5
The staff in the centre are more aware of the need to provide a quality service following the completion of the CDP process	3.4
The CDP process has increased the sense of teamwork in the centre	3.2
The CDP process was a motivating process for the centre staff	3.5
The V.E.C./ Board of Management are more aware of the work that goes on in the centre as a result of the CDP process	3.0
The workload involved in the CDP process was manageable	3.0
I expect that the specific actions will be implemented as set out in the short term action plan	3.6
I expect that a process of Internal Evaluation will occur in the centre on an annual basis	3.8
I expect that learners will be given opportunities to evaluate the programmes delivered in the centre on an annual basis	3.8

5.2.5 Co-Ordinators/ Directors Views on the Centre Development Planning Process

Over all, Co-Ordinators and Directors were very positive about the Pilot Phase. This part of the questionnaire was set out in the form of a series of statements relating to the CDP process. Respondents were asked to select from a four-point rating scale of responses including

1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree, 4= strongly agree.

Based on 24 respondents the average score for each statement is set out in the table above (4 being the highest score).

The feedback from Co-Ordinators/ Directors showed that they found the guidelines clear and easy to follow in the main. This however contradicts some of the comments from stakeholders who had suggested that the guidelines were somewhat complicated, cumbersome and repetitive at times. The guidance provided by the facilitator prevented this from causing significant problems during the Pilot Phase. In general, stakeholders relied on the facilitator's direction and depended less on the written guidelines.

As with ICE the regional information session proved useful in preparing stakeholders for the CDP process. The timing of the information sessions was particularly suitable as they were held close to the time that all centres started the CDP process.

The CDP has increased the level of awareness among staff of the need to provide a quality service; it did prove to be a motivating process for centre staff. Working together as a staff team and making decisions about the future of the centre gave renewed energy to the team. For many centres this was the first major review that had taken place, and for centres that had been in place for many years it was an opportunity to examine the appropriateness of the service that the centre was providing in light of changing needs of the learners and the demands of recent legislative and policy changes.

While Co-Ordinators/ Directors did agree that the CDP process has increased the sense of teamwork in the centre, this was not so in all cases. The establishment of planning teams did seem like a good option, for many centres it caused problems. Those who were heavily involved in the process felt that they were

doing all the work and those who were not in the planning group felt excluded. As with the ICE process, the CDP cannot motivate everyone, and therefore there remained individuals who did not fully participate in the process and who were resistant to taking on additional work.

Some stakeholders found the process a little over their head at times and found it difficult to know what the review questions meant. The language and the “jargon” of the process proved frustrating for some participants.

The workload in drawing up the plan seemed manageable but less so than the ICE process. The facilitated process appeared to cause little workload in itself, but the actual physical work of putting the plan together, including the writing up, cutting and pasting, layout, editing and photocopying seemed to cause the most problems. For centres that did not have access to an individual with relevant ICT skills this was problematic. On the other hand, doing this work gave a great sense of ownership to the task, something that was less apparent when the task was handed over to another party to collate. It is clear that additional time is required to complete the plan other than the five facilitated days. The amount of time required varied from centre to centre.

Directors/ Co-Ordinators seemed confident that the actions that were set out in the plan would be implemented despite some difficulties including the lack of a management structure in S.T.T.C.s and the problem relating to the payment of part-time teachers in certain centres. Some feedback suggests that the timeline for actions would be reviewed on an annual basis. The likelihood of implementing actions was closely related to the establishment of an implementation team. Some Co-Ordinators/ Directors reported that the action plan would be on the agenda of monthly staff meetings and that this would ensure that the plan would remain the driver of change in the centre for years to come.

Some fears were expressed in relation to the implementation of plans. Frequently Co-

Ordinators/ Directors referred to the need for Management to be involved in ensuring that plans were implemented. Stakeholders regularly referred to the importance of support and encouragement from management in completing this work.

Co-Ordinators/ Directors were very confident about the likelihood of annual ICE processes being held in the centre. This would provide a structured opportunity to evaluate the implementation of the action plan as well as other centre work. The evaluation criteria developed by the stakeholders during the CDP process would be used to evaluate the implementation of the actions during the ICE process.

The feedback suggested that it was highly likely that learners would be given opportunities to evaluate programmes delivered in centres. The possible resistance by some members of staff was acknowledged. Some Co-Ordinators/ Directors felt that teachers needed to be open to receiving feedback from learners and that this would only lead to improvements in the service that is being provided.

5.2.6 Additional Feedback from Co-Ordinators/ Directors and Staff

In addition to the feedback included in this report, there was a great deal of information gathered from stakeholders relating to the organisation and facilitation of the CDP process and the layout and purpose of the centre plan.

Numerous recommendations were made in relation to the review process. Many suggested the need for holding separate reviews with each stakeholder group and only asking individuals to review an area if they had some knowledge or experience of the areas for review. There were also comments regarding the lack of evidence examined when scoring the review. Suggestions were made to include the examination of evidence particularly in relation to the review of policies and procedures.

The timing of the CDP process was also questioned. Stakeholders recommended that the five days would be held closer together and that the process should be complete by Easter

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Directors were very confident about the likelihood of annual ICE processes being held
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in any given year to avoid clashing with examinations.

The planning process highlighted the fact that certain centre activities should take place on an annual basis. Through the planning process numerous centres devised an annual calendar of events and planned the implementation of actions around this. The need to hold planning meetings was highlighted through the Pilot Phase. Staff and management are more aware of the need to build planning meetings into annual timetables as they would staff meetings.

This additional feedback represents part of the comprehensive feedback received from stakeholders. It is not possible to include every detail of the feedback in this report however due consideration will be given to all of the issues and recommendations highlighted by stakeholders when the CDP guidelines are being re-drafted.

“
Student involvement should be looked at again, but the process was good overall”

”

5.3 FEEDBACK FROM VEC MANAGEMENT

5.3.1 Comments from V.E.C. Management

“The whole process was very worthwhile and informative. I have no doubt that it will be of benefit to the students and staff of the centres as well as meeting VEC requirements for planning. The centre plan will feed into the V.E.C.s five year plan”

“It got to the heart of the matter in a quick and efficient way”

“More focused approach to working with learners - more beneficial approach to working with learners not just token”

“The process does involve a great deal of commitment and professionalism on the part of staff”

“Much of the engagement between centres and V.E.C. was happening already e.g. evaluation, reporting, involvement in staff development and training”

“The V.E.C. will strongly encourage centres to participate in this initiative”

“CDP Review Sheet is appropriate tool for A.E.O. review as long as the management share in the vision and processes of the centre”

“Student involvement should be looked at again, but the process was good overall”

“Reservations about the how it will work in centres where there is resistance and where staff are against the idea of learners evaluating programmes”

“Strongly recommend that all centres would engage in CDP and ICE”

“It is important for management to be involved in some of it”

“V.E.C. has important role in creating and raising expectations”

“Worthwhile process for staff and management”

5.3.2 Views of V.E.C Management on the CDP process

The participation of V.E.C. Management in the Pilot Phase included Chief Executive Officers, Education Officers, Adult Education Organisers and Regional Co-Ordinators. The level of participation by Management in CDP was a great deal higher than it was in the ICE process. Of the twenty individuals who participated, eight returned questionnaires by post or completed the questionnaire through telephone interview.

Members of Management were asked about their views on the CDP process and as with Co-Ordinators/ Directors the questionnaire was set out in the form of a series of statements relating to the ICE process.

Respondents were asked to select from a four-point rating scale of responses including **1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree, 4= strongly agree** with each of the statements.

Based on 8 respondents the average score for each statement is set out in the table below (4 being the highest score).

Management Views on CDP	
VIEWS ON CENTRE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESS	OVERALL RATING
The guidelines were clear and easy to follow	3.6
Sufficient information was provided at the regional information session to allow the centre to prepare for the CDP process	3.7
The staff in the centre are more aware of the need to provide a quality service following the completion CDP process	3.5
The CDP process has increased the sense of teamwork in the centre	3.4
The CDP process was a motivating process for the centre staff	3.4
The V.E.C./ Board of Management are more aware of the work that goes on in the centre as a result of the CDP process	3.1
The amount of time required to complete the planning process was appropriate	3.1
I expect that the specific actions will be implemented as set out in the plan	3.2
I expect that a process of Internal Evaluation will occur in the centre on an annual basis	3.7
I expect that the centre will produce an annual report for the V.E.C.	3.7
I expect that learners will be given opportunities to evaluate the programmes delivered in the centre on an annual basis	3.4
I am more aware of the work that is going on in the centre since my involvement in the CDP process	3.1
The VEC will support the implementation of the action plan	3.7
I recommend that other YR and STTC centres within the VEC system should engage in CDP	3.7
The quality standards and the quality assurance processes provide V.E.C.s with a mechanism to engage with centres in a more meaningful way	3.6

Respondents agreed that the guidelines were clear and easy to follow and that the Regional Information Sessions adequately prepared centres to make the necessary preparations for the CDP process. While most members of Management felt that it was a motivating and team building process they were aware that there were individuals who were not motivated by the process.

The V.E.C. s involved in the Pilot and the members of Management are more aware of the work of the centres as a result of the CDP process but many reported that they had good relationships with centres to start with. One comment suggested that the quality assurance processes of the Quality Framework Initiative would not in themselves create the relationship between centres and V.E.C. Management but where there is a good

relationship these processes can help to build the relationship. If the relationship is poor to start with then other steps need to be taken to forge strong links prior to meaningful engagement in quality assurance processes.

Some respondents questioned the level of involvement by Management in centres. It was clear that Management held differing views on the level of knowledge that they would have in relation to centres. Some stated for example that the Review Questionnaire was an appropriate tool for Management to comment on centre performance while others felt that it was too detailed in that it asked Management to have a level of familiarity with a centre that they felt was impossible to maintain. It was therefore recommended that Management would engage in a less detailed review of the

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**V.E.C. has
 important role
 in creating and
 raising
 expectations**
 ”

centre rather than the one set out in the pilot guidelines. Some members of Management suggested that it was difficult to engage with centres when there were no “rules of engagement”. This was pointing to the lack of operational guidelines for centres which had prevented them from having clear expectations for centre performance.

Whatever level of participation is appropriate, all respondents agreed that it was vitally important that Management be represented in such an important process. This would provide staff with support at a time when it was much needed and appreciated. In addition, it is important for staff to be aware of the bigger picture at VEC level, particularly in terms of staff training and policy development. The majority of respondents strongly agreed that the V.E.C. would support the implementation of the plan. Some highlighted the importance of Management having expectations that centres would engage in quality processes. They also highlight the importance of Management showing an interest in the implementation of the centre’s plan and where possible becoming a member of the implementation team.

While Management generally agreed that the amount of time required to complete the CDP process was appropriate others felt that it was too short.

There appeared to be strong support for the suggestion that other centres would engage in the CDP process. It was acknowledged that all centres do not have the same capacity to engage in such processes and may need considerable support and encouragement. It was acknowledged that there was too much inconsistency in the way in which centres currently operate and it was hoped that the Quality Framework would help to address this problem.

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**Worthwhile
 process for
 staff and
 management**
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section six

End of Pilot
Phase
Feedback
Sessions



6.1 OUTLINE OF FEEDBACK SESSION

6.1.1 Introduction

By the time all centres had completed the Pilot Phase in July '04 a great deal of feedback had already been collated from questionnaires and interviews. Even at that early stage it was possible to see some of the key issues arising from the Pilot Phase. The Feedback Sessions were an opportunity to bring stakeholders together to discuss the Pilot Phase, to tease out issues, to resolve questions that were being raised and to debate a number of points where a difference of opinion existed.

The Feedback Session provided a particular opportunity to engage with learners. The information that had been gathered by the end of the Pilot phase clearly recommended that the methods of engaging with learners in both the ICE and CDP processes required improvement. The Feedback Session was an ideal opportunity to invite learners to participate in a number of workshops that would test a range of new methodologies and activities.

6.1.2 Format of Feedback Session

1. *Presentation from centres that piloted ICE and CDP*
2. *Presentation on the Key findings arising from the Pilot Phase*
3. *Workshops*
 - *Internal Centre Evaluation*
 - *Centre Development Planning*
 - *Learners Testing ICE and CDP Methodologies*
4. *Feedback Session*



6.1.3 Key Issues - Internal Centre Evaluation

- Who should participate in the two day ICE process?
- Should separate evaluation sessions take place with any stakeholder groups?
- Should evidence be produced during the evaluation process that would confirm or back up evaluation findings?
- How can Management become more involved in the ICE process?
- How can the evaluation of a programme be incorporated into an ICE session?
- How can centres be supported to develop and document the necessary procedures and policies?

6.1.4 Key Issues - Centre Development Planning

- How often should centres engage in CDP?
- Should centres only engage in CDP when they have a recent (less than 2 yrs old) Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives in place?
- Should learners participate in the planning group? How can staff create greater awareness of the process among learners?
- Should a separate review process take place with different stakeholder groups and should stakeholders only be asked to score the areas that they are familiar with?
- How can Management become more involved in the CDP process?
- Should the review involve the examination of certain evidence?

6.2 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

6.2.1 Internal Centre Evaluation

Who should participate in the two-day ICE process? Should separate evaluation sessions take place with any stakeholder groups?

The evaluation process requires honesty and openness from those involved. Some individuals feel vulnerable and for this reason it has been recommended, by some, that only

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All agreed
with the need
to produce
evidence
during an
evaluation
session
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staff including Co-Ordinators/ Directors participate in the two day session. The involvement of Management, community representatives, learners and Boards of Management could stifle honest dialogue.

In addition, staff members were concerned that those external to the centre would not have sufficient knowledge of the workings of the centre to fully participate and therefore time would have to be spent updating and informing certain stakeholders about centre practice. In contrast to this view, it was suggested that the evaluation process is an opportunity to promote the work of the centre and therefore the involvement of Management was essential.

If separate evaluations could take place with each of the key stakeholder groups this information could be brought to the evaluation session. It was recommended that separate evaluations would take place with Management, Boards of Management, learners, parents and representatives of key organisations within the community. Separate questionnaires could be devised for this purpose. Stakeholders would only be asked to evaluate the areas that were relevant to their experience and responsibility.

Should evidence be produced during the evaluation process that would confirm or back up evaluation findings?

All agreed with the need to produce evidence during an evaluation session. This would make the process somewhat more objective. A number of stakeholders reported that folders of evidence had been collected in some centres.

How can Management become more involved in the ICE process?

It was suggested that the V.E.C. Management may not be sufficiently aware of the Quality Framework Initiative and that further work needs to be done in this area. It was recommended that Management would be more involved in the preparatory stage and that the centre Co-Ordinator/ Director would ask Management to evaluate the work of the

centre using an evaluation questionnaire or structured interview. It was recognised that Management are very involved with many centres and while this is appreciated a more systematic appraisal of the work would be appreciated by centre Co-Ordinators/ Directors. Generally, a more formalised approach to Management was recommended. The evaluation report could be presented to Management for review and further recommendations could be sought.

How can the evaluation of a programme be incorporated into an ICE session?

While the ICE process allows for the evaluation of twenty-nine quality areas, it is possible to use the same format to evaluate particular aspects of centre practice including the evaluation of specific programmes. During the feedback session participants were asked to examine the evaluation criteria that could be applied to the evaluation of a programme. In this particular example a F.E.T.A.C. Foundation Level Programme was being evaluated. It was anticipated that this would be a useful exercise in light of F.E.T.A.C.s requirements for evaluation of programmes.

From an examination of the evaluation criteria participants stated that it was encouraging to discover that programme evaluation could be incorporated into the annual ICE process. Some of the evaluation criteria need to be simplified but the way in which outcomes are reported for F.E.T.A.C. purposes fits very well into the normal reporting procedure as set out in the guidelines. Anxiety was expressed about the level of information that would be required by F.E.T.A.C. in an evaluation report, particularly in relation to the evaluation of programmes by learners.

How can centres be supported to develop and document the necessary procedures and policies?

It was recognised that certain policies and procedures need to be developed at national level, particularly those that originate from legislation, while others can be developed at regional, V.E.C. or centre level.

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The evaluation report could be presented to Management for review

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Participants recommended that V.E.C.s would be made aware of the policies and procedures that require development and perhaps some of this work could take place in a co-ordinated manner through the I.V.E.A. Policies that are to be developed at local level may require national guidelines but could be developed at a regional level with the aid of a facilitator who may have expertise in a particular area.

Some participants stated that time was a big factor; where administration support was not available in the centre, in particular, there was little time to co-ordinate the development of policies and procedures. The development of Operational Guidelines was more of a priority for many than the development of further policies and procedures.



certain policies and procedures need to be developed at national level



6.2.2 Centre Development Planning

How often should centres engage in CDP?

Based on the experience of participants it was recommended that centres would continue to have a choice in terms of the duration of the centre plan. Between two to five years was recommended as a possible timeframe. All agreed that it was important to hold evaluation sessions annually and monitoring meetings as required.

Should a centre only engage in CDP when it has a recent (less than 2 yrs old) Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives in place?

All agreed that these should be in place prior to engaging in a CDP process. Some suggested that these be reviewed annually.

Should learners participate in the planning group? How can staff create greater awareness of the process among learners?

Overall, it was not recommended that learners participate in the planning team, however their involvement in the process was seen as essential. Some centres actively encourage the participation of learners in key decision making processes and if this is part of the centre's mission then it may be appropriate to include learners in the

planning team. If learners are part of the planning team their involvement should be contingent on their understanding of the process, otherwise it is merely tokenistic.

More appropriate methodologies need to be developed that will engage the learner, and learners should be appraised of the developments that are taking place as a result of their recommendations.

Should a separate review process take place with different stakeholder groups and should stakeholders only be asked to score the areas that they are familiar with?

All agreed that separate reviews should take place with key stakeholder groups, bearing in mind time and budgetary constraints. The different groupings suggested were as follows:

- Staff review
- Management review
- Board of Management review
- Learner review
- Parent review
- Community review
- Administration review

It was recommended that key stakeholders would be brought together at the start of the process. Each stakeholder group should only be asked to review quality areas that relate to their knowledge and experience of the programme.

How can Management (AEOs, CEOs, EOs, Regional Co-Ordinator) become more involved in the CDP process?

Management can participate in some or all of the five CDP days. If this is not possible the Co-Ordinator/ Director may conduct a review with a member/s of Management. This information can be fed into the development of the plan. The finished plan can be presented to Management for comment or amendment. Management may take on the responsibility of implementing parts of the plan. This might include the areas of staff development or policy development. It was

suggested that centre Directors were responsible for bringing the QFI to the attention of the Board of Management. It was suggested that V.E.C.s should get more direction from the D.E.S. with regard to the importance of the Q.F.I. for centres and managers.

Should the review involve the examination of certain evidence?

There was general agreement that evidence be looked at during the review process. The gathering of evidence was seen as part of the process of growth and development. The notion of evidence is very much part of F.E.T.A.C.'s quality assurance requirements and it would be useful if centres were encouraged to think in terms of producing evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of centre practice. In the case of the review it may only be required in relation to certain areas such as policies or procedures.

6.3 LEARNER WORKSHOPS

6.3.1 Introduction

Learner workshops took place during the two Feedback Sessions that were held at the end of the Pilot Phase. A total of 26 learners were involved in the workshops, the purpose of which was to find out what learners thought of the ICE and CDP processes and to test a range of activities that were designed to engage learners in quality assurance processes.



6.3.2 Feedback from Learners

The learners said that they were generally aware that "something new" was happening in the centres during the ICE and CDP processes, but there was some confusion as to what it was and what the implications were for the learners.

The majority of those present had completed an evaluation questionnaire/ review questionnaire. None of them were involved in the planning group but some had student councils in their centre where the information was fed back. Participants said that they may have been told about what was happening but they might not have understood it properly or were absent on the day in question. All said that generally they found both questionnaires easy to fill out, but there were times when the questions were very complicated and had to be explained. Simply ticking the boxes meant very little discussion. They were aware that some learners could not complete the questionnaires. All thought that they didn't officially get the results, but they had a general idea of them as they all filled out the questionnaire together or it was talked about informally. All felt that they were told what improvements were going to be made and even some of those improvements had started already, e.g. change in timetable, change of lunch time or new equipment.

6.3.3 Why ask learners to evaluate?

Learners were asked to say what they thought evaluation meant. The following comments were listed.

- Check how everything is going
- See if they are up to standard
- See what work is being done
- See what's wrong
- Checking progress
- Explain how you did things
- Work on change
- Write up the changes
- Praise ourselves
- Making changes

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The learner's
opinion is
important
”

6.3.4 Why would centre staff ask learners to evaluate the programmes and services provided to learners?

When asked to discuss this question the following comments were made.

- The learner's opinion is important
- When you get the learners opinion it makes the running of the centre much easier
- The centres are set up for learners
- We as learners are as important as if we stayed on at school and therefore so are our views
- They (staff) wouldn't be able to improve things fully if they didn't know our opinion
- It's all about us!

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It's all
about us!
”

6.3.5 Testing a Range of Quality Assurance Activities

The learners tested a range of activities that could be used by centre staff to engage learners in ICE and CDP processes. During the Pilot Phase learners were simply asked to complete an Evaluation Questionnaire or a Review Worksheet and in many cases learners did not fully understand what the processes were about and were not informed of the outcomes of the quality assurance processes. Learners generally did not know how their feedback would impact on their own experience of the centre, if at all.

The activities tested involved exercises that could be used to introduce the concepts of evaluation and planning and to examine the purpose of involving learners in such processes. This was followed by a number of evaluation and review exercises some of which required no literacy skills on the part of the learners and others that used more appropriate language than previous questionnaires/ worksheets. Overall it was felt that discussion and group-work methodologies were very effective methods of aiding learner understanding.

The learners involved made comment on each of the activities and this information will be used to develop new guidelines and material for engaging learners in ICE and CDP processes.



7

section seven

Feedback from
Facilitators



7.1 INTRODUCTION

During the Pilot Phase the facilitation team not only had the task of implementing the guidelines they also attempted to look for potential improvements that could be made to the guidelines and the processes. Their commitment to ensuring that this would be a positive experience for each centre was clear from the initial training session. The Centre Development Planning Process began for most centres in October '03 and all centres had completed two of the five days by December '03. In January '04 the team of facilitators met to carry out a mid-way review with regard to the CDP process and to recommend changes if necessary. The ICE process had started in centres from January '04 however most centres had engaged in ICE from May to June '04. The end of Pilot Phase review included an examination of both the ICE and CDP processes.



Their commitment to ensuring that this would be a positive experience for each centre



7.2 MID-WAY REVIEW - KEY ISSUES ARISING

7.2.1 Centre Development Planning

- Centres should have clear reasons for involving various stakeholders.
- Large numbers of stakeholders attending the review can be problematic; separate reviews may be more appropriate.
- A review process involving a wide range of stakeholders can lead to an attempt to present a better image of the centre than is the case in reality.
- Stakeholders need to be familiar with quality standards prior to review day.
- Considering the rate of progress to date it is recommended that Day 3 and Day 4 would be dedicated to action planning.
- Learner participation in the planning group does not appear to be the most appropriate form of learner engagement in some centres, due to the nature of the debate and level of experience required.

- Centres that did not have a Mission, Aims and Objectives completed prior to the CDP process did not have sufficient time to develop these as part of the CDP process.
- Clear guidelines on how to develop a Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives need to be included in the CDP guidelines.
- Further guidelines need to be developed in relation to carrying out the learner review, feeding this information to the planning group and feeding developments back to learners.
- The implementation of actions should be broken down into those requiring immediate action, those that will occur on an annual basis and those that are to be implemented in the medium to long term.
- Monitoring meetings need to be built into plan.
- Further clarification is required regarding the link between ICE and CDP.

7.3 END OF PILOT PHASE REVIEW- KEY ISSUES ARISING

Internal Centre Evaluation

- The facilitator needs to clarify his/her role as a facilitator not an external evaluator.
- The facilitator needs to ensure that the areas for evaluation are selected, the evaluation criteria agreed and the learner evaluation complete prior to the ICE session.
- Clear guidelines need to be developed on how the feedback from learners is incorporated into the evaluation session and how learners are informed of progress resulting from the evaluation.
- The involvement of management needs to be addressed.
- The examination of evidence during an evaluation session may cause problems for the facilitator. It is not the facilitator's role to comment on the standard of policies or procedures. Clear guidelines need to be developed in this regard.

- The importance of celebrating the success of the centre was highlighted. A range of suitable exercises need to be developed.
- Facilitators have to allow staff to decide on the actions that are to be undertaken as a result of the evaluation process.
- Time should be allocated to advise centre Co-Ordinator/ Director on the content of the ICE report.

Centre Development Planning

- Stakeholders should not be involved in the CDP process purely for the purpose of promoting the work of the centre.
- The review process could be simplified by removing the scoring format.
- The introduction of evidence during the review was an issue of concern for facilitators. There was a concern that facilitators would be expected to comment on the suitability or standard of evidence.
- Stakeholders need to document and refine actions so as to insure ownership of process.
- Centres would benefit from the development of IT based templates in the production of the centre plan.
- The additional time required to collate the plan should be recognised and allowed for in future CDP processes.
- The plan, when complete, should be submitted to the facilitator for review before Day 5.
- The centre should decide if the entire plan or some of it distributed to outside agencies. It may be prudent to produce a less detailed version for external distribution.



**section
eight**
Recommendations



8.1 THE QUALITY FRAMEWORK

- The Quality Standards and the Guidelines for Internal Centre Evaluation and Centre Development Planning should be re-developed. In doing so, due consideration should be given to F.E.T.A.C.s quality assurance policy and procedures.
- The external evaluation aspect of the Quality Framework requires further development in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science Inspectorate.
- The centralised selection and training of facilitators is recommended as an essential aspect of the Initiative.
- Centres together with local Management should select suitably trained facilitators from a list provided by the Quality Framework Co-Ordinator.
- Centres should continue to receive the supports necessary to assist them to engage in the ICE and CDP process.
- Regional Information Sessions should continue to be provided for centres engaging in ICE or CDP for the first time.
- Stakeholders participating in quality assurance processes should continue to have an opportunity to evaluate their experience. Such evaluations should be fed back to the Quality Framework Co-Ordinator to ensure the continued relevance of the guidelines and processes.



- Arrangements for the payment of part-time staff who engage in ICE and CDP processes should be agreed by the Department of Education and Science and the Vocational Education Committees/ I.V.E.A.
- The apportioning of administration support between centres and V.E.C. offices should be agreed between the Department of Education and Science and the Vocational Education Committees/ I.V.E.A.

8.2 INTERNAL CENTRE EVALUATION PROCESS

- Internal Centre Evaluation should occur in all centres on an annual basis.
- More detailed guidelines are needed in relation to the evaluation of programmes by staff and learners in order to comply with F.E.T.A.C. requirements.
- The wording of the evaluation criteria needs revision to ensure that meaning is clear.
- The process for engaging learners in the evaluation process needs to be revised. A selection of evaluation activities need to be developed as well as good practice guidelines for engaging in consultation with learners.
- The question of how V.E.C. Management and Boards of Management representatives can best participate in the ICE process needs further examination. A range of options may need to be developed.
- The evaluation process should involve the examination of evidence in order to confirm if procedures and policies are actually in place. This will require additional preparation work by centre staff in advance of the evaluation.
- Systems for ensuring the on-going implementation of the short-term action plan require development.

- Clearer guidelines are required on how the evaluation of the implementation of actions fits into the annual evaluation process.

8.3 CENTRE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESS

- A process of Centre Development Planning should take place in centres as required, but no more frequently than every 3-5 years.
- CDP guidelines should include clear information on how to develop a Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives.
- Centres should not engage in a CDP process unless they have a recently developed Mission Statement, Aims and Objectives in place.
- The guidelines, generally, need to be re-organised with further clarification and additional information provided in relation to a number of areas.
- The process for engaging learners in the planning process needs to be revised. A selection of review activities need to be developed.
- The question of how VEC Management and Boards of Management representatives can best participate in the CDP process needs further examination. A range of options may need to be developed.
- Stakeholders engaging in a review process should only review the quality areas that relate to their experience of the programme.
- Separate reviews may be carried out with the various stakeholder groups.
- The review process should involve the examination of evidence to confirm if procedures and policies are actually in place. This will require additional preparation work by centre staff in advance of the review.
- Guidelines for monitoring the implementation of actions need to be developed.

8.4 ROLL-OUT

- The rolling out of the Quality Framework to all YOUTHREACH and Senior Traveller Training Centres should be agreed through discussion between the Department of Education and Science, The Irish Vocational Education Association, The Association of Chief Executive Officers and Education Officers and the National Co-ordinators for YOUTHREACH and for Senior Traveller Training Centres.
- It is recommended that each Vocational Education Committee becomes involved in the Quality Framework Initiative. It is also recommended that V.E.C. Management should ensure that all centres are working towards improvement using the Quality Framework model.
- Management should include the Quality Framework Initiative as part of their induction programmes for new Co-ordinators and Directors.
- The Quality Framework should be seen as a framework for interaction between centres and V.E.C. Management in that it introduces a clear system for reporting and consultation between centres and V.E.C. Management
- Management should have clear expectations for centre performance based on the Quality Standards, which should also identify for Management the kinds of supports centres require.
- Additional facilitators should be recruited and trained. Special effort should be made to encourage staff from centres to apply for the position of facilitator as this would result in significant capacity building at local level.



8.5 NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

In addition to the developments that would be the responsibility of the Quality Framework Co-Ordinator a number of other developments are recommended that would greatly assist the embedding of the quality system. They include the following:

- A co-ordinated approach to the development of the relevant policies and procedures by the DES and the I.V.E.A.
- The re-development of Operational Guidelines for centres.
- The development of an IT based record keeping system for centres.
- A training programme for Co-Ordinators/ Directors to enable them to develop the necessary leadership skills to promote and encourage quality assurance within centres.

