Childcare Tutors: Profiles, Perspectives and Professional Development Needs

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Abstract

Following decades of limited development, the early years of the 21st century have seen significant developments in Irish childcare policy and practice. Growth in the numbers benefiting from childcare has been accompanied by increasing numbers of childcare practitioners acquiring qualifications. These developments are well documented in a variety of reports and research studies. However, little attention has been paid to the people who teach on these programmes, the childcare tutors. Given the recognition of the importance of quality childcare for healthy child development it is timely to investigate the experience, qualifications and theoretical bases of the tutors who prepare childcare practitioners. This study presents an in-depth profile of a small number of such childcare tutors and maps their working contexts. Original data regarding the provision of childcare training nationally were compiled from a range of sources. Data from semi-structured interviews with childcare tutors and with providers are used to build a profile of these tutors and their continuing professional development needs.

The study locates childcare tutors in two distinct domains: childcare and adult education. Recruitment of the childcare tutors in this study points to haphazard, expedient employment practices, low pay and no security of tenure. Low status of both childcare and adult education combined with a sense of isolation among childcare tutors adds to the challenges such workers face. Childcare tutors are confident of their ability to assist their learners develop the caring dimensions of their role. However, they are less certain of their theoretical foundation and subject matter knowledge. Providers express general satisfaction with their childcare courses and tutors. However, they recognise that increasing the work experience element would improve the learning experience. The study concludes with some recommendations for continuing professional development including the need for childcare tutors to organise themselves into a professional support and advocacy group.

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Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

AEO	Adult Education Officer
APEL	Accreditation of prior experience and learning
BMW	Border, Midlands and Western Region
BTEI	Back to Education Initiative
CAS	Common Awards System
CETS	Childcare Education Training Support scheme
CE	Community Employment
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DES	Department of Education and Skills
EA	External Authenticator
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECD	Early Child Development
ECI	Early Childhood Ireland
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
FESS	Further Education Support Service
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICEA	International Council for Adult Education
IPPA	Irish Pre-school Playgroups Association
IT	Information Technology
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LES	Local Employment Services
LMAF	Labour Market Activation Fund
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
NCCC	National Co-ordinating Childcare Committee
NCNA	National Children's Nursery Association
NESF	National Economic and Social Forum

NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NVAE	Non-vocational adult education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PD	Professional Development
PFL	Protection For Learners
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
QNHS	Quarterly National Household Survey
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
SIOPS	Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This study set out to investigate the realm of the tutors of childcare workers, specifically those teaching on programmes leading to FETAC Level 5 childcare awards. Recent legislative changes and innovations draw attention to the importance of early years experiences for the healthy development of the person. They acknowledge also that high quality childcare has an important role in maintaining a vibrant economy. The 2010 introduction of universal access to a free pre-school year in an early childhood care and education (ECCE) setting, the 2011establishment of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, as well as the 2012 referendum on children's rights acknowledge this importance so positioning ECCE within mainstream education. However, the policy rhetoric of the importance of high quality ECCE is belied by the reality of the low status of the pre-school sector characterised by poor wages, high staff turnover and a pre-dominantly part-time workforce. A further sectoral quandary concerns an on-going policy debate regarding a differential emphasis between 'care' and 'education'.

In order to participate in the free pre-school year initiative, childcare providers must employ qualified staff. This requirement has led to increased demand for staff training. The FETAC Level 5 Childcare Award is the designated baseline qualification for pre-school leaders[1] (DCYA, 2010). These programmes are delivered by adult, community and further education providers. This sector displays exactly the same low status features as the pre-school sector. This example of dual logic gives rise to dilemmas at the heart of this thesis - quality ECCE is critical for the healthy development of young people and for the economy; but the resources to develop quality provision are overlooked.

This chapter details my interest in the topic, introduces the aims of the research, briefly surveys the development of childcare provision and training in Ireland and summarises relevant policy. It identifies the educational and childcare organisations that have important functions in the area of childcare training. It also describes the complexity of the relationship between early years education and adult education

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[1] A 'leader' is one title used for the person in charge of a pre-school group. One or more childcare assistants may work with the same group. See free pre-school year guidelines (www.dcya.ie)

that tutors must negotiate. Finally, it provides a brief introduction to the subsequent chapters.

There is abundant evidence of the important contribution of quality ECCE to child development; policy makers and researchers stress the significance of adequate training and preparation of childcare workers to ensure quality provision (eg. Hayes, 2007b, OECD, 2012). However, there has been little exploration of the people who prepare childcare workers for their important role. They are the subject of this thesis.

Professional Interest of the Researcher

Since 1998, I have worked, *inter alia*, as an evaluator/authenticator of certified education and training programmes. In addition, I have worked with education providers regarding the development of quality assurance systems. In my role as an evaluator/ authenticator of learners' work, I see a wide variety of approaches to teaching and learning among tutors. Reviewing learners' work demonstrates that some tutors are imaginative in the manner in which they develop and implement curricula; they use creative approaches to teaching and assessment. At the opposite end of the spectrum, some tutors seem to approach a programme outline much as one might a cookery recipe, reading the instructions and proceeding step by sequential step never deviating from the directions on the page. Such tutors tend to regard assessment as purely summative and consequently students' learning experience is impoverished.

An example of concerns about childcare tutoring can be found in a submission to the childcare workforce development consultation process:

- No evidence of the core value statements outlined in the Model Framework with FETAC Level 5.

- Childcare practice does not always reflect attainment of FETAC level 5 qualifications.

- The lack of practical assessment within this qualification is a serious gap.

- Some employees with FETAC level 5 have significant literacy difficulties. When asked how they obtained the qualification they reported that someone else completed the paperwork. *(*Brocklesby, 2009*)*

The draft report *Developing the workforce in the early childhood care and education sector* (DES 2009c) resulting from the consultation process seemed to

accept Brocklesby's concerns. It noted wide variation in the quality of tutors and training programmes and recommended that '*minimum qualification standards and sectoral experience levels*' should be developed. However, this recommendation was omitted from the final report (DES, 2010b).

In giving feedback to education centre directors, I sometimes enquire about tutors' practice and prior experience. Some are aware of tutors' strengths and challenges. Others tend to allow tutors to 'get on with the job'. On a few occasions, I met tutors who were teaching a programme that they themselves recently completed. Speaking to tutors about their teaching programme I am regularly struck by their feelings of being lost and unsupported. Tutors with a teaching background are familiar with teaching to a curriculum but may not be familiar with the curriculum development demands of a FETAC module descriptor. Tutors with a subject matter expertise but no teaching experience are also unfamiliar with the module descriptor demands. Furthermore, they may lack a pedagogical grounding.

Additionally, I worked with the childcare staff of a Family Resource Centre over a period of five years providing team and individual support and mentoring. During that period most of the staff members engaged in FETAC Level 5 training with a variety of providers. Each of these learners was an early school leaver for whom returning to learning presented considerable challenges. This experience informed and influenced my approach to evaluating/authenticating childcare learning programmes.

Familiarity with some of the difficulties that learners and tutors encounter suggests a complex set of interdependent issues that combine to encumber their learning journeys. With the introduction of the free pre-school year it is likely that the demand for childcare training will continue to increase, therefore, it is timely to explore the experiences of childcare tutors.

Outline of the study/research questions

The goal of this study is to explore and investigate the learning and support needs of childcare tutors engaged in providing training at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications. I set out to gather information from the literature, childcare tutors and their employers. The study endeavours to do the following:

- profile a select number of childcare tutors

- o   their educational backgrounds, qualifications and work experience
- identify and describe their professional development needs
- investigate their work environments by
  - o   mapping FETAC Level 5 childcare training providers in Ireland
  - o   considering the impact of policy developments in the childcare and adult education sectors
  - o   exploring some of the challenges facing education providers of childcare training programmes
- explore the impact of welfare and education sectoral tensions and contradictory logics on the education of childcare practitioners.

Although small in absolute numbers, the qualitative methods employed yielded rich data through participant focused, in-depth interviews. In addition, the quantitative exercise involved in mapping the provision of Level 5 childcare training provides national level data previously unavailable. Despite the evidence emphasising the importance of childcare, Level 5 childcare training in Ireland is provided in response to local needs; there is no evidence of a national planning strategy. The mapping exercise will provide a basis for analysing current provision.

It is important to emphasise that this study is not about the provision or quality of childcare, or the content and quality of childcare training programmes; the study explores the experience of childcare tutors, their professional development needs and the context in which they work.

Context

Two particular contexts impinge strongly on the professional domain of a childcare tutor: Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and adult education.
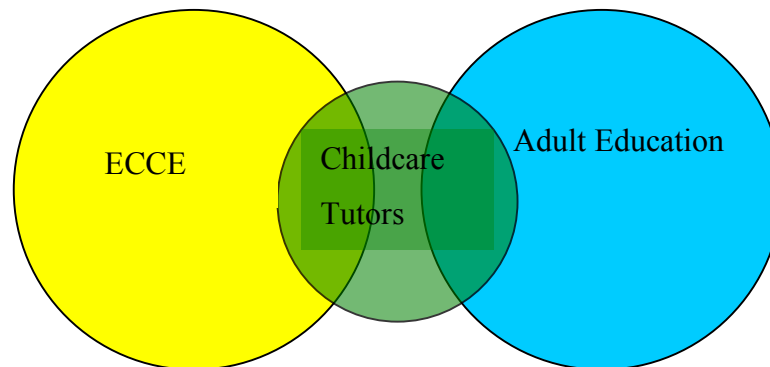
Diagram 1: The Contexts of Childcare Tutors

As the model (above) illustrates, childcare tutors straddle two distinct *fields* (Bourdieu, 1993 in Rey, 2008). Each field, ECCE and adult education, has its own distinct vision, ethos, policies and practices. In reality their separateness is emphasised by the fact that compulsory education of six to sixteen year olds is interposed between ECCE and adult education. The challenge for childcare tutors is to integrate their knowledge and experience of ECCE and adult education in their role as tutors. Therefore, the working world of the tutor is the field of adult education while the field of childcare provides the content.

Background

According to the National Childcare Strategy (Government of Ireland, 1999b), 'childcare' refers to day-care facilities and services for pre-school children and school going children after school hours. It includes services offering care, education and socialisation opportunities for children to the benefit of children, parents, employers and the wider community (ibid, 1999b, p.xxii). In this context, 'Childcare' differs from 'Child Care', referring to 'Child Care Services' targeted at people up to the age of eighteen years who are in need of the care and protection of the State. The term 'Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)' is used as is 'Early Childhood Education and Care' (ECEC). The terms indicate the continuing debate regarding the relative importance of 'care' and 'education'.

This illogical distinction contradicts accepted insights from developmental psychology that show learning as a developmental process commencing before birth with the period from birth to five years of age being particularly critical. This distinction is important in this study as it has the potential to influence both childcare and childcare education providers to accentuate either 'care' or 'education', diminishing the importance of the other. 'ECCE' is the dominant term used in Ireland and so is used throughout this thesis.

Childcare provision in Ireland has developed mainly on a demand and supply basis. Historically, family members fulfilled childcare needs or wealthier families employed nursery and/or tutor staff. According to Horgan (2001) the values set out in the 1937 Constitution regarding family privacy and responsibility of parents for their children contributed to government policy of non-intervention regarding the provision of childcare. The state perceived its responsibility towards children as related only to their protection. Essentially, childcare was a family responsibility. Regarded as 'women's work', caring for children shared the low status accorded to women. Consequently, private and community organisations developed un-regulated provision of non-family childcare on an arbitrary basis. While parents seek childcare for a variety of reasons (Government of Ireland, 1999), one of the main drivers is the desire and the opportunity for women to return to the workforce. Since Ireland joined the EEC in 1973 the percentage of women actively participating in the workforce increased from 27% to 49% in 2006. The economic downturn beginning in 2008 is reflected in a drop back to 46% in 2010.

Organised Childcare in Ireland

In the second half of the nineteenth century, organised care of children outside of their home environment happened in a number of ways. For example, Froebel-influenced kindergartens catered for children of the middle classes while philanthropic organisations established orphanages and crèches to care for young children whose mothers needed to work. In the first half of the twentieth century, organisations such as the Sisters of Charity and the Civics Institute of Ireland initiated year-round day-care facilities (Hayes and Kernan, 2008).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, organisations advocating improved childcare facilities entered the social landscape. In 1948 supported by UNESCO, l'Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Prescolaire was founded (OMEP,

2010). In 1966, an Irish branch was established. Hayes (2002) credits OMEP with raising the profile of children and their issues in Ireland.

Influenced by UK childcare developments, the Irish Preschool Playgroups Association[2] (IPPA) was established in 1969. According to its website, www.ippa.ie (November 2010), IPPA's membership of over 2400 includes '*Playgroups, Parent and Toddler Groups, Full Day Care Groups, After-school and Out-of-School Groups and individual members*'. The IPPA offers training programmes to childcare workers, supervisors and trainers.

The community and voluntary sector in Ireland played a major role in the development of childcare services. Local community groups facilitated sessional playgroups organised and operated by parents. Charitable organisations, both religious and lay, provided childcare services to communities experiencing disadvantage. The number of private childcare providers increased as interested individuals opened fee-paying playschools (Duignan and Walsh, 2004).

The services offered by childcare providers varied in extent and in quality. The only information about the quality of a childcare service available was by word of mouth or from the childcare service itself. Prior to the commencement of Section V11 of the Child Care Act (1991) in 1996, childcare services were not regulated. This Act placed responsibility for the inspection of childcare services with the Department of Health and Children. A 1997 report from the Mid-Western Health Board stated:

> *While the standard of care in a number of services inspected was seen to be of a high standard, the standard of services generally was considered to reach only a basic and satisfactory level. In most cases providers were dedicated and caring people but were limited in their capacity to provide higher quality in their services.* (Mid-Western Health Board, 1999 p.34)

Policy context of childcare

The Childcare Act (1991) describes the duties of childcare providers as '*to take all reasonable measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of pre-school children attending the service and to comply with regulations made by the Minister under this Part.*' (Section VII, 52). The Act empowered the Minister to develop regulations for '*the purpose of securing the health, safety and welfare*

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[2] In October 2011, the IPPA and the National Childrens' Nurseries Association merged to form Early Childhood Ireland

and promoting the development of pre-school children attending pre-school services' (Oireachtas, 1991. The 1996 commencement of Section VII of the Act led to increased attention on the provision of pre-school services. However, this interest was not well coordinated and led to an abundance of reports and policy documents from a variety of sources. Tracking the various policy developments highlights the emergence of dual structures and logics governing ECCE, some examples follow.

The National Childcare Strategy Report (Government of Ireland, 1999b) underlined the confusion arising from the fact that eleven Government Departments had some responsibility for the funding and/or provision of services to children. The report advised assigning responsibility for 'coordinating children's policy' to a new office – that of the Minister for Children. It identified the following government departments as having responsibility for the Childcare sector:

- the Department of Health and Children, through the HSE is responsible for the registration and monitoring of childcare facilities;
- the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs which chaired the Commission on the Family (1998) working group;
- the Department for Education and Science convened the Forum on Early Childhood Education also in 1998;
- the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform chaired the expert working group that drafted the Partnership 2000 Childcare Report and the Model Framework for Education, Training and Professional Development in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector (2002)[3]. The department operates the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme.
- The Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands mainly by providing funding to An Comhcoiste Réamhscolaíochta and Udarás na Gaeltachta;
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment providing funding to the NOW programme, Community Employment projects, FÁS childcare training and County Enterprise Boards' childcare initiatives;
- Department of Agriculture and Food channelling funding through the LEADER programme;

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[3] This document is referred to throughout this study as 'the Model Framework'.

- Department of the Environment, funding for non-specific Local Authority initiatives;
- Tourism, Sport and Recreation funding for new initiatives and provision of staff and infrastructure to Partnerships and Community Groups;
- Department of Finance funding Social Inclusion and Cross-Border projects.
- Department of the Taoiseach – Territorial Employment Pact programmes (these were absorbed into the 2000 – 2006 Structural Funds Programme)

Lack of coordination between the various childcare initiatives meant that other than the 1991 Act, no agreed understanding, vision or approach informed the development of the sector. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 2.

In December 2005, the Government established the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) in the Department of Health and Children *'to improve the lives of children under the National Children's Strategy and bring greater coherence to policy-making for children'* (Andrews. 2010). Following the general election in February 2011, Enda Kenny the newly appointed Taoiseach, established the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) to *'safeguard the integrity and innocence of children'* (Kenny, 2011). Some children's services have been moved to the DCYA. These include: from the Department of Health, the Child Welfare and Protection Policy unit and the National Children and Young People's Strategy Unit (formerly the National Children's Office) and from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Childcare Directorate. Although technically under the aegis of the DCYA, the Youth Justice Service and the Early Years Education and Policy Unit continue as part of and report to their parent departments, respectively the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, and the Department of Education and Skills. Furthermore, responsibility for the inspection service that ensures compliance with childcare regulations, remains with the HSE.

Negligible consideration is paid to the training of childcare practitioners in the regulations. The only reference to specific training requirements is Regulation 6 which requires that a *'person trained in first aid for children should be on the premises at all times'* (Government of Ireland, 2006 p. 36). Regarding the management and staffing of a childcare facility the regulations stipulate that *'a sufficient number of suitable and competent adults are working directly with the*

pre-school children in the pre-school service at all times' (ibid p.6). The document defines '*suitable and competent'* as an adult *'who has appropriate experience in caring for children under six years of age and/or who has an appropriate qualification in childcare'* (ibid p.38). It also instructs providers to *'have management, recruitment and training policies to ensure that a sufficient number of suitable and competent adults are available' (ibid p.38).* However, the regulations do not define either '*appropriate experience'* or '*appropriate qualification'*. The phrase '*or who has an appropriate qualification in childcare'* suggests that qualifications are not strictly necessary and underline the low status of the sector.

It could be argued that the absence of clear guidelines regarding qualifications for all childcare workers has the potential to undermine the contribution of quality childcare to the healthy development of the individual. Among childcare providers general acceptance emerged of the FETAC Level 5 Childcare award as the baseline '*appropriate qualification'* for childcare workers. The publication of the ECCE Workforce Development Plan in 2010 (DES, 2010) confirmed this acceptance. However, the requirement for childcare workers to have a FETAC Level 5 qualification only applies to registered childcare providers. As long as providers of childcare are not obliged to hire trained staff, the low status afforded to childcare is perpetuated, and the efforts of tutors to cultivate skilled practitioners are hampered. The next section introduces the education and training context of the childcare sector.

Education and training structures

Similar to the field of childcare, adult education has come under increased legislative and policy attention as the Irish Government recognized the potential of the concepts of Lifelong Learning and Knowledge Economy (Grummell, 2007). The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, the White Paper Learning for Life 2001 and the Teaching Council Act 2001 developed a framework for providers and tutors operating in the fields of adult and further education. While these developments created a structure for provision issues to do with content and pedagogy were neglected. The absence of a generic qualification for adult and further education tutors is addressed and the development of mechanisms for recognising prior learning and experience as well as a pre-service training programme recommended. However, these proposals concern generic

training programmes; neither childcare or adult education policy documents confront the appropriate skill and knowledge requirements for childcare tutors. In the developing sector of childcare training, programme providers are left without a reference frame to guide the selection of 'appropriately qualified' tutors. Potential applicants for teaching positions on childcare programmes cannot access qualifying criteria. These issues are explored in subsequent chapters.

Historical Development

The National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) was established in 1991 to develop a national certification system for vocational training (Murray et al, 1997). The NCVA developed a framework for levels of qualification across a range of vocational areas including childcare. Working with childcare educators and providers NCVA developed suites of modules at introductory, basic, practitioner and supervisor/manager levels. For the first time learners could access nationally recognised certification for childcare training. This initiative could be described as the first step towards professionalisation of the sector.

The passing of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999) led to the establishment in 2001 of the National Qualifications Authority[4] of Ireland (NQAI), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). The NCVA was subsumed into the newly established FETAC.

The NQAI[5] launched the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) in 2003. The framework aims to support lifelong learning by promoting the quality of awards and facilitating the widespread recognition of awards (NQAI, 2009).

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[4] The NQAI's principal objectives are: i) the establishment and maintenance of a framework of qualifications for the development, recognition and award of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners, ii) the establishment and promotion of the maintenance and improvement of the standards of awards of the further and higher education and training sector, other than in the existing universities, iii) the promotion and facilitation of access , transfer and progression throughout the span of education and training provision. (NQAI, 2010)

[5] Further momentum was given to this process in November 2012 with the establishment of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) which brings under one roof four awarding bodies, FETAC, HETAC, IUQB and NQAI. QQI is now responsible for all the functions of these legacy organisations.

FETAC[6]

FETAC is the national awarding body for the further education and training sector in Ireland (FETAC, 2008). FETAC determines standards and awards and certifies learning programmes from levels 1 - 6 that are part of the NFQ. Awards types include major, minor, special purpose and supplemental. A major award is comprised of a number of minors; the number varies depending on the credit value and the award level.

In order to offer certified further education and training programmes, childcare education providers must register with FETAC. Since 2005, all providers must develop and submit for approval comprehensive Quality Assurance (QA) policies and procedures. It is intended that current legislation and good practice inform the provider's QA system thus guiding the provider in every aspect of their education provision. FETAC providers must self evaluate the operation of their QA system regularly. Provider registration serves to assure stakeholders and the public that childcare training providers' adherence to the national standard is monitored. The effectiveness of providers' QA system is explored in Chapters 4 and 5; in particular the extent to which the QA systems structures providers' relationships with their tutors is addressed.

FETAC Awards[7]

In the context of this study, a Level 5 FETAC major award consists of eight distinct modules or learning units. The module descriptors are available on the FETAC website (www.fetac.ie). Technically, a registered provider has access to and the freedom to offer any of the available modules[8]. In practice, FETAC monitors the programmes delivered by providers; for example, should a provider of computer training begin offering courses in childcare, FETAC would undertake a thorough investigation of the provider's capacity to offer the new programme. Providers may offer individual modules, a number of modules or an entire award group. Such decisions are based on the needs of their learners. For example, in a Post-Leaving Certificate College (PLC), learners are likely to embark on a full

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[6] FETAC was subsumed by QQI in November 2012.
[7] The conditions outlined in this section will be superceded by new regulations concerning programme registration and validation that are due to be fully operational by 2013.
[8] Once the programme validation process is complete, providers may continue to access component specifications but may only offer a training programme following validation by QQI of their programme.

award (eight modules) while in a community setting learners may work to achieve the full award one module at a time.

A module descriptor presents the purpose, desired learning outcomes and assessment strategies for a particular learning unit. While modules may be delivered as stand alone components, they are also designed as parts of a 'whole'. Some modules within an award group show obvious overlap in the learning outcomes. This overlap allows the provider of a full award to design an integrated programme that obviates repetition. An integrated programme is less time demanding but more intensive for the learner and the provider than one delivered sequentially. A programme delivered over an extended period of time may allow part-time workers/part-time learners greater opportunities for relating theory to practice, interrogation of and reflection on their own practice thus embedding their learning. In addition, sequential delivery permits learners to study at their own pace and accumulate credits towards a major award over a period of time. Module descriptors provide a template for tutors to develop a learning programme that is informed by learners' needs and interests. FETAC encourages tutors to be creative when devising assignment briefs. Tutors may ask learners to present assignments in graphic, audio, video or written formats. This flexibility allows tutors to design assignments that suit the learning styles of their learners. Assessment strategies include Assignments, Skills Demonstrations, Examinations, Learning Journals / Records and Projects. It is envisaged that these strategies serve to provide assessment for, as well as, of learning; therefore, assessment should be continuous throughout the programme and not merely summative. Devising a learning programme from a module descriptor is challenging; it requires creative thinking as well as knowledge of curriculum development and learning theories. A major strength of the FETAC system is the flexibility it affords tutors to keep the learners' context, needs and interests at the centre of the process. However, meeting the challenge requires a facility in curriculum development. These issues are explored further in Ch. 5.

The Level 5 Childcare Award

The participants in this study were involved in providing and tutoring the FETAC DCHSC Level 5 Childcare Award. The award was published in 2001. The major

award consists of six mandatory modules and two electives[9], all of which are available[10] on the FETAC website (www.FETAC.ie). The mandatory modules are: Child Development, Working in Childcare, Early Childhood Education, Caring for Children (0 – 6years), Communications and Work Experience[11]. The modules introduce learners to topics such as the role of play; the physical, intellectual, language, emotional and social development of children; relevant legislation and regulation; health, safety and nutrition; and teamwork and communication. Participating in a childcare training programme helps learners acquire skills in devising and leading creative play activities; using observation to assess child development; communicating with children, parents and colleagues; and maintaining a stimulating, healthy and safe environment for children. In November 2010, according to the Qualifax[12] website, four FETAC registered providers offered childcare courses at Level 3; thirteen at Level 4, two hundred and twenty eight offer a major Level 5 award and eighty-four providers offer a major Level 6 award (Qualifax, 2010).

Recent developments

From 2001, FETAC has been the certifying body for educational programmes developed, provided and formerly certified by FÁS, Teagasc, Bord Iascaigh Mhara and CERT. In 2008, FETAC began the major task of developing a common awards system (CAS) to encompass all the legacy awards of these providers. This has been an important development towards establishing a unified system of training and certification, not least in the childcare arena. The development of the CAS means the gradual withdrawal and replacement of all existing awards; this process will be completed in December 2013 (FETAC, 2009). Under the CAS, registered providers will design programmes based on published specifications and submit them to FETAC for validation. Providers may only offer validated programmes (FETAC, no date given).

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[9] A full list of childcare elective modules is available in Appendix 2.
[10] With the introduction of the new childcare award in 2011 and the withdrawal of DCHSC in 2012, these descriptors will no longer be available.
[11] Communications and Work Experience modules were a mandatory component of all Level 5 major awards prior to the introduction of the CAS.
[12] Qualifax is a web based database that provides information on further and higher education courses. It is part of the NQAI (now QQI, 06.11.12)

A new Level 5 childcare award, *5M2009 Early Childhood Care and Education*, was published in March 2011. At the time of gathering information for this study none of the respondents had begun to deliver this programme.

The Training and Education of Childcare Tutors

While significant progress has been made in clarifying and systematising training for childcare practitioners, the policy documents are virtually silent regarding the teachers of these practitioners. Little or no attention is given to appropriate qualifications and experience in the childcare or adult education domains. While policy developments have led to teaching at primary and secondary level becoming exclusively graduate professions (Burke, 2002), this is not the case in adult education or ECCE. There is a presumption that tutors have or can acquire a knowledge base that will enable them to operate as effective tutors of potential childcare practitioners. Furthermore, many learners entering FETAC Level 5 childcare education programmes have few, if any formal education qualifications; this scenario poses additional challenges for the tutor who may or may not possess pedagogical expertise. There are no official regulations or guidelines for education providers employing childcare tutors. Similarly, applicants for childcare tutor vacancies lack a reference base by which to self-assess their suitability for the position. Within this policy vacuum, providers and tutors of childcare can seem like sailors without a compass hopeful that the course they have plotted will lead to the desired destination.

Summary

Quality childcare can help prepare children to embark confidently on the social and cultural journey through formal education. It has the potential to offset some of the disadvantages experienced by many children. Well-trained, high calibre childcare workers are required to accomplish this demanding task. A FETAC Level 5 Childcare award is recognised as the basic qualification for the sector. The award components offer a well-developed framework and have the potential to equip childcare personnel with adequate knowledge and skills. The role of childcare tutors in achieving this goal - hitherto unexplored - is undoubtedly vital. This chapter has shown that while recent years have seen important strides made in filling previous policy vacuums, significant gaps persist.

This chapter introduced the research topic and questions, i.e. to profile a select number of childcare tutors; identify and describe their professional development needs; investigate their work environments; map the provision of FETAC Level 5 Childcare programmes and explore the impact of welfare and education sectoral tensions and contradictory logics on the education of childcare practitioners. It proceeded to outline the development of childcare and training for childcare staff; describe the context and introduce the three domains within which the research is located, namely, childcare, adult education and childcare tutors. Finally, it outlined the Level 5 learning programme.

Chapter 2 explores the literature as it pertains to childcare education and educators. It identifies key considerations for the training of quality childcare workers. The chapter also looks at adult education as the work domain of the childcare tutors. It reviews significant policy developments relating to childcare and adult education and considers some of the implications for the tutors.

Chapter 3 presents the author's methodological approach and outlines the rationale for its adoption. It considers the consequences of the chosen approach, outlines some of the hurdles encountered and details the ethical guidelines that inform the study.

Chapter 4 investigates Level 5 childcare training in Ireland. It presents data on numbers and locations of training providers. It profiles the nine provider participants and details their views. It analyses the challenges they encounter in their efforts to contribute to a high quality childcare workforce.

Chapter 5 considers the findings resulting from the tutor interviews. Profiles of the eight tutor respondents are presented. Their current work situations, the difficulties they encounter are explored and some of their professional development needs are identified. Analysis of the data highlights the structural impediments facing tutors and explains their concerns for their future.

Chapter 6 contains a discussion of the themes and issues emerging from the different strands of the research. It draws attention to contradictions in policy and procedures that hinder the provision of high quality childcare training. Finally, conclusions are offered and recommendations for further actions suggested.

Terminology

Terminology use in the adult education sector varies widely, for example, 'students', 'pupils', 'participants' and 'learners' can be used interchangeably. The

question of language usage raises issues of clarity in both the ECCE context and the Adult Education sector. Fumoto, Hargreaves and Shirley (2004) assert that '*conceptualising 'teaching' in early education and childcare and the corresponding use of the term 'teachers', is by no means straightforward*' (Fumoto et al, 2004, p 179). They note that early childhood has traditionally been the only area of education where different professionals work alongside each other in the classroom (ibid, p 180). If 'teacher' is contentious, 'practitioner' is also problematic. Unclear terminology has been observed also in the European context; Buiskool et al (2009) note,

> *... all over Europe different names are often given to these professionals, even though they refer to the same sorts of positions. Hence, teachers, tutors, lecturers, trainers and instructors were all referred to as teaching professionals. (*Buiskool et al, 2009 p.149)

Apart from direct quotations, the terminology used in this study generally reflects that used in the adult education sector; course participants are referred to as 'learners', adult education teaching staff as 'tutors', places of learning as 'centres' and members of management as 'providers'. Within the Irish childcare world, a number of terms are used, 'ECCE' and 'childcare' are most common. 'Educare' and 'ECEC' are used less frequently. Throughout this thesis, 'ECCE' and 'childcare' are used.

Chapter 2   Literature Review

Given the overarching concerns about tensions and contradictions regarding childcare generally and childcare tutoring in particular, this chapter critically examines Irish and international literature on the topic. Documents relating to policy, regulation, the workforce, childcare education and the educators of childcare workers are interrogated. Secondly, the theories relating to the purpose and pedagogies associated with education for childcare are analysed critically. The chapter also examines how policy impacts on the childcare sector and how it addresses internal tensions, for example, between the rhetoric of high aspirations and the reality of poor pay, temporary contracts and low status; between 'care' and 'education, between the care of children and the availability of their mothers for the workforce. The significance of the ECCE section being, *de facto*, an all-female occupation is also analysed. Finally, the issue of status, a recurring theme in the literature in relation to children, women, ECCE workers, childcare tutors and adult education generally, is explored further.

Early Childhood Care and Education

As indicated in the opening chapter, the State traditionally perceived its responsibility towards children as related to their protection. Essentially, childcare was a family responsibility. Recognising the lack of support for families, private and community organisations developed un-regulated provision of non-family childcare on an arbitrary basis. The commencement of Section VII of the Child Care Act (1991) in 1997 laid the ground for the development of structured, regulated childcare (NCCC, 2002). This policy shift led to what Williams (1989) observed as childcare changing from being essentially 'a private concern' to one of critical importance for civil society, with serious implications for providers of childcare and for those who work in childcare. A growing recognition of the importance of ECCE is evident in Ireland in extensive recent legislation, regulation and provision. For example, the policy decision to introduce a free Pre-School Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (www.dcya.gov.ie) in January 2010, for all children between the ages of three years and two months and four years and seven months has particular significance for parents and children.

Welcoming the announcement by the then Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan in the supplementary budget speech in April 2009 (Department of Finance, 2009), Minister for Children Barry Andrews drew attention to the motivations - educational, social and economic - driving the initiative:

> *This is a highly significant step in the development of Ireland's early childhood care and education (ECCE) policy. The Government has, by announcing this decision, demonstrated our commitment to our children's social and educational development. It is a key building block in the realisation of our plan for a smart economy. The provision of a year's free pre-school to all children will promote equality of opportunity at the most important developmental stage of children's lives. Regardless of income or ability to pay, all children will be entitled to avail of this pre-school service. (*Andrews, 2009)

Research in Europe, the U.S. and elsewhere testifies to the benefits accruing to children, families and society from the provision of quality childcare (World Bank, 2007; OECD 2012, 2004,1998; Europe, 2011; Hayes, 2007b; Walsh & Kiernan, 2004). Barnett (2012) contends that while worldwide, 200 million children under 5 years of age, are failing to reach their developmental potential, pre-school interventions can assist children's development and yield high economic returns. He reports that the provision of early years education has reaped benefits including increased school success of migrants (Germany), reduced dropout (Uruguay) and increased attainment (U.K., Argentina, Uruguay). Irish Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald, reiterated the advantages described by Barnett. She added:

> *Early-interventions in children's lives and in quality early childhood experiences are crucial to a child's emotional, cognitive and social development.* (Fitzgerald, 2012a)

The Minister also recognised that provision of ECCE in Ireland '*lagged behind*' that in other countries and acknowledged that recent advances in provision have been driven by the imperative to increase women's access to the labour market.

Much of the literature on the benefits of ECCE enunciates the economic and societal advantages that follow from one or more years spent in an early childhood setting. The World Bank highlights research in the US and in a number of developing countries that shows that 'Early Child Development' (ECD) programmes improve society '*by ensuring that its individual members live up to their full potentials*' (www.worldbank.org). Some of the advantages identified include:

- *Higher and timelier school enrolment*
- *Less grade repetition and lower dropout rates*
- *Higher school completion rates*
- *Improved nutrition and health status*
- *Improved social and emotional behavior*
- *Improved parent-child relationship*
- *Increased earning potential and economic self-sufficiency as an adult*
- *Increased female labor force participation* (World Bank, n.d.)

Current thinking internationally stresses the importance of '*quality'* ECCE. Barnett (2012) states that return on investment depends on '*intensity and quality'* and that '*quality depends on teachers, class size and classroom composition'*. This increasing emphasis on the quality of provision is a consequence of a shift in policy focus from economic concerns with '*quantitative aspects of accessibility and availability'* (Urban, Lazzari, Vandenbroeck, Peeters and Laere, 2011, p.15) to recognising ECCE contribution to children's development. The economic perspective regards childcare as essential for labour market access. An educational perspective recognises quality ECCE as a vital step for children on the path to achieving their potential. For some, emphasis on the link between education and economic development remains central,

> *High quality early childhood education and care can make a strong contribution to achieving two of the Europe 2020 headline targets in particular: reducing early school leaving to below 10%, and lifting at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and social exclusion.* (Europe, 2011)

While the various sectoral interests agree on the importance of quality ECCE, it is noteworthy that children rights are highlighted principally by those whose remit relates to services to and for children. For some, childcare is mainly about freeing up women for the workforce, for others it's about realising children's rights so that their potential is realised. In policy documents, tensions exist between the two perspectives.

Irish Policy Development

As noted earlier, recent Irish policy developments confirm the importance of high quality childcare and well-trained staff for the healthy growth and development of

children (NESF, 2005; DJELR, 2002; Government of Ireland, 1999b; Government of Ireland, 1999a).

Prior to and since the 2010 introduction of the free pre-school year, a variety of government departments issued policy documents[13] relating to the provision and regulation of childcare services. Different emphases appear in the documents with consequences for ECCE training. For example, the Department of Education and Science in *Ready to Learn*, (Government of Ireland, 1999a) emphasises the educational and developmental purpose of childcare, while the 1996 regulations introduced by the Department of Health and Children (DOHC, 1997) are more concerned with children's safety, health and welfare. Commentators continue to draw attention to a type of dual logic operating concerning the purpose of ECCE leading to a lack of clear policy thinking. For example, '*early childhood services in Ireland are fractured across the welfare (childcare) and educational (early education) domains*', (Hayes, 2008, p. 33). Arguably the most important development in the sector was the creation of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (http://www.dcya.gov.ie) in 2005 to ensure the coordination of policy and provision for children and young people. However, Kiersey (2009) suggests the new Office did not ameliorate the situation,

> *... In Irish social policy childcare tends to be broadly defined as a general concept which can also comprise early education.*
>
> *...Therefore, within the general concept of childcare in Irish policy there are two separate dimensions, childcare and early education.* (Kiersey, 2009)

Government commitment to coordination continued with the establishment of a full government department - the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2011. This Department brings together a number of functions however, despite its name, inspection of pre-school services remains the responsibility of the HSE.

Competing needs

Allied to the 'care – education' debate is an ambiguity regarding the primacy of meeting the developmental needs of children or the needs of parents, society and the economy. *Ready to Learn,* (Government of Ireland, 1999a) originating in the Department of Education and Science, emphasises that the purpose of childcare is to benefit children and describes additional advantages as 'a spin off'. The

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[13] A brief synopsis of these documents is included in Appendix 8

definition of ECCE used in the Childcare Strategy document[14] (developed under the auspices of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform) appears to award equal importance to children's needs as to those of 'employers and the wider community',

> *'... it includes services offering care, education and socialization opportunities for children to the benefit of children, parents, employers and the wider community ...'.* (DJELR, 1999)

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs has reiterated that the primary focus of childcare is on supporting the development of the child,

> *I am determined that unlike in the past when, for too long, the focus was solely on supporting parents, going forward the focus must be on quality supports for the development of the child.* (Fitzgerald, 2012b)

She also references the facilitation of women's participation in the labour market (Fitzgerald, 2012a, 2012b). In addition, her Department's strategy statement on the economic agenda is clear,

> *'The role of affordable childcare in supporting labour market activation will also provide opportunities for the DYCA to contribute to the jobs agenda'* (DYCA, 2012a)

It is hardly surprising that analysts suggest that 'early education' services are aimed at developing the human capital of children while the main focus of 'care' services is to facilitate the participation of parents in the labour market (Heckman and Masterov, 2007 in Hayes & Hynes, 2010). Hayes (2010) acknowledges that the issue of care and/or education has been addressed but says that it remains unresolved in practice while the primary policy concern continues to focus on increasing childcare provision. The fault lines persist.

Continuing Hayes' argument, it is possible to assert that the failure to resolve the debates firstly on 'care – education' and secondly on 'individual development – needs of the economy', contributes to the continuing division of responsibilities between government departments. As the HSE (under the Department of Health) retains responsibility for inspection of childcare services it is understandable that the focus of the Inspectors is on the care and safety aspects of childcare provision. In the absence of clarity of purpose, providers of childcare facilities may understandably structure their service to comply with the requirements of the inspectorate (primarily the care/safety aspects) while the educational features of

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[14] Indeed, Hayes (2007a) suggests that the tension between 'care' and 'education' is visible in these document titles – the DES document emphasises 'learning' while the DJELR strategy refers to 'childcare'.

the programme receive less attention[15]. In this scenario providers of education and training programmes for childcare practitioners may find that an emphasis on the educational purposes of childcare does not resonate with the experience of learners on work placement, thus weakening links between learning in the classroom and learning on placement and effectively causing confusion. The implications of this are explored throughout the following sections.

Standards and curriculum

Development of the ECCE sector continued with the publication of Síolta (CECDE, 2006) and Aistear (NCCA, 2009). Síolta sets out the quality standards for operating a childcare setting and provides a framework for assessing and improving the quality of childcare. Its purpose is,

> *... to define, assess and support the improvement of quality across all aspects of practice in early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings where children aged birth to six years are present. These settings include:*
>
> *full and part-time daycare, childminding, sessional services, infant classes in primary schools.* (www.siolta.ie, 2012)

Aistear (NCCA, 2009) specifies an appropriate early years curriculum framework for children 0 - 6 years. It is constructed around four major '*aims and learning goals*'. Concerns with balance and quality are evident in these themes, '*well-being, identity and belonging, communicating and exploring and thinking*' (NCCA, 2009). The adoption of these frameworks while encouraged (Government of Ireland, 2006), has been neither mandatory nor the subject of inspection (Share *et al*, 2011).

Occupational profiles of ECCE

The National Childcare Strategy report (1999) proposed a range of occupational profiles for the sector. These were further developed in the Model Framework (DJELR, 2002) and reiterated in the Workforce Development Plan (DES, 2010). The Model Framework was the first document to comprehensively address the education and training needs of the childcare workforce (Neylon, 2011). It welcomed the development of the National Qualifications Framework especially its commitment to consultation with stakeholders. The Model Framework stressed

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[15] See (P.36, this chapter) for P. Murphy's (2005) experience regarding research respondents in childcare settings describing their practice as 'to comply with the Health Board'.

that flexible modes of learning and accreditation were essential in order to ensure equitable access for childcare practitioners.

Three years after the publication of the Model Framework, the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF), noted that previous childcare reports including the National Childcare Strategy (1999) and the Model Framework (DJELR, 2002) were not accompanied by policy implementation. The Forum issued a further report *Early Childhood Care and Education* (NESF, 2005) aiming to stimulate action. The report, addressing the question of a '*Skilled ECCE Workforce*' (*ibid* p.88), commented on a lack of data concerning qualifications and training and recommended an audit of ECCE training programmes[16]. The report states '*Quality across courses varies*', but does not explain how it reached this conclusion. Significantly, it recommended the adoption of the occupational profiles outlined in the *Model Framework* (*op.cit* p.90). Although the NESF hoped to accelerate the pace of policy implementation, it was not until October 2009 that the NQAI established a working group to examine the existing standards for childcare training. The working group reported in June 2010 with a proposed revised FETAC Level 5 Award in Early Childhood Care and Education[17].

Developing the workforce

The *Workforce Development Plan for the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector in Ireland* (DES, 2010) mapped the childcare roles outlined in the *Model Framework* (*op. cit*. 2002) to the NQF. The mapping exercise finally provided a firm policy base for the generally accepted FETAC Level 5 Childcare Award as the basic practitioner qualification for the sector. A Level 4 award was designated the standard for a 'basic practitioner', a Level 5 award for an 'Intermediate practitioner' and a Level 6 award for an 'experienced practitioner'.

The *Workforce Development Plan* (DES, 2010b) also addressed access to education and training. It asked education providers to implement flexible learning and delivery approaches and to develop RPL[18] procedures and programmes. It identified the main challenges as,

> *The lack of consistency by training providers, especially in relation to the*

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[16] The researcher found no evidence that such an audit has occurred.

[17] The FETAC Level 5 Childcare Award delivered by the providers and tutors in this study will be phased out by December 2012. The new award has been available to providers since 2011.

[18] RPL refers to recognition of prior learning whereby experienced practitioners are awarded a qualification following prescribed and assessed demonstration of their knowledge and skills.

hours required to achieve certification and the variability in the skills and qualification of those delivering courses. (DES, 2010b)

Elaborating, the plan states that these issues concern the '*Further Education and Training Sector*' and blames its lack of a programme validation process[19]. It continues,

It is reasonable to expect that further education and training providers would ensure that staff delivering relevant parts of ECCE programmes are qualified in ECCE, have appropriate sectoral experience and that their knowledge and skills are up to date with latest development in research, policy and practice in ECCE. (DES, 2010)

Besides ensuring the employment of qualified staff, the plan recommends that providing details of staff qualifications should be required and that these details should be available to all stakeholders[20]. It also recommends that education providers must support learners according to their needs.

The question of suitability of existing adult and further education and training programmes is outside the remit of this study. It is worth noting, however, that despite the expert views contained in the Model Framework and Workforce Development Plan documents, some commentators advocate that childcare be a graduate only profession. One writer is particularly disparaging about adult and further education qualifications,

... the UK and Scotland ... has encouraged practitioners to attend ... modular third level ECEC training ... Not so in Ireland where the Social Partnership practice continues to cast ECEC training in the FÁS and FETAC domain. (Neylon, 2011)

Before pursuing the training issue further, a profile, from the available literature, of the Irish childcare workforce is presented.

The Childcare Workforce - profile

The National Childcare Census 1999-2000[21] (ADM, 2002) surveyed 3,052 childcare providers, 91% of whom cooperated fully. The census found that 7,560 people were employed as childcare practitioners; 2,895 were full-time paid staff,

[19] Education providers who wish to offer the new Childcare awards must develop and submit their programmes for validation before a course may commence.
[20] While FETAC has introduced programme validation, providers retain full responsibility for ensuring the suitability of tutors.
[21] Area Development Management (ADM) Ltd between April 1999 and April 2000 on behalf of DJELR carried out the census. ADM was established in 1992 it changed its name to Pobal in 2005. On behalf of the Government it manages programmes that support communities and local agencies toward achieving social inclusion, equality and reconciliation. www.pobal.ie/AboutUs Accessed 28.07.11

3,380 were part-time paid staff, 1,204 were Community Employment (CE) participants and 81 were Jobs Initiative[22] (JI) participants.1.3% of the childcare workforce was male.[23] The census found that 80.7% of childcare facilities accepted students on placement, 11% of these counted the students as part of the required child/staff ratio. 41.9% of community childcare facilities used volunteers compared to 13% of private settings. 31.2% of the childcare providers stated that they needed volunteers to maintain the required child/staff ratios. Although this data is twelve years old, it is valuable in terms of providing baseline information. Furthermore, it informed the rationale of the Model Framework (2002). This, in turn, built on the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group Report, 1999, which stated,

> *Demand for ECCE is likely to increase by between 25% and 50%[24] by the year 2011. (*DJELR, 2002 p.8*)*

The complexity of direct and indirect public funding of social services generally and childcare in particular is also highlighted in the report. This parallels the complexity of childcare organisational structures outlined earlier which result in multiple and often contradictory logics being placed on the sector. The most obvious example is the Community Employment programme. Its primary purpose is economic - to provide work experience placements (www.fas.ie, 2012); contributing to the social development of childcare services is not an aim. However, in many childcare settings, as well as being a source of income, CE participants may be essential to meet adult to child ratio requirements (DES, 1999b). The reliance of community childcare provision on CE weakens the long-term planning and development of services due to the precarious nature of the CE resource.

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[22] Operated by FÁS, the JI scheme provided full-time employment for people over thirty-four years of age and more than five years registered as unemployed. No one has bee recruited to the scheme since it ended in 2004. (www.citizensinformation.ie Accessed 27.07.2012)

[23] The Census figures are considerably lower than those in the Background Discussion Paper – Developing the Workforce in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector (2009). This can be explained as the Census focused on surveying '*centre based childcare providers'* only (p.7/8). The discussion paper data is based on Quarterly National Household Surveys figures in the 1998 – 2008 period. The data covers a wider range of provision encompassing child minders, au pairs, playgroup leaders, special needs assistants and nursery nurses (p.22).

[24] The *Background Discussion Paper* (DES, 2009) demonstrated that the employment trend in childcare related occupations rose by 252% in the period 1998 – 2008, approximately 13% per annum (DES, 2009).

ECCE training outcomes and issues

Despite an emphasis on high quality staff in childcare settings in research, policy and public consultation processes (Barnett, 2012; DES, 2009b; NESF, 2005; DJELR, 2002), the staffing and provision of ECCE training programmes has received little attention in Ireland. However, some studies have considered the effect of training on quality standards.

Focusing on one ECCE setting, Murphy (2005) found that, following training, staff members made changes both to their practice and the physical environment. She observed,

> *The effect of training on the ability of staff to share with parents their children's learning is noticeable. As the core staff members completed the FETAC Level 2[25] qualification in childcare, they become more accustomed to analysing their practice, and more skilled at documenting and explaining it to parents and others.* (Murphy, R. 2005)

Another study (Murphy, P. 2005) conducted in ten settings showed that 52% of staff members had FETAC Level 5 qualifications. The report does not say whether participants achieved a major Level 5 award or a number of component certificates. More than 70% of respondents had left formal schooling without achieving a Leaving Certificate. The study found that 84% of practitioners thought that quality ECCE depended on the personality and attitude of the practitioner. The author notes the possibility of the 'Hawthorne effect[26]' in the participants' responses; they tended to emphasise the importance of structural aspects and their compliance with regulations when speaking about their practice as '*to comply with the Health Board*' (Murphy, P., 2005).

R. Murphy (2005) observed a difference between ECCE practitioners with an academic qualification who developed a curriculum that reflected the interconnectedness of care and education, and practitioners with a FETAC qualification and a '*low level*' of formal education who emphasised the care aspect of their role. She also found that some practitioners had a poor understanding of child development theory. Many stated that lack of funding and resources were major barriers to quality provision; however, for highly motivated individuals with a firm grasp of theory, these deficits were not a major issue.

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[25] With the advent of the National Framework of Qualifications and the introduction of two new foundation levels the former FETAC Level 2 awards moved to Level 5 on the NFQ.
[26] The Hawthorne effect describes a phenomenon whereby research participants change their behaviour while being observed.

Practitioners indicated a preference for experiential training rather than theory focused programmes (ibid. 2005). P. Murphy (*op. cit.,* 2005) recommended that,

> *Government agencies must cease to utilise pre-school care and education in community-based centres as employment outlets for unqualified personnel … there is a fair percentage of 'half-trained' unemployed personnel out there who were never afforded an opportunity to continue their training in childcare.* (Murphy, P., 2005)

Quality and qualifications

Documentary evidence from the USA shows the debate regarding the education and training of childcare practitioners moving from identification of required knowledge and skills, to methodologies and to examining the quality of training programmes and teaching staff. Williams (1989) examined the nature of the childcare practitioner role. Highlighting the importance of quality preparation for practice, she observes that the development of reflective practitioners requires training programmes that help learners develop awareness of their assumptions regarding the skills and knowledge required of ECCE practitioners. Williams suggests that:

> *… the image of mediator appeared a more accurate representation of actual functions than those of transmitter of knowledge or shaper of behaviour (sic)* (Williams, 1989, p.482*)*

She regards the role of ECCE practitioner as,

> *… mediators between children and the increasingly complex socio-cultural contexts of their lives, between parents and the school, between themselves and their colleagues, and between their own inner perceptions of what should be and what is.* (ibid, p.482)

Quoting Copple and Bredekamp, (2009) the USA organisation, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2010) strongly suggests that ECCE tutors should model the practice they hope to develop in ECCE student practitioners. Adult students learn from instructors who model NAEYC's guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice, including

- *create a caring community of learners*
- *teach to enhance development and learning*
- *plan curriculum aligned with important learning outcomes*
- *assess candidate growth and development related to those outcomes*
- *build positive relationships with students and other stakeholders in the program*

> Copple and Bredekamp, 2009 in NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards, 2010

Still in the USA, Whitebook and Ryan (2011) advise broadening the discussion from qualifications alone to include the quality of the education programmes and of the teaching staff. Specifically, they identify a need for greater support and professional development opportunities. Finally, they emphasise the importance of tracking the characteristics of the workforce in order to inform policy development and implementation.

The literature agrees that well qualified practitioners are vital for the provision of quality ECCE settings. The focus on quality has widened to include the training and preparation of practitioners. However, in Ireland, the HSE as the regulatory authority does not currently disseminate information regarding the quality of ECCE practice. This information would contribute to identifying critical knowledge, skills and attitudes and would benefit programme development and contribute to the formation of effective ECCE practitioners.

Childcare teaching staff – their education and training

> *Very little is known about the professional quality of teacher educators.*
> (Koster et al, 2005)

Numerous studies suggest that 'adequate', 'good' or 'high quality' staff training is an indicator of quality adult learning provision in general (Buiskool, 2009) and in particular in the field of ECCE (Barnett, 2012; Mueller, Wisneski and File, 2010; Hyson et al, 2009; Hayes, 2008, 2007; Duignan & Walsh, 2004; Horm, 2003; DJELR 2000; Philips et al., 2000; Currie, 2000; Siraj Blatchford & Wong, 1999). One study found that high quality childcare settings *'are characterised by stable childcare arrangements, low staff turnover, good staff training and low child:staff ratios'* (Blatchford and Wong 1999).

Barnett (2012) develops the argument further when he suggests that inadequate, poorly trained staff are likely to lead to poor or negative outcomes for children. However, reliable evidence of effectiveness of training is scarce. Mueller at al (2010) remark that,

> *the relative dearth of research on effective teacher preparation in early care and early childhood has left the sector open to criticism.* (Mueller et al, 2010)

Others agree with these sentiments, observing that the inadequate quantity and limited scope of available research creates pitfalls such as overstating the importance of limited evidence, ascribing the status of data to anecdotes, disregarding '*professional wisdom*' and is likely to lead to poor policy decisions (Whitebook and Ryan, 2011; Isenberg, 2000, in Horm 2003; Bowman et al, 2000 in Horm 2003). Furthermore they maintain that the inadequacy of the available research makes it impossible to state with certainty whether it is the quality of the ECCE practitioner preparation programmes that facilitates the formation of an effective practitioner or '*the cluster of variables within a program that contribute to program quality*' (Whitebook and Ryan, 2011). The variables they regard as important include length of training day, the training environment, teacher background and curriculum content, institutional capacity. They contend that unless studies isolate the teacher education variable it will be impossible to propose an ideal level of qualification.

The lack of research sparked Koster et al (2005) to reflect on possible causes. They speculate that from a policy viewpoint,

> *... teacher educators have a minor role to play and are low status. Therefore researchers perhaps see little reason to study teacher educators. Another reason could be that researchers tend to study other groups more than themselves so teacher educators as researchers tend to study teachers more than teacher educators.* (Koster et al. 2005)

It is difficult to locate literature that casts light on ECCE preparation programmes' teaching staff. Cochran-Smith (2003) notes that many '*teacher educators*' do not have full-time contracts and therefore are less likely to have their work subjected to the scrutiny experienced by their full-time colleagues,

> *... adjunct faculty, supervisors, and group leaders are seldom regarded as teacher educators and issues related to their "education" are virtually absent from the literature.* (Cochran-Smith 2003)

She advocates the formation of teacher communities that will explore and advance issues including diversity, '*learning to teach and educating teacher educators*' (ibid. 2003).

Improving training programmes

An awareness that much ECCE research focused on the link between the *level* of ECCE practitioners' training and outcomes for the children in their care, spurred Hyson et al (2009) to explore the quality of preparatory training programmes for the sector. They conducted a nationwide study in the U.S.A. that sought the

views of more than 500 senior ECCE teaching staff on improving the quality of their ECCE training programmes. The researchers give no background information on the respondents apart from the fact that they were all 'program leaders'; there is no information on their experience or areas and levels of expertise.

Asked to identify factors that would contribute to improving the quality of their programmes, respondents recommended: increasing teaching staff numbers; allocating more time to programmes; developing awareness of the value of ECCE; increasing funding and supporting CPD initiatives.

The inquiry focused on the structure and delivery of the education programme and did not explore the respondents' professional environment or their CPD needs. Nonetheless, responses to certain questions suggest that gaps in knowledge could impact adversely on students' learning experience. For example, questions concerning the inclusion of research in programme design and curricula showed that many respondents who answered had little familiarity with current ECCE research and did not consider it important that their learners would appreciate new research generated learning. This prompted the researchers to wonder how ECCE teaching staff construct their learning programmes. Respondents reported that funding issues, institutional lack of commitment to the ECCE programme and reliance on part-time staff militated against the provision of CPD. However, it is possible to infer respondents' recognition of the need for CPD, as they report difficulties in recruiting teachers with '*current knowledge and experience in ECCE'.*

The researchers conclude that the indicators of quality of ECCE programmes vary widely. They recommend further studies to investigate issues such as ECCE teaching staff's understanding and use of theory and research, their teaching approaches and their ability to deal with critical issues. They suggest targeted studies to investigate the benefits to ECCE practitioner students of '*providing more and better'* CPD opportunities and improving access to current research for teaching staff. It is noteworthy that a study designed to investigate learning programmes, produced valuable information concerning issues facing teaching staff, such as knowledge deficit and part-time contracts.

Effective training for ECCE tutors

Revised regulations in the childcare sector (Government of Ireland, 2006) requiring qualified ECCE staff led to an increase in people seeking qualifications in childcare. In PLC colleges alone, numbers rose from 1,968 in 2002 to 3,567 in 2008 (DES, 2009a). Childcare providers found the new regulations challenging especially as the new emphasis on record keeping distracted from direct interaction with the children. What constitutes 'good' staff training is contested. Whitebook and Ryan (2011) argue that while there is universal consensus that '*teachers are central to preschool program quality*', they found little agreement on appropriate knowledge and skills. They assert that 'required' qualifications and expectations for teacher education vary widely; from those who maintain that access to employment in ECCE should not require any specific training, to the view that an ECCE qualification is essential. They suggest that the early education experiences of childcare educators may be as important for the quality of their childcare practice as their practitioner education. Williams (1989) appears to support this view when she suggests that ECCE tutors must examine their assumptions about what ECCE practitioners need to learn. She points out that some ECCE experts do not examine the lenses of their narratives and hence are unaware of the values underlying their discourse. She is particularly concerned about diversity, observing that cultural differences are often confused with social and economic class issues resulting in poorly chosen responses to their resolution. She suggests that unconscious acceptance of the *status quo* reduces the potential learning from ECCE practice and recommends,

> *... re-examination of educational goals, design of culturally sensitive settings for early learning, and preparation of caregivers and teachers to utilize cultural differences constructively in the teaching and learning processes.* (Williams, 1989)

Williams' identification of major themes such as diversity resonates with issues raised by the interviewees in this study. It also raises questions (beyond the scope of this study) about the capacity of existing childcare programmes in Ireland to adequately prepare learners for their role.

In Wisconsin, USA, the introduction of new ECCE standards demanded curriculum change and prompted Mueller et al (2010) to identify their goals for their students. Mindful that legislation and regulations provided a framework for curriculum development, the authors came to an awareness of the necessity to

maintain a focus on '*big ideas – a concept, theme or issue*' (p.78). Using the 'big idea' approach they were able to '*concentrate on the larger conceptual issues of early childhood education*' (p.78). In this manner they challenged their own assumptions and considered their impact on their own learners and on their learners' practice. The authors report that in this way they were able to '*incorporate standards and received philosophies while maintaining a critical stance*' (ibid, p.79). The principal '*big ideas*' they identified include:

- *Curriculum development*
- *Respect of child*
- *Situatedness in the larger sociocultural and historical context*
- *Personhood/self-understanding*
- *Professionalism*
- *Human interconnectedness* (Mueller et al, 2010)

Using 'big ideas' helped the authors stay focused on the processes of teaching and learning. They contend that traditional assessment strategies are inadequate for gauging students' understanding. Pragmatically, they recognised that assessment must provide accurate information for regulation purposes; but remark that satisfying regulation requirements is only one part of the process of developing effective childcare practitioners. They sum up the benefit of the 'big ideas' concept stating,

> *... (they) lead us to ask "what do we want to teach?" rather than "what have we checked off?"* (Mueller et al., 2010)

Some of the difficulties they encountered continue to challenge. Four issues are particularly problematic and resonate strongly in the Irish context; firstly, including the views of part-time staff members in working meetings; secondly, assisting part-time staff members incorporate into their teaching practice approaches they had little or no part in developing; thirdly, part-time staff members are a '*shifting workforce*' (ibid, p.82) and fourthly, creating a common vision for the programme among people who spend little time together. Significantly, Mueller et al's findings remind us of the importance of maintaining focus on education for the development and welfare of the vulnerable child at the centre of the process while acknowledging the necessity to demonstrate compliance with regulations.

The importance of CPD

For tutors of ECCE practitioners as for adult educators in general, research shows that the importance of CPD ranks alongside that of initial training and induction (Whitebook & Ryan, 2011; NAEYC, 2009; Horm, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 1999). Darling-Hammond (1999) refers to the '*cumulative nature of teacher education*' stating that teachers learn and develop their practice through reflecting on their teaching. Mueller et al (2010) suggest that tutors' reflections on what is important in teaching are as vital for programme development as are new regulations and standards. They assert (quoting Hyson, 2003) that childcare training providers espouse a common philosophy or set of values,

- *including and engaging all children;*
- *allowing ethics a central role;*
- *respecting the family, community and cultural contexts within which children live. (Mueller et al, 2003)*

Due to the paucity of research on the education of ECCE tutors, it is only through deduction that it is possible to posit the training required to assist tutors develop the skills and knowledge required for their role. There is broad agreement in international literature on the content of programmes for the preparation of ECCE practitioners[27], which in turn suggests that tutors on ECCE preparation programmes need to have the knowledge and skills to facilitate their learners' progress through these programmes. Mueller et al (2010) advocate childcare practitioners should have, knowledge of child development, the ability to teach and assess, to respond to diversity and to work with professional teams and families. The NAEYC enumerate some prerequisites for teachers on ECCE programmes including: appropriate academic qualifications, substantial professional experience and knowledge of pertinent legislation, regulation and standards. Opportunities for work practice are considered essential (NAEYC, 2009).

The Williams, Whitebook and Ryan, Hoyle, Mueller et al studies and the NAEYC guidelines could provide a useful starting point for examining childcare training programmes in Ireland.

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[27] In Ireland, the Occupational Profiles (DJELR, 2002) for the childcare sector detail the skills and knowledge associated with each role providing valuable information for childcare training providers.

The Adult Education context

The working environment of the FETAC Level 5 tutors who are the focus of this study is adult and further education, their subject area is childcare. The Adult education sector has been described as a 'Cinderella service' (Anderson, 2012). According to the fairy tale, Cinderella, though beautiful was confined to a low status and service role by powerful and wealthy female siblings until 'rescued' by a handsome, male prince (Baum, 2000). Policymakers, researchers and stakeholders acknowledge the lack of status afforded adult education and adult education tutors in Ireland (DES, 2008; Lipinski et al, 2007). Lack of qualification requirements, poor career structure, and limited full-time employment contracts, render the sector an unattractive career proposition. The work of adult education tutors does not have a high public profile and is not well understood (Robson, 1998). This is similar to experiences of ECCE tutors as this thesis reveals. Robson (1998) describes the adult education sector as,

> *… uncertain of the nature or value of a shared body of professional knowledge, unable to require all entrants to qualify formally as teachers (and therefore to acquire such knowledge), compelled to accept recruits into its ranks from hugely diverse backgrounds and entry routes, with no means of controlling their numbers, the professional group lacks closure and is struggling to develop any sense of its collective status or identity.* (Robson, 1998)

Developing an identity as an adult education tutor is hampered by the scarcity of full-time contracts and the consequent difficulty of developing a common purpose or sense of 'team' among tutors in adult education settings (Mueller et al, 2010; Robson, 1998). These mirror the tensions experienced by the ECCE sector described in earlier sections.

Research demonstrates that the principal hallmark of adult education is its diversity, with a wide variety of educational activities taking place in an equally wide range of environments (Buiskool et al, 2009). Adult education's primary target group is people who did not achieve certification within the formal school setting (UNESCO, 1996; Europe, 2007; Government of Ireland, 2002). The evidence from this study confirms the high percentage of early school leavers among those ECCE learners.

The Green Paper that preceded and informed the White Paper *Learning for Life* (2000) was appropriately titled *Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning* (DES, 1998). This document locates adult education firmly in a lifelong learning

context with compensatory, empowering and upgrading functions. It articulates a vision for an equitable and accessible education system for adult learners, one that acknowledges a range of learning styles and learner issues while affirming learners' rights to participate and progress.

The White Paper (2000) enunciates Irish Government policy on adult education. It defines adult education in a more functional view as,

> *... systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training.* (DES, 2000, p.12)

It explains that the definition includes re-entry by adults to 'Further Education', 'Higher Education', 'Continuing Education and Training', 'Community Education', and 'other systematic learning undertaken by adults in a wide variety of settings and contexts, both formal and informal' (p. 27 - 28). Developing the argument for a broad base for adult education provision, it differentiates between 'education in the community' (delivered by one or other of the formal institutions on an outreach basis' and 'education of the community' (a process of individual and collective empowerment, often self directed). This debate over the positioning of adult education has implications for sectors such as ECCE which is often located in 'education in the community' mode. As earlier discussions about policy implementation in ECCE reveals, it is difficult to maintain these visionary aspirations of adult educational values in the face of low status, poor working conditions and sectoral confusion.

Following the White Paper recommendation for a review of needs of the adult education sector, the DES established a review body. The 2003 report known as the 'McIver report' focused on provision in PLC colleges. Among the recommendations was,

> *The Department of Education and Science should establish Further Education formally as a distinct sector of education with a key element of that sector being post second level provision ... (*McIver, 2003)

It advised that PLC colleges must respond to the needs of adult learners by providing, for example, flexible learning opportunities and varied modes of assessment (McIver, 2003). It proposed the establishment of a new separate further education sector by breaking the link between secondary schools and PLC colleges (ibid, 2003). However, in 2006, many expressed frustration at the lack of

progress on implementing changes (Coolahan, 2006; Moriarty, 2006; TUI, 2006). McIver's recommendations remained at an aspirational stage (Murtagh, 2009). Restricting McIver's review to the PLC sector effectively marginalised the adult education providers working in the community and voluntary sectors as well as those in VEC 'adult' education centres thus perpetuating the 'Cinderella' status of much of Level 5 childcare training.

 The 21st century has witnessed important policy developments that have resulted in changes and adjustments in the practice of adult education and childcare. Many of the changes and developments in these areas impact on how the tutors prepare their learners for working in childcare.

The introduction of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, *Learning for Life* (2000), the Teaching Council Act (2001) and the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance* (*Education and Training*) *Act 2012* has the potential to bring structure and form to a sector hitherto marked by diversity and flexibility. In particular, policy developments are likely to mean significant changes for the adult education workforce.

The Adult Education Workforce

The Green Paper (DES, 1998) addresses adult learning personnel. Pointing out the lack of a representative body for adult educators, it proposes an adult education forum that would:

- *Provide an opportunity for the exchange of ideas and the sharing of good practice*
- *Provide a mechanism for new thinking and innovation in the field*
- *Enable practitioners to inform policy development*
- *Contribute to the development of solidarity and peer support amongst practitioners.* (DES, 1998 p.111)

In addition, it advocates the development of career structures that '*reward excellence and professionalism*' and in-career support and training initiatives. It points out that these innovations would facilitate the retention of teaching staff and the foundation of an '*inter-agency working group to make recommendations on the formal recognition of professional qualifications for adult education practitioners*' (ibid, p.111). The White Paper (DES, 2000) reiterates the need for an inter-agency working group (p.153). It returns to the issue of qualifications, clarifying that it is policy to expand '*existing mechanisms for recognition of*

qualifications' and to '*embrace a variety of new qualifications in this field'* (ibid, p.150). It proposes that the inter-agency working group would make recommendations on the recognition of future qualifications. It stresses that qualification routes must be flexible and modular, allowing for accreditation of prior learning and in service training programmes. The White Paper charged the proposed National Adult Learning Council[28] with establishing a forum for adult education practitioners with the objectives outlined in the Green Paper and to provide '*solid foundations for the on-going development of the field'* (ibid, p.153). Some argue that the failure of the Irish National Adult Learning Council to achieve any of its objectives resulted in stagnation. In a seminar paper, Brady (2008) asserts that this inactivity has led to a lack of integration of programmes and policy development, poor inter-department communication and failure to implement policies; all of which resonate with the experience of ECCE training provided earlier.It is difficult to see how those involved in providing Level 5 childcare training programmes can contribute to their review and development without the kind of values system or forum proposed in the Green Paper (DES, 1998). Thus, limited formal structures, uneven implementation of regulation and arbitrary approaches to qualifications all continue to impact on childcare tutor training.

A European perspective

The European Commission's survey of national adult education policies '*Adult learning: it is never too late to learn'* (Europe, 2006) highlighted the implications of this gap between policy ideals and actual implementation. It found that across Europe,

> *Policy statements espouse an holistic approach to adult learning ... but, in reality, policy implementation privileges the economic agenda, thus providing greater support for vocationally-oriented adult learning than for general adult learning.* (Eurydice, 2007)

The survey findings show that the occupation of adult educator is unregulated in most member countries and that governments pay little attention to formal training of NVAE personnel in the formal sector and almost no attention in the non-formal sector; all of which resonant with the ECCE training experience. It points out that teaching staff in the formal NVAE sector may be linked to

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[28] Minister of State for Adult Education Willie O'Dea T.D. established the National Adult Learning Council in January 2002; it was suspended in 2003. (Brady, 2008)

mainstream schools and are likely to hold the same qualifications as school teachers. It adds that professional development of adult educators *'remains a real challenge for most countries'* (ibid, 2007). Notably, it found that the provision of CPD is more widespread than initial training but is dependent on the resources of the education provider and likely to be limited to educators working with large providers[29]. Finally, the report notes that public funding requiring adherence to quality assurance measures is likely to bring the issue of teacher qualifications to the fore.

Reviewing the information supplied by member countries for the compilation of the 2007 Eurydice report, Buiskool et al (2009) highlight the fact that the sector is predominantly female and that most adult educators have extensive work experience in other sectors prior to their adult education careers. As a consequence, practitioners may identify not with the adult education sector but with the career in which they forged their professional identities. The authors characterise the sector as having an older, mainly female, workforce on short-term contracts without job certainty.

Multiple responsibilities and working conditions

Adult education tutors undertake a wide variety of tasks; the most important being teaching followed by assessment and development of methodologies and learning materials. Buiskool et al (2009, p.158) remark that '*too many bureaucratic, administrative or technical tasks*' may compromise the practitioner's capacity to focus on their primary role – teaching. They assert that while there is little agreement on the skills required in an adult learning environment, basic requirements for adult educators include:

*   *Knowledge of adult lifelong learning and development (theory);*
*   *Social and communications competences in adult learning (methodology);*
*   *The ability to link theory and practice*
*   *Work and life experience (experiential knowledge);*
*   *Subject-specific knowledge*
*   *Applied knowledge (expertise)* (ibid p.151)

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[29] These findings are confirmed in this study, see Chapter 5 Findings – Providers.

In addition, where countries have developed competency profiles, they found evidence of inconsistent implementation.

Practitioners who work in 'formal' adult learning environments alongside or within mainstream schools are more likely to have permanent, full-time jobs while those in the non-formal sector are more likely to freelance, often working for more than one provider and/or in another 'regular' job. Freelance staff give education providers flexibility to offer learning programmes according to demand; short-term contracts allow providers to reduce pay rates to cope with funding issues. Adult education practitioners working in the formal sector have agreed contracts, salaries and social insurance benefits, while remuneration in the non-formal sector does not correspond to any agreed scale and practitioners must make arrangements for their own insurance and pension plans (ibid p.155).

Another fraught issue concerns regulation. While Buiskool et al (2009) found that most EU member countries have developed legislation and regulations for the adult education sector, given the predominantly freelance nature of employment, practitioners who have other jobs are likely to '*function in the legislative context of another sector*' (ibid, p.155).

When asked about employment criteria, two-thirds of providers look for subject knowledge, fifty percent require professional experience but '*only a minority*' specify adult education training (ibid, p.156). This is a critical finding in light of the fact that the authors also report that adult educators whose work environments are closely associated with the formal school sector may be '*locked into an adult schooling approach, as opposed to an adult education approach*' (ibid p.149). They observed that providers in the formal sector assign low priority to CPD for adult educators. This suggests that 'qualified', albeit for secondary level, is considered adequate and indicates at best, lack of awareness and at worst, lack of interest in the needs of adult learners and the skills required to meet these needs.

Adult education offers practitioners '*freedom, professional autonomy, a sense of working for a good cause and recognition from their learners*' (ibid, p.157). On the downside, hourly pay, job insecurity, lack of entitlements and low status contribute to making adult education an unappealing career choice. The authors contend that the sector must compete with other occupations to interest '*talented and motivated people*'. However, it appears that job satisfaction is high within the sector leading the authors to observe that,

> *'...* attractiveness *is more a matter of intrinsic motivation and the positive experience derived from the work than a matter of reputation and package of benefits'* (ibid, p.157).

Notwithstanding the reported job satisfaction of adult educators, Buiskool et al (2009) believe they are poorly represented, due partly to the predominance of part-time staff. Echoing the White Paper (DES, 2000) recommendation, they advocate the formation of organisations to '*promote the rights and employment situation*' of adult education staff.

The Initial and Continuing Education of Teachers

As outlined earlier, the childcare education/training link between the practices of childcare and adult education is ignored by most of the literature. In general, ECCE literature tends to focus on the professional development need of staff in childcare settings – not on their tutors. While the generic literature is useful, the particular needs of childcare tutors remain unconsidered.

'Teacher' and 'practitioner' are contested and problematic terms within the ECCE sector as indicated earlier, similarly, the term 'teacher education' is also a source of considerable discussion. For example, in the USA, Cochran-Smith (2000, p.14) observed that:

> *There is no consensus about what teachers need to know, who should provide education for teachers, how teachers should be certified and licensed ... Teacher education is at a critical juncture and we are faced with confusing alternative realities.* (Cochran-Smith, 2000, p.1)

If teacher education for mainstream primary and secondary teachers is seen as problematic, it is the subject of debate. In the absence of guidelines, the childcare training provider has no recourse to current thinking to inform childcare tutor recruitment policy and decision-making. Compounding the issue, ECCE literature hesitates to identify the requisite hallmarks of practitioners. Horgan and Douglas (2001, p.139) observe that '*the complexity of preparing personnel for early childhood environments is common in many countries of the world*'. They also remark that,

> *...definitions of 'quality teaching' like those of 'good practice' are difficult to find as most authors tend to be unwilling to identify exactly what constitutes a 'good early years teacher'.* (ibid, p.139)

Burke (2002) contends that while historically, the teacher has been viewed as part technician and part professional, the relative emphasis put on these dimensions has particular implications for the education of teachers. In his review of the

evolution of primary school teaching during the 20th century, for example, he notes that,

> *From being a craft whose skills could be acquired either through a short teacher training course or through apprenticeship, it has evolved to a point where policy and practice have a more comprehensive basis.* (Burke, 2002 p. 15)

He goes on to identify three stages through which certain occupations evolve (ibid, p.17). The first is as craftsperson or technician, operating mainly by rules of thumb and 'tricks of the trade' learned empirically through practice and apprenticeship. The second is by a more rational and scientific approach in the search for theoretical constructs to inform practice. The third is characterised by increased conceptualisations and a growing dependency on other disciplines. The key to progress through the stages, he argues is increased comprehension of the context in which the practitioner works. In relation to education, the third stage is greatly informed by modern psychology, psycholinguistics, sociology, economics, developments in educational research, in the philosophy of education and insights emerging from teachers' practical experience'.

Reflective practice

Teacher education programmes tend to combine an element of teaching practice – workplace learning with a structured emphasis on particular theoretical insights from established fields such as philosophy, psychology, sociology and the history of education (Burke, 2002). Linking these two major strands together in more recent times has led to the emerging concept of 'the teacher as critically reflective practitioner' where the influences of Dewey (1904), Schön (1983) and Brookfield (1995) provide a unifying focus for ongoing reflectivity in teacher education. Dewey draws out the implications of a developmental perspective for supervisors of teaching practice that should be,

> *... directed at getting the student to judge his (sic) own work critically, to find out for himself in what respects he has succeeded and in what failed, and to find probable reasons for both failure and success.* (ibid, p.27*)*.

The reflective approach is in sharp contrast to a narrow, technical 'what to do and how to do it' approach. For Dewey, Schön, Brookfield as well as a range of others including Fenstermacher (1986), Goodlad (1990) and Darling Hammond (2006) the 'how?' must always link closely with the 'why?' Hargreaves (1994, p.12) notes the strong culture of practicality among teachers, he states,

> *In the ethic of practicality among teachers, is a powerful sense of what works and what doesn't; of which changes will go and which will not – not in the abstract, or even as a general rule, but for the teacher in this context. In this simple yet deeply influential sense of practicality among teachers is the distillation of complex and potent combinations of purpose, person, politics and workplace constraints. It is through these ingredients and the sense of practicality which they sustain that teachers' own desires for change are either constructed or constrained.* (Hargreaves, 1994, p.12).

Berry (2007) engaged in a self-study of her transition from a high school biology teacher to an educator of student teachers. Recognising that she had no formal training for her new role, she developed a framework for conceptualising the problematic nature of teaching about teaching by exploring the tensions and conflicts experienced by teacher educators. Her framework identifies six broad areas; firstly, there is the tension between informing the students – giving them the information – and creating opportunities for them to reflect and become self-directed. Secondly, students need confidence to make progress but this can be in tension with the complexities and 'messiness' of teaching. Linked to this she also sees the tension for the teacher educator to show her own vulnerability without losing prospective teachers' confidence in the teacher-educator as a leader. Thirdly, Berry (ibid, p.32) identifies '*working towards a particular ideal and jeopardising that ideal by the approach taken to attain it*'. The next tension, she sees is between '*safety and challenge*', between a constructive learning experience and an uncomfortable one. Berry's fifth tension is between valuing experience and reconstructing it, by which she means enabling students to recognise the authority of their own experience but also to recognise that there is more to teaching than acquiring experience. Berry's final tension is between planning and being open and responsive to events as they unfold. Berry concludes that her awareness as a critically reflective practitioner of these tensions was effective in making her more mindful, more open to taking risks, more focused on her students' learning and more committed to ongoing self-study. Berry's study identifies a framework for initial teacher education, particularly for practitioners in other disciplines transitioning to adult education. For anyone embarking on a career as a childcare tutor, it offers a coherent framework for developing good practice.

Clandinin (1995) asserts that the dominant view that often shapes the lives of student teachers, teachers and teacher educators is a '*sacred story*' that involves theoretical knowledge handed down to the 'professional knowledge landscape' of student teachers and teachers '*as a kind of rhetoric of conclusions*' (Clandinin 1995, p.28). This '*sacred story*' is based on assumptions of '*expert, knowledge production, certainty and hierarchy*' (ibid, p.30). Her views resonate with Berry's when she observes that, student teachers in their practice often encounter dissonances or stories that appear to compete with the sacred story. She advocates the telling and living of stories that compete with the sacred story as they result in tensions '*that lead to questioning, to awakenings, to transformations*' (ibid, p.30). Clandinin also notes that teacher educators who relocate themselves outside this sacred story and attempt to construct new ones through engaging in collaborative conversations with students, children and teachers, take professional risks.

Given the shortage of literature pertaining specifically to the educators of childcare workers, useful lessons can be gleaned from general literature on ITE and CPD. In particular, the importance of tutors who have extensive work experience in other disciplines, developing reflective practice cannot be over-emphasised as the findings chapter will reveal.

Recognition of prior learning

If, as has been asserted above, a majority of adult educators move to that role from a previous career or area of expertise, it makes sense that professional accreditation or qualifications should give some recognition to that prior expertise and learning. The report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (2002) includes some salient points for childcare tutors and their learners. It recommends that awarding bodies should include '*substantive provision*' for the accreditation of prior experience and learning (APEL) and that APEL arrangements should be transparent. In particular, the report states that APEL should extend beyond formal learning to encompass work based learning, community based learning and self-directed learning. It reiterates the recommendation in the White Paper (DES, 2000) regarding the provision of modular programmes that would facilitate learners fill gaps in their knowledge base. The report identifies the needs of the non-traditional learner (p.35) for additional support to develop confidence and study skills. Highlighting the importance of work-based learning for non-

traditional learners, the report offers clear guidance to the regulators and developers of adult education ITE programmes.

Professionalism and Professionalisation

The task of improving the status of adult educators is similar to that experienced in the ECCE sector. Robson (1998) suggests advancing the professionalisation of adult education. Goodson (2003 in Ackland, 2011) defines '*professionalisation*' as '*the pursuit of status and resources for an occupational group*' (Goodson, 2003) and is concerned with gaining credit for the extended role of teachers including administrative and management duties.

Ackland (2011) points out that on the other hand, '*professional*' connotes qualification and accreditation and therefore has implications for practitioners, some of who regard themselves as expert in their original disciplines. This is a very pertinent issue for ECCE given the operation of the dual logics of a child-centred educational development and an employment-centred child care and welfare orientation.   Many adult education tutors espouse a philosophy that places the learner at the centre of the process, values an informal approach and focuses on personal, social and civic development and liberation (Connolly, 2007; DES, 2000; Freire, 1970). These values seem uncomfortable bedfellows for the professionalisation lobbyists. However, the lure of the benefits associated with increased status has the potential to achieve acceptance of the accountability measures associated with professionalisation (Ackland, 2011). These same tensions exist for ECCE as it struggles to balance child-centred developmental values with the increasing demands of professionalism and performativity as later chapters will explore.

In opposition to Robson (1998), Hoyle (2001) and Ackland (2011) warn that the professionalisation agenda linked to accountability could endanger professionalism. Hoyle (2001) asserts that concentrating on status is ultimately '*a source of dissatisfaction*' and suggests focusing on improving the quality of education thus enhancing public esteem for the profession leading to increased teacher satisfaction. Ackland (2011) goes further, warning that a consequence of professionalisation is the valuing of a narrow definition of standards based practice and the marginalisation of the broad philosophy of adult education.

From a practical point of view low salaries, poor working conditions, insecure contracts, funding uncertainties conspire to sustain the self-perception of adult

education tutors' low status (Lipinski et al, 2007). From a policy point of view the lifelong learning agenda is unsustainable without raising the status of adult educators (Delors, 1996). Some might think it ironic that a sector fighting for recognition for the importance of its contribution to social, cultural and economic development connects in a critical training role with another equally important but low status sector, childcare.

The Role of The Teaching Council

Huge strides in achieving recognition and status for adult educators were anticipated with the introduction of the Teaching Council. Its inauguration presented fresh opportunities to implement some of the vision set out in the White Paper (2000)[30] and to enhance and consolidate adult education. However, when launched in February 2005, the Minister for Education and Skills, Mary Hanafin, gave no indication of an awareness that the Teaching Council remit would extend to the adult education sector. Referencing her visits to schools and their occupants as pupils seems to confine her vision of the functions of the Teaching Council to the primary and secondary sectors. On the same occasion, the newly appointed Chief Executive Áine Lawlor added substance to this view, stating,

> *Teachers bring to their professional work a sense of service and dedication which is evident in primary and post-primary schools throughout the country during and after school hours.* (Lawlor, 2005)

Giving the benefit of the doubt to Ms Lawlor, '*after school hours*' may refer to adult education but if so it confines the sector to the realm of established schools. To confirm the neglect of the adult education sector, the membership of the Council at the time of the launch[31] gave neither recognition nor representation of the adult education sector[32]. One of the functions of the Teaching Council is to,

> *... represent the teaching profession on educational issues and establish*

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[30] The vision is outlined thus: 'If the Adult Education sector is to make the quantum leap envisaged for it in this White Paper, it can only do so on the basis of a highly trained corps of adult educators and trainers who are dynamic and equipped to lead change, to play a key role in the policy debate and to reflect the distinctive identity of the sector in the field of professional practice and research. …, it is a question of widening the existing mechanisms for recognition of qualifications in education and training … and of providing mechanisms for accreditation of the learning of many practitioners in the sector who have considerable expertise and experience, but who lack formal qualifications'. (DES, 2000 p.150)

[31] The membership of the Council at the time of the launch consisted of thirty-seven delegates: eleven primary, eleven post-primary, two Colleges of Education, two Universities and Named 3rd Level Colleges, four school management; two Parents Councils and five Minister's nominees

[32] This representation did not change when the Minister for Education appointed a new Council in March 2012 (www.teachingcouncil.ie)

> *procedures for the exchange of information with teachers, organisations involved in education and the public.* (Teaching Council Act, 2001)

Without representation on the Council, it is difficult to envisage how the views and interests of the adult education sector can be considered. Compounding the disregard of the adult education sector, the Act states that the Minister's five nominees should be people with '*experience in business, industry or the professions*', one nominated by ICTU and one by IBEC[33] (ibid, 2001).

Regulation

In March 2011, the Council published *Further Education: General and Programme Requirements for the Accreditation of Teacher Education Qualifications* (Teaching Council, 2011). It details the requirements for new applicants for registration with the Teaching Council – applicants must hold a primary degree and a 'teacher education' or 'an accredited further education teacher education qualification'. It also sets out its expectations for the composition of teacher education programmes for the further education sector. Programmes must be at Level 8 or higher on the NFQ, be registered with an awarding body and carry a minimum of 60 ECTS[34]. The requirements allow for flexible approaches to programme delivery and invite programme providers to take a '*broad approach*' when considering learner applications[35].

The requirement to obtain an additional 60 ECTS presents significant challenges to non-traditional teachers and will further disadvantage those working part-time in adult education. Secondary teachers may use their existing qualifications to work in the further education sector. They are not obliged to participate in an adult education learning programme.

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[33] All three of the Minister's remaining appointees to the 2012 Council have a primary education background (www.teachingcouncil.ie)

[34] The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System facilitates comparison of courses of study throughout the European Union. It allows for learner transfer between courses and aids curriculum design.

[35] A quick survey of the eight Teaching Council accredited Further Education ITE programmes shows that seven of the institutions and have structured either full-time or part-time delivery schedules. The remaining institution delivers a concurrent three –year undergraduate and ITE degree both full-time and part-time at 'evenings and weekends'.

The document (ibid. 2011) refers to the responsibility of adult education tutors to develop and assess learning programmes based on learners' needs and advises that initial teacher education (ITE) programmes[36] should aim to

> *i) prepare student teachers to develop their knowledge, skills, competences and understanding in order to teach in further education*
>
> *ii) provide a foundation in the theories and practices of lifelong learning, including pedagogical and andragogical approaches to teaching and learning*
>
> *iii) develop teaching styles and methodologies appropriate to a wide range of learners and contexts*
>
> *iv) develop the theoretical understanding and practical skills to devise and implement programme-appropriate assessment for national certification*
>
> *v) provide supervised and supportive practical teaching experience in authentic further education settings.* (p.10)

The Council proposes that courses should consist of foundation studies, professional studies and practical teaching experience. It details learning outcomes in the areas of:

> *a) teaching, learning and assessment;*
>
> *b) subject knowledge, curriculum process and content;*
>
> *c) group management and organisation;*
>
> *d) the teacher as lifelong learner and*
>
> *e) knowledge and understanding of education and the education system.* (p.13 – 17)

This outline is quite traditional and omits some of the subtlety, not least the emphasis on critically reflective practice, found in Dewey (1904), Hargreaves (1994), Brookfield (1995) and Darling-Hammond (1997). This is especially significant given the difficulty achieving the educational values of the adult education and ECCE sectors noted earlier. (See Appendix 8).

The White Paper recommended that the process of recognising adult education practitioner qualifications should '*recognise the diversity of the sector and provide for the multiplicity of actors and providers in the field*' (p150). It also states that a programme leading to a professional qualification should be implemented on an in-service modular basis with a view to its eventual availability as a pre-service programme.

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[36] The further education ITE programme aims outlined here differ considerably from those aimed at the primary and secondary sectors included in 'Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers (Teaching Council, p.9; 2011)

In summary, the Teaching Council model appears to operate from a traditional, narrow view of teacher education. It does not appear to cater for the diversity and richness that infuses the thinking in the White Paper on Adult Education or the subsequent report from the Taskforce. In particular, the apparent exclusion of the adult education sector, in policy, representation and practice, is disadvantageous to all stakeholders. The overall impact is that without clear, official guidelines from the Teaching Council as to how best to operate as professional educators, the status of childcare tutors is undermined, the position of providers is confused and the overall sector is marginalised further.

Status

A significant feature of each of the areas addressed in this study -, childcare, ECCE tutors and adult education - is the low status all three are accorded. According to Hoyle (2001), in terms of teaching, 'status' has three components, prestige, status and esteem. He defines theses terms thus:

- *occupational prestige ... as the public perception of the relative position of an occupation in a hierarchy of occupations*

- *occupational status ... a category to which knowledgeable groups allocate a particular occupation*

- *occupational esteem ... the regard in which an occupation is held by the general public by virtue of the personal qualities which members are perceived as bringing to their core task. These qualities can perhaps be grouped into three areas: dedication, competence and care.* (Hoyle, 2001)

Although some scoff at the ascription[37] of 'profession', the status of teaching comes to some extent from its designation as a 'profession'. Views on the meaning of 'profession' differ; Hoyle (2001) acknowledging its contested character suggests that practitioner autonomy, higher education, knowledge-based practice, a self-governing body and a code of ethics are hallmarks of the term. Robson (1998), concerned about a crisis of identity in the further education sector, emphasises features such as,

> *... exclusivity, the strength of occupational boundaries and formation processes and the nature and status of its professional knowledge.* (Robson, 1998)

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[37] For example, 'man among boys, boy amongst men'; 'those who can, do; those who can't teach'.

In the Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale (SIOPS)[38] the occupation 'schoolteacher' is ranked among the semi-professions along with 'social worker' and 'librarian', below the major professions including 'doctor' and 'lawyer'. When 'schoolteacher' is examined, a secondary teacher receives a higher ranking than a primary teacher. There is no mention of adult education or ECCE. Hoyle argues that the image of teachers is constructed primarily by their work with children. Other factors play a role; salary scales and entry requirements are lower than for the major professions; the social background of entrants and the female face of the profession contribute to limiting its prestige (Hoyle 2001). As children are not the remit of adult education, the public view of the sector is confused; it does not have a clear identity, it is difficult to ascribe a status to its workforce (Robson, 1998). The terms 'semi-profession' and 'incomplete professionalisation' distinguish the well-known and widely accepted professions from those that do not demonstrate all the characteristics of profession such as a professional body or specific entry qualifications. It is clear that such distinctions have the potential to impact adversely on issues of status and working conditions (Jütte et al 2011). Jütte et al (2011) welcome the debate on the merits of professionalisation and warn that arguments regarding the justification of the designation of profession are likely to distract from,

> *... the possibilities afforded through the diverse histories and cultures that have given rise to the wealth of distinctive practices which constitute its 'qualities'. From these have emerged different social and cultural functions and statuses for the work of adult and continuing educators in different locations. These are riches that have afforded educators and graduates very specific and contextualised social roles when compared with those emerging from the traditional notion of profession.* Jütte et al, 2011

They advocate that practitioners and researchers create awareness of the 'heterogeneous and changing terrain' of adult education, identify emerging issues and continue the debate on professionalisation and professionalism (Jütte et al, 2011).

Children

The opening sentence of the National Children's Strategy (2000) – *Children Matter* – demonstrates an implicit awareness of the low status afforded to

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[38] The SIOPS is a metric developed by Treiman (1977) from 85 occupational prestige hierarchy studies in 60 countries (Hoyle, 2001)

children; an issue that also has significance for the low status of ECCE. The Minister for Children referred to the 'invisibility of children' as a challenge (Fitzgerald, 2012c). An aim of the National Children's Strategy was to *enhance the status and further improve the quality of life of Ireland's Children* (DES, 1999b).

Ireland's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) in 1992 signalled a commitment to improve the status of children, but progress has been slow.

In the Irish Constitution, *explicit children's rights or protections do not appear in any substantial way* (Fitzgerald, O., 2008). Many reports have highlighted the need for a constitutional referendum to address this issue (e.g. Ombudsman for Children, 2008). Minister Fitzgerald hopes that the imperative to listen to children will be given a firm base by acceptance of the forthcoming constitutional referendum that aims '*to strengthen the protection and the place of children in Ireland*' (Fitzgerald 2012c). She recognises that achieving the aims of the referendum will require '*champions*' of young people as well as the development of policies at national and local level in order to empower children to participate in decision-making processes on issues of relevance to them (ibid, 2012).

Some structures already in place such as the Child Care Act 1991, the Children Act 2001 and the office of the Ombudsman for Children have given a firm legislative framework for children's services. However, despite the aim of the National Children's Strategy and other developments, people under 18 years old remain at greater risk of poverty than any other age group (CSO, 2011). The CSO analysis of 2010 statistics shows, *a significant increase in the deprivation rate for children (aged 0-17), which was 30.2% up from 23.5% in 2009* (CSO, 2011).

Childcare

> *The sector is still characterised by high staff turnover (with negative effects on young children), low pay, weak professional profiling, limited access to in-service training and limited career mobility.* DES, 2004

Childcare is traditionally viewed as the responsibility of women whose moral imperative and socialisation into the role of reproducer and carer has led to women bearing an unequal burden of care (Lynch, 2009). Studies show that from infancy, children are treated differently both at home and in school where care tasks are assigned generally to girls and physical tasks to boys (Cuneen, 2002). A

widespread perception that childcare required no specialised skills was challenged officially with the commencement of the Child Care Act (1991) in 1997 (Murphy, P., 2005). As has been seen, subsequent policy documents stressed the requirement for well-trained staff in ECCE settings (Government of Ireland, 1999a; Government of Ireland, 1999b; DJELR, 2002; DES, 2004; Oireachtas, 2005; NESF, 2005; CECDE, 2006; DCYA, 2012).

The lack of recognition of the skills required for effective childcare contributed to the low status of the sector (Murphy, P., 2005; NESF, 2005; Kavanagh & Healy-Magwa, 2005) and it was hoped that the introduction of regulation would raise the status of childcare (O'Kane & Kernan, 2002). A major contributory factor to the sector's low status is poor remuneration (DES, 2004). Many community providers of ECCE are dependent on community employment participants to ensure required staff ratios (Government of Ireland, 1999b; Oireachtas, 2005). Moreover, a CE participant is appointed to a childcare setting for a limited time period usually between one and three years (FÁS.ie) thus exemplifying the problem of staff retention.

For other childcare providers, poor pay and conditions lead to high levels of staff turnover (NESF, 2005). Whitebook & Ryan (2011) maintain that remuneration does not reflect either the skills required or the responsibilities of childcare practitioners. They and others (Barry, 2005; Rourke, 2008) suggest that the call for higher qualifications for ECCE staff and their educators could lead to an exodus from the sector. They also suspect that lack of appreciation of the skilled nature of the role of ECCE practitioner has contributed to deficient training programmes, in particular the inadequate work based learning component may be due to,

> *low expectations for education and training necessary to work effectively with young children.* Whitebook & Ryan, 2011

Opportunities for career advancement are in short supply (DES, 2004) and recognised as a barrier to developing an identity for the sector and raising its status (Duignan & Walsh, 2004).

Women as care workers

Ryan et al (courtesy of Hussey, 1999) provide another image of the adult education tutor, known graphically as 'Jesus of Rio', interpreted as one that views adult education as a charitable bestowal or caring gift. Given the largely female

profile of the teaching workforce and the acknowledged gender inequality in the burden of care (Lynch, 2009; Murphy Lawless, 2000), this image is only surprising in its maleness.

The increase in the number of women at work might appear to indicate an acceptance of a new image for women, however,

> *Women in the home continue to face significant barriers in areas such as childcare, care of other dependants, finance and transport in accessing education and training opportunities. Women with low levels of education tend to experience the greatest inequalities in labour market participation* (DES, 1999).

While there is an increase in numbers of women in the workforce particularly in 21st century Ireland, this cannot be taken as an indicator of fundamental change. An analysis of data gathered between 2009 and 2011 by the CSO shows that women in employment worked for an average of 30.6 hours per week compared to 39.4 hours for men. This accounts for some of the disparity in remuneration, which for women in 2009 was 73% of men's earnings, but when adjusted for hours worked, was 94%. However, 'hours worked' does not take unpaid duties into account (CSO, 2012). Interviewed about their work, teachers in a Canadian study spoke about insufficient time to accomplish their workload; many took work home or remained in the workplace 'even after the heat had gone off'. Others spoke about dashing home to their care duties and resuming 'work' afterwards (Hargreaves, 1994). Of the 851,300 women in employment in 2011, in Ireland, 35% were working in either the education or health and welfare sectors. Analysing this data further shows that more than 80% of employees in the health sector are women, as are almost 75% of the education workforce. The impact of the economic crisis is evident in the data; numbers of women unemployed remained at 4% between 2001 and 2008, doubled to 8.1% in 2009 and increased to 10.4% in 2011. At 17.5% unemployed in 2011, men have fared even worse. At the same time, women's participation in decision making structures remains very low; men account for over 65% of members of state boards (CSO, 2012), two of the fifteen government ministers and four of fifteen ministers of state are women (www.taoiseach.gov.ie, 2012), slightly over 33% of VEC members and less than 20% of local authority members are women. In the civil service, less than 20% of the top positions have women incumbents while almost 80% of the clerical and staff officers are female.

Lynch (2009) describes women as the 'default carers' of society, characterised by a nurture discourse that is at variance with the competitive discourse of the workplace. Their care role shapes their identity, with women tending to prioritise their care responsibilities over others, including career advancement. Indeed, avoiding responsibility for the caring role risks the attribution of 'uncaring'. As care is integral to identity, - titles such as parent and child connote both relationship and responsibilities - it is not possible to separate the role and the associated tasks without undermining the relationship. Lynch (2009) distinguishes between care labour and love labour. Care labour describes the aspects and tasks associated with the role that can be undertaken by another. Love labour entailing both attachment and intimacy is inseparable from role performance. As such, while love labour is highly valued by society, it does, albeit willingly, limit women's view of their potential participation in society.

Chapter Summary

An examination of the literature concerning the three domains of interest to this study reveals a picture of the early childhood care and education sector continuously facing serious challenges. While the literature emphasises the importance of childcare, it shows clearly that it is inadequately funded, a low status occupation, characterised by a fragmented, overwhelmingly female workforce, with few career opportunities and without job security.

The position of ECCE tutors reflects the issues that beset the childcare and adult education sectors. The identity of ECCE tutors is vague and unfocused; many retain allegiance to their original discipline without opportunities to develop a sense of shared purpose with their seldom-encountered fellow tutors. Unattractive part-time and uncertain employment contracts result in problems of staff recruitment, retention and continuity.

Similarly, the literature demonstrates the fragility of the adult education sector, unsure of its identity and lacking a clear structure. Its workforce exhibits an analogous profile; poor pay and conditions, lack of opportunities for career advancement, uncertainty concerning the qualifications and experience required and poorly integrated within the teaching profession with a resultant lack of confidence and status.

Chapter Three - Methodology

This chapter outlines the approach taken to completing all stages of this project. It explains the motivation for undertaking the study, describes the rationale and details the research design. Consideration is given to the reliability and validity of the data and ethical questions of confidentiality and consent are explored. Anticipated and encountered hurdles are identified and the measures taken to surmount them are described.

Rationale and paradigm for this research

As outlined earlier, there is a dearth of information about childcare educators (Buiskool et al 2009), for example, *An Audit of Research on Early Childhood Care and Education in Ireland 1990-2006* (CECDE, 2006) did not identify any study that focused on the education or educators of childcare workers.

Given this under-researched field, the task was to investigate and describe the tutors' reality and make or construct meaning from the resulting data. It was not proposed to develop a generalised theory about childcare tutors but to describe their reality in a way that would develop an understanding of their context and needs. The objective of this study is to achieve a deeper understanding of FETAC Level 5 childcare tutors, their *modus operandi*, the challenges they encounter, and their professional development needs. The study seeks to illuminate the context in which they work with special focus on their employers, the providers of FETAC Level 5 childcare training programmes. Additionally, it explores how tensions and contradictory logics within the ECCE governance structures of the education and welfare sectors impact on the training of childcare practitioners.

 It was hoped that the learning might be transferable to other contexts such as care for the elderly, people with special needs and people with disabilities. Given the exploratory nature of the undertaking, and influenced by Popper's refutation of inductive knowledge in favour of the critical method (Popper, 1979 p.31), it was important to recognise that while the objective was to establish facts, no claim would be made regarding the achievement of a definitive truth (Swann, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

The study took place within a constructivist paradigm, recognising that reality is that what is experienced by the actors and is specific and local in nature. My role within this paradigm was that of facilitator and participant in the process, working cooperatively with the research subjects to discover and describe their reality. Given the lack of prior research with this group, a constructivist stance enabled me to affirm and value the participants' contributions. Constructivism recognises the possibility of divergent views and facilitates the slow emergence of important concepts (Crotty, 1998). The aim is to illuminate rather than develop a truth with wide applicability. Using a variety of methods as well as a range of sources assists claims for validity (Mertens, 2010). Dialogue with research subjects and analysis of the data was used to develop an agreed holistic picture of the world of the childcare tutor (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The study provides background information on the research participants and their working environment as well as their beliefs, positions and opinions (Mertens, 2010).

Theoretical Perspective

In keeping with the constructivist repudiation of the possibility of an objective truth, a pragmatic perspective was adopted. This perspective views knowledge as circumscribed by time and location. Knowledge is assessed according to its usefulness in particular situations and importantly, pragmatism rejects the notion of a 'best' or 'only' approach to achieving answers (Denscombe, 2010). These core ideas make pragmatism the natural partner of a mixed methods research approach.

Methodology

Within the constructivist paradigm, I used a mixed methods framework to inform the development of the approach. The world of the FETAC Level 5 childcare tutors was not previously investigated or documented. Therefore, this was a journey that was going into territory that while partially familiar was also unknown. Denscombe, (2010) outlines three distinguishing features of a mixed methods approach: firstly, qualitative and quantitative methods are used; secondly, the importance of using a dual approach is explained and thirdly, pragmatism, I believe that answering the research questions specific to this study requires a combined approach. Mixed methods facilitate triangulation, the checking of data from one source with another, thus increasing confidence in the findings. A combination of approaches was used

to measure '*overlapping but distinct facets*' of childcare training provision
(Caracelli and Greene 1993 p.196). This approach facilitated description of the
reality and the interpretation of the perspectives of the research subjects (Gay,
Mills, Airasian 2009). A nested mixed methods approach (Cresswell, 2003)
combining documentary, qualitative and quantitative research was appropriate for
studying this under-researched field.

Methods

Guided by a pragmatic perspective, it was decided to use a variety of secondary
sources to compile quantitative baseline data. Adhering to principles guiding
documentary research was important particularly in relation to reliability of the
data. Further documentary research was undertaken to explore other perspectives on
the research questions. Qualitative methods were used to gather data from the
research participants.

The methods used facilitated the gathering and analysis of quantitative baseline data
(such as the listing of FETAC Level 5 childcare education providers county by
county) as well as qualitative data. The approach yielded a broad understanding of
the field of childcare education provision and an in-depth understanding of the
situation of a small number of childcare tutors. It was also appropriate in that it
facilitated breadth as well as depth in this small study (Hunter & Brewer, 2003).
The resultant data raises significant research questions explored in Chapters 4 and
6.

Mapping childcare training provision provided a broad overview of the sector; the
follow-up interviews with tutors shed light on their varying contexts and challenges
and thus supply depth.

Qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured, open-ended interviews with
education centre directors, FETAC coordinators and tutors.

Each of the methods is discussed further in the following sections.

Documentary evidence

There is currently no single source of data relating to providers of basic childcare
education in Ireland making describing the context problematic. This aspect of the
research involved the identification, verification, analysis and compilation of a
national map of childcare provision in Ireland. This original data was collated from
a number of documentary sources that provided information about childcare

provision in Ireland. The majority of documents were available on the Internet through databases such as Qualifax[39], FETAC and providers' own websites. These sources were used to gather baseline data and map the area. The resulting data include the range and location of childcare training available and facilitated the differentiation of FETAC Level 5 childcare training providers within the general list of FETAC Level 5 providers. The hope that an examination of FETAC monitoring reports might provide a rough estimate of the number of people teaching childcare was not fulfilled due to the small number (4) of reports available[40].

Essentially a document is '*an artifact which has as its central feature and inscribed text … it may be a clay tablet, a sheet of paper or a visual display unit*' (Scott, 2006). Scott clarifies that visual documents include computer files and electronic databases which are relevant for this research (ibid.). His identification of four criteria that documents should meet if they are to be of value to the researcher was valuable in this study. These are:

- Authenticity – the researcher should check
    - the reliability of the source (is it an original document or a copy or a copy of a copy)
    - for internal inconsistencies
    - different versions of the same document (where they exist)
    - authorship[41]
- Credibility – the researcher should ensure documents are unaltered, that information is either free from bias or specifies a particular viewpoint
- Representativeness – the researcher must ensure that sampling procedures ensure the identification of characteristic documentary material
- Meaning – the researcher needs to check that s/he is developing accurate rather than biased conclusions from the documents. (ibid.)

Other than the various studies mentioned in the literature review, Irish Government departments or agencies authored the majority of the Internet data sources used in this study. This helped meet Scott's criteria for value, as website security is high

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[39] Qualifax is a national learners' database that provides comprehensive information on further and higher education and training courses. Qualifax is a service of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI)

[40] This figure does not indicate that FETAC has monitored only four childcare training providers, as other monitoring reports may be awaiting publication.

[41] Ascribing authorship can pose issues particularly in relation to government documents, although a document may originate in a particular government department its authorship is often assigned to for example, 'Government of Ireland'.

and news of interference with these sites is widely publicised and corrected
promptly.

As there is currently no single source of data relating to providers of basic childcare
education in Ireland, checking data involved visiting a number of websites. This
exercise enabled the compilation of childcare education providers nationally and
assisted in the verification process. However, reliability issues of some data arose,
for instance, some providers' names differed depending on the website. Of more
serious concern, is the fact that inclusion on a list of providers may indicate a
capacity to deliver rather than actual delivery; issues that are discussed throughout
the relevant findings chapter.

Sourcing quantitative data

In this study desk research was used to generate as accurate a picture of Level 5
childcare education provision in Ireland, as possible. This exercise has not been
attempted previously. Decisions to offer childcare training are made without
reference to national policy, existing provision of childcare training or childcare
services, or workforce requirements.

A FETAC Level 5 Childcare Award is considered the basic qualification for
working in childcare[42]. All FETAC registered providers are listed on the FETAC
website. However, the website does not indicate the courses each provider offers.
The Qualifax website (www.qualifax.ie/) lists courses according to category and
supplies web links to the providers. Screening of the courses on the Qualifax site
was essential as not all courses listed lead to FETAC qualifications. Through
personal knowledge, it emerged that some providers of childcare training are not
included on the Qualifax site. Therefore, accuracy required a second trawl of the
FETAC registered providers. This involved checking the 1,026 education providers
registered with FETAC (FETAC, 2012). In some instances provider's names
provided clues to their area of provision shortening the process slightly; for
example, the '*Associated Craft Butchers of Ireland'* are unlikely to offer childcare
training, while '*Chambers Ireland'* gives no indication of the training offered.
Another difficulty encountered is that some providers that perhaps offer childcare
training do not have websites, (eg *Canal Communities Training Programme,
Ballymun Women's Resource Centre*). It was not feasible to contact all the

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[42] See Ch. 1 Introduction p.23 - 24

providers who do not have websites; therefore they were excluded from the research. In other cases the link to the provider's website shown on the FETAC database did not connect to the provider; initially, I thought this meant that the provider either no longer had a web presence or that perhaps the provider had ceased trading. However, an Internet web search for the provider in question sometimes confirmed their existence but showed a change of web address.

The process was complicated further by name changes; in some instances the name of a provider on the Qualifax website differs from that on the FETAC site, for example, one course provider on the Qualifax website is named as 'Colaiste an Chregain'(stet), the website address is given as 'www.countygalwayvec.com', when the County Galway website is accessed and the link to 'Schools and Colleges' is followed there is no mention of 'Colaiste an Chregain'; similarly, neither a search of the FETAC site nor an Internet web search leads to a 'Colaiste an Chregain' website. The VEC website does have a link to 'Mountbellew' that led me to 'Coláiste an Chregáin'(stet)[43].

Another factor that must be considered is that, sometimes, providers who state that they offer FETAC Level 5 childcare programmes are indicating merely their capacity to provide such programmes. The only way of checking which providers are currently offering childcare programmes is by contacting each individual provider. Currently, FETAC does not issue information regarding the childcare awards made in any given period.

A third factor impacts on the reliability of this data. At the time of gathering the data there were thirty-three Vocational Education Committees (VEC) in existence[44]. Each VEC provides childcare training through one or more of its centres. However, in some instances certain constituent VEC centres may also be registered separately with FETAC. While every effort was made to eliminate duplication some double counting of centres may have occurred. Similarly, at the time of data collection, FÁS[45] centres were not on the FETAC register as historically, FÁS was an

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[43] This is not an isolated case, other examples include CityNorth CFE /Terence McSwiney college in Cork and Allenwood Community Development Association/ Allenwood Business Training College /The ACDAL Training Centre in Kildare

[44] In October 2012 the Minister for Education and Skills published the Education and Training Boards Bill 2012. The Bill signals the abolition of the VECs and their replacement with sixteen Education and Training Boards (ETB). (www.education.ie accessed 10.10.2012)

[45] In July 2011, the Minister for Education and Skills announced the disbandment of FÁS and the formation of a new further education and training authority to be known as Solas. (www.education.ie)

awarding body in its own right. With the advent of the Qualifications Act (1999) FETAC became the awarding body for FÁS programmes, however, as with the VECs, some centres that offer FÁS funded programmes are registered with FETAC (eg. Ballymun Community Training Centre), hence the presence of FÁS in the data. This data gathering strategy resulted firstly, in an initial mapping of provision of FETAC Level 5 childcare programmes in Ireland and secondly, using FETAC categorization of provider type, an analysis of types of childcare training providers. Further desk research of FETAC publications was undertaken to ascertain the number, type and distribution of registered providers as well as the number of childcare awards issued. I requested additional information from FETAC as the published data includes aggregated numbers only for each of the award areas. FETAC generously supplied the requested data.

Prior to this study, a national profile of childcare education providers was not available. While there are serious questions about the reliability of the emergent profile, it does provide a baseline that can be tested in future studies.

Interviewing as a form of narrative research

It is known and acknowledged that training for childcare takes place in a wide variety of settings and childcare tutors/teachers have varied backgrounds (Government of Ireland, 1999; 2000). Working within a constructivist paradigm I recognised the importance of acknowledging and affirming the practitioners who contributed to the study (Mertens, 2010). Hence, a narrative analysis was used develop and execute the interviews. Narratives are the stories that people tell about themselves within a particular context. According to Lawler (2002) '*narrative must contain transformation, plotline and characters. But these components must be brought together within an overall plot.*' From a research point of view, narrative inquiry has the potential to elicit a great deal of information about the person and their world. In addition it elucidates the significance that a respondent places on her/his story.

The interview approach was guided by the principles of Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry is '*the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organisations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives "life" to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological and human*

terms'. (Cooper Rider and Whitney, 2005). This approach was chosen mindful that the researcher's identity impacts on the respondent particularly when dealing with sensitive issues (Denscombe, 2010). As the majority of the interviewees knew me as an External Authenticator for FETAC programmes, it was important to emphasise to them that the research role is very different to the evaluative role of the authenticator. Therefore, the approach in action meant valuing and affirming respondents and their contributions; probing was used, challenging was not. The task of analysis of the narrative is to synthesise the various accounts into one story noting the points of agreement and discord (Lawler, 2002). In total, seventeen people were interviewed; nine providers and eight tutors; their profiles are included in Chapters 4 and 5.

Advantages and limitations

It is hoped that the mixed methods design helps allay concerns regarding the validity of the study resulting from a perceived use of inductive thinking. I recognised that while some generalised conclusions result from the data, there is no claim of discovering a general truth. While gathering the experiences of the participants, I endeavoured to refute rather than support expectations and assumptions, recognising that a universal theory remains unattainable (Popper, 1979).

It is important to note some limitations to the mixed methods approach; firstly, considerable time and resources are required to undertake such a wide-ranging process and secondly, the skill mix required to successfully carry-out a mixed methods study may challenge the lone researcher who instinctively favours quantitative over qualitative approaches or vice versa.

Integrating the quantitative and qualitative strands of this research was challenging. Given the lack of data, it was considered essential to develop an overview of the sector. When the complexity of building a precise picture became apparent, pursuing accuracy was tempting. This would have meant changing the research questions and required a different approach such as a detailed survey of providers and extensive fieldwork beyond the capabilities of the lone researcher. Therefore, the sectoral overview developed is recognised as being incomplete. It does hint at and provide a context for the data materialising from the qualitative strand of the study – interviews with childcare practitioners and childcare education providers,

thus returning to the starting problem for the study i.e. the CPD needs of childcare tutors.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability of the study depends on the strategies used to gather the data and on researcher reliability. The trustworthiness of each of the data gathering techniques proposed is well documented in research literature (Cresswell, 2003; Gay et al, 2009, Denscombe, 2010). The advantages and drawbacks are well known, as are mechanisms to minimize the associated pitfalls. According to Hunter and Brewer (2003) '*for both reliability and validity ... multiple measurements are required. ... Multimethods, then, have built into them almost by definition the very essence of what is needed to assess the validity of research.*' They continue, '*different methods might simply be tapping different dimensions, qualities or aspects of a given phenomenon. These differences might be as theoretically and substantively important to consider as are methodologically generated differences*' (Hunter and Brewer, 2003*).*

They suggest that using a variety of instruments to gather data helps to avoid misinterpretation of superficial agreement and may highlight important deviations in the results. While this procedure was employed, reliability, particularly of quantitative data, is compromised by difficulties accessing information outlined later in this chapter[46].

In qualitative research a number of issues require consideration when interviewing participants. According to Measor (1985), developing a relationship with an interviewee while maintaining a critical stance is central. She suggests that the researcher must enter '*another person's world*' (ibid, 1985). Although there is no single method of ensuring either the reliability of the data gathered or the analysis process (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000), triangulation (the collection and comparison of data from a number of sources) and clarifying the context of the data are important (Measor, 1985). In this study I suspected socially desirable responding (SDR)[47] in two interviews. I clearly indicated my role as a FETAC external authenticator in the information note to education providers, and when meeting all interviewees. In response to the question '*In what ways does your QA*

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[46] See 'Sourcing quantitative data', this chapter p.73
[47] The SDR phenomenon is when respondents provide answers that make them look good. (Jan-Benedict, Steenkamp, de Jong and Baumgartner (2010)

system inform and support your recruitment and development of childcare tutors?' I noticed one provider responded immediately, then paused, thought and considered the response carefully. Two interviewees' positive comments about the external authentication process may have been for my benefit.

To ensure validity, I interpreted and represented accurately the respondents' contributions. Crosschecking data on an on-going basis was essential. Relating the data gathered to the literature further assisted validity. Ensuring freedom from bias is more problematic; on-going dialogue with critical friends and a journaling process were helpful in identifying and eliminating bias. In addition, preliminary analysis of contributions informed the continuing development of the interview guides[48] thus checking for bias.

While the paucity of literature on the topic of childcare tutors is acknowledged, a review of literature on childcare, professional development, adult learning and the impact of the quality agenda on further education provision and practice informed the on-going development of interview schedules. Taking account of cultural differences, the literature review assisted the contextualizing of the overall study in the Irish and international domains.

Interview schedules with tutors were designed to elicit information about their reality. Providers were interviewed to gain a greater understanding of the overall training context. In order to honour the confidentiality agreed with respondents, information gleaned from tutors was neither used nor checked with their corresponding providers. Pseudonyms are used for all participants, tutors' aliases are Irish names using the first eight letters of the Irish alphabet, providers' are English names using the first nine letters of the English alphabet and centres were allocated the first seven letters from the Greek alphabet. It is hoped that identities have been generalised and blurred sufficiently to avoid recognition and protect confidentiality.

The research process

As the qualitative and quantitative research strands were not interdependent, it was decided to run both concurrently. The data gathering process began with the

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[48] Whereas preliminary analysis contributed to the interview guide development, the researcher ensured that nothing in a participant's contribution was disclosed to anyone else throughout the interview phase. (See Informed Consent, p.78 this chapter.)

selection of an initial interview site. Selection was accomplished following the principles of '*theoretical sampling*'.

> *Sites to be included in the research are deliberately selected by the researcher for what they can contribute to the research. This means that, unlike random sampling, theoretical sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which the new sites are consciously selected by the researcher because of their particular characteristics.* (Denscombe, 2010)

Sites were selected to ensure a mix of type and location. The original plan was to identify relatively inexperienced tutors, however, early analysis showed that this additional category was unnecessary. The sampling method assisted me to direct the focus at points of interest that arose through on-going data analysis. Information leaflets for participants were developed and these formed the basis of the consent process. Potential interviewees at the first and subsequent sites were contacted by phone and further information sent by email.

Initially, three interviews with a tutor and a centre director and a childcare course coordinator were conducted. This initial data was recorded, transcribed, analysed and some preliminary coding took place. This initial analysis informed the selection of subsequent sites.

Data sources - childcare education providers and tutors

Using the FETAC database, six provider types were identified. It was decided not to attempt to interview representatives of each type in order to focus on the main providers. Representatives of three[49] types were interviewed between November 2011 and May 2012. These types provide almost 90% of all FETAC Level 5 childcare training.

Gathering data from tutors and providers was undertaken by means of in-depth individual interviews. Invited to participate in the research by phone, most providers agreed readily. Some difficulties were encountered initially in recruiting a private provider and a community college. Once the provider agreed, s/he nominated one or more tutors as potential interviewees. I then contacted the nominated tutors and informed them about the purpose of the study. Some expressed doubt that they would contribute anything of worth; following reassurance that all views are valuable, they agreed. Eight tutors and nine providers from seven centres participated.

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[49] The three provider types are Community/Voluntary; Private and VEC colleges.

It was intended to identify teachers/tutors and providers in each of the sectors in order to investigate similarities and differences. The interviews aimed to:

- contribute to building a profile of childcare tutors
- explore their working environment
- identify some of the challenges they encounter
- explore their professional development needs
- provide insights into their experiences and perceptions.

The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended, a '*conversation with a purpose*'[50] or a dialogue guided by the experience and expertise of the interviewee.

In addition to basic personal facts, the individual tutor stories include information concerning their education, qualifications and experience; a description of their path to becoming childcare tutors; their views of their professional strengths and challenges and an exploration of their estimation of their professional development needs. The provider interviews yielded data concerning the issues providers of childcare training encounter, particularly in relation to the employment of tutors. They also gave their views on the professional development needs of tutors.

Most interviews took place in the participants' workplace. Two tutors were interviewed at a time and place of their choosing – in each instance a nearby hostelry. The interviews lasted between forty-five and 120 minutes. They were recorded using a digital voice recorder followed by transcription. During the initial three interviews I took notes as well as using the audio recorder. However, I felt that this interfered with the relationship and in subsequent interviews gave full attention to the interviewees. Transcribing interview notes is time consuming. I transcribed the first four and had the fifth recording transcribed professionally. However, personally transcribing the data provided a familiarity that facilitated analysis and identification of emerging themes so I transcribed the rest[51].

It was hoped that the education providers and tutors recruited would reflect a gender mix and the range of provider types. The gender aim proved impossible. The overwhelmingly female nature of the sector was confirmed by the failure to identify

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[50] The origin of the term is unknown, it may come from a book title published in 1959 by the St Louis, Catholic Hospital Association of the United States and Canada, 'The interview; a conversation with a purpose' by Gerard, Sister A.
[51] The interview transcripts yielded 57,655 words.

any male childcare tutors. One of the provider respondents, a centre director is male.

Documentary research continued throughout the study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The inherent challenge in analyzing data arising from a mixed methods study is to identify commonalities and contradictions emanating from the various methods (Gay et al, 2009). In this study the purpose of the documentary research was to assemble basic data to illuminate the overall context of childcare training provision. Desk research identified existing provision. The results are presented in tabular and diagrammatic formats and give a broad outline of the type and spread of existing provision.

I considered using a typing service to transcribe interview data. However, having transcribed one interview personally and received the transcript of another, I transcribed the remainder[52] personally. Initial data analysis of individual interviews occurred in tandem with collection and identified possible themes and categories. This early identification process guided the on-going interviews, and facilitated checking the validity of the proposed themes. However care was taken to avoid prescribing the interview process. Recognising that context influences actions and understandings (Gay, 2009) the first step in analyzing the data was to describe thoroughly the respondents' situation.

At this point, the technique of mind mapping was a helpful starting point to identify codes[53]. The emergence of commonalities and connections led to the surfacing of new overarching themes. Amid the wealth of data, journaling forced me to focus on the main themes and so enabled me to clarify and deepen my understanding of the issues. Making sense of practice through journal writing is essentially talking about reality construction and interpretation (Ghaye, 2011). Brookfield (1995) notes, '*we can never completely avoid the risks of denial and distortion when engaged in self reflection';* I was conscious of such limitations and combined the use of journaling with discussion with my critical friends. I suggest that this is another form of triangulation.

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[52] The interview transcripts yielded 57,655 words.
[53] Two mind maps developed during the analysis process are included in Appendix 8.

The final data analysis task was to identify missing data, i.e. data that for whatever reason was unobtainable, and unexpected data that emerged, the relevance of which became apparent during the analysis process.

Interpretation of the data showed the relevance of the material and clarified its importance. The analysis succeeds in highlighting important issues for childcare training providers and shows why this learning is important (Gay et al, 2009). However, it must be remembered that the primary purpose of the study was to describe the reality of childcare tutors and the challenges they encounter.

Ethical considerations

According to Aldridge and Levine (2001), respect for the integrity of research participants is central to research ethics. They contend that confidentiality, informed consent and sensitivity are the elements of this respect.

For this study I was informed by and complied with NUIM's guidelines on research integrity and practice (NUIM, undated). Therefore, I adhered to professional research standards, maintained a critical stance, attributed authorship to all documentary sources and guarded confidentiality of all participants as described below

Confidentiality

Assuring participants that their contributions to the study would be neither identified nor identifiable is generally accepted as a prerequisite when conducting research (Paul, 2010; Gay et al, 2009; Swann, 2004). Assuring confidentiality is easier in quantitative studies than in qualitative work. Why is confidentiality considered so important? Research is conducted for a variety of purposes such as future planning, identifying causes of problems, evaluating the work of an organisation or team, to name a few. The ultimate goal is often to facilitate planning for change. The prospect of change evokes a variety of responses in people from fear, to hostility, discomfort, nervousness, anticipation and occasionally, welcome. Therefore, some of those contributing to the study may be uneasy about the changes consequent upon the study. Kellehear raises the question as to whether it is ethical to ask people to participate in research when the findings and outcomes are uncertain at the time of interview (Kellehear, 1998). This hazard can be overcome by sensitivity to the participants on the part of the researcher.

Assurance of confidentiality is intended to give respondents the confidence to participate freely and honestly. Participating freely and honestly is of utmost importance in all research but especially so in qualitative studies where views and opinions are analysed. However, in small-scale research projects (such as this one) where the number of respondents/ participants is small and the research topic is very specific, is it possible for a researcher to ensure confidentiality? The Encarta dictionary definition of '*Assure*' is:

    1.   *to overcome somebody's doubt or disbelief about something*

    2.   *to convince somebody of something*

    3.   *to make something certain*

The same dictionary definition for '*Ensure*' is:

    1.   *to make sure that something will happen*

    2.   *to protect something or somebody from harm*

All professionals have a duty of care towards the people with whom they work, I was confident that I had the capacity to convince potential participants to contribute to the study and to overcome any doubts expressed. However, I am less confident of my ability to ensure complete confidentiality or that participation would cause no negative repercussions. I endeavoured to protect participants' identity as far as possible by removing participants and centres' identifying markers and guaranteeing all information gathered confidential from other participants. I also discussed fully with participants the entire research process.

Of particular importance in this study is the protection of interview data. Steps to guard confidentiality were outlined in information given to respondents[54].

Informed Consent (Oliver, 2010).

Providing full information to potential participants regarding the study was necessary in order to facilitate informed participation. I prepared written explanations of the purposes, methods, end uses and users of the study. Initially this was used for information purposes when seeking permission for access from institutions such as FETAC, VECs, community organisations and independent colleges. Another document was prepared and given to all participants before the interview began and I checked for understanding and clarified as necessary before

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[54] See Appendices 3 and 5 for information notes

seeking consent[55]. The statements detailed the potential uses and benefits of the study. In each site a tutor and one or two members of the management team were interviewed. This had the potential to create a situation that could affect informed consent. As the centre director was asked to suggest a potential interviewee, I had to ensure tutors' voluntary willingness to participate. This involved telling each tutor that should they prefer not to participate, that fact would not be disclosed to their colleagues. Additionally, each participant was assured that nothing contained in his or her contribution would be disclosed to another participant.

Freedom of choice

I contacted tutors through their employers, verbally explained the purposes of the study, outlined the time implications of participation and described some of the advantages of participation. The right of participants to withdraw from the study at any time and to review their contributions was emphasized and a commitment to confidentiality was given. Following the initial link, I contacted the participants to check if further clarification was needed and if the person was happy to take part. Before starting each interview, I re-visited the information to ensure voluntary participation and understanding of the right to withdraw. In each centre tutor interviews took place before provider interviews. Tutors were assured that their testimonies would not be referred to in any way, overtly or by implication during the provider interviews. This undertaking meant that providers' views were not sought on tutors' contributions. While this would have provided an interesting dimension to the study, it was more important to ensure that vulnerable tutors were not exposed in any way.

As the name of the study – the Continuing Professional Development Needs of Childcare Tutors has a clear underlying assumption that tutors have professional development needs, I was concerned that some potential participants might consider this discourteous and others may find it somewhat undermining. Piloting the information sheet with a provider and tutor helped allay these concerns.

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[55] See Appendices 3 – 6 for information notes and interview schedules.

Conclusion

This chapter details the rationale for embarking on this study. The constructivist paradigm adopted was helpful given the scarcity of prior investigation of childcare tutors. Caracelli and Greene's (1993) notion of '*overlapping but distinct facets*' facilitated the development of the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 2 Literature Review (p.24). The mixed methods design was critical given the varied data sources required to build and interpret the emerging picture. Utilising the appreciative inquiry approach (see p.83) helped encourage openness and frankness especially among the tutors and contributed to the richness of the assembled data. On-going engagement with two 'critical friends' greatly assisted the interrogation of and reflection on the data and its interpretation.

Chapter 4   Findings – Providers

Introduction

Mapping childcare training provision in Ireland was one of the aims of this research. This chapter examines childcare Level 5 training provision .. Provider types and their locations are identified. A profile of the eight providers from seven FETAC registered centres that participated in this study follows. The providers' views on the challenges faced by providers of childcare training and their tutors, including their reflections on tutors' CPD are explored.

Mapping Childcare Training Provision

As a national picture of childcare provision in Ireland does not exist, it was necessary to complete original data collection for this thesis. Data was gathered from FETAC online information concerning registered providers, the Qualifax website, FETAC reports, unpublished Childcare Award statistics kindly supplied by FETAC, CSO population data and data collected from providers and tutors interviewed for this study.

This was a considerable scale of original data gathering with particular difficulties encountered in this data collection exercise outlined in Chapter 3 p.68. Notwithstanding these issues, the picture emerging from the national data shows 195 FETAC registered providers offering childcare training programmes throughout the country. Some clusters are obvious, notably in the Dublin area (45), Cork (18) and Tipperary (16). Offaly is distinguished in that only one provider, a VEC centre, offers Level 5 Childcare programmes. In reading the data regarding pre-schools, it must be remembered that only registered pre-schools[56] feature. A further study is required to build a more complete picture of childcare and child-minding services.

The available data shows an average of one registered pre-school per 75 children nationally; the ratios range from one pre-school for 47 children in Clare to one per

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[56] Section 58 of the Childcare Act (1991) states that the following categories are exempt from registration responsibilities; persons caring for young relatives; persons caring for one or more children from the same family in one's own home and caring for not more than three children in one's own home (HSE, 2006).

92 children in Carlow.. From the available data, ten counties, Carlow, Cavan, Cork, Donegal, Laois, Longford, Louth, Offaly, Roscommon and Waterford have one pre-school for eighty or more children under 5 years. This triggers various queries that require further research including: is there a greater variety of childcare provision in these counties?; do more children remain at home until starting primary school?; is there a lower percentage of women in the workplace in these counties?

The ratio of childcare training providers to registered pre-schools is one provider per 25 pre-schools nationally. Sligo and Limerick have one childcare training provider for every ten and eleven (respectively) pre-schools. At the other end of the scale, Offaly has one childcare training provider for every 73 pre-schools. The figures for Offaly are at variance with the trend in all surrounding counties. This prompts various questions: do childcare workers in Offaly go elsewhere for training or are there very few childcare settings in Offaly? ; are there more than average numbers of unqualified childcare workers in Offaly?; why does neighbouring Tipperary have so many childcare training providers? Perhaps not all providers offer programmes on a regular basis; if so the number of training places available at a particular time may be fewer than the data as presented suggests. The low ratios in Sligo and Limerick could indicate some sporadic provision or, more worryingly, it may signify a high turnover of childcare staff leading to increased demand for training.

While various caveats have to be considered regarding this data, further evidence emerges from FETAC data. Greater provision in the East and South of the country is reflected in the childcare tutor awards made in recent years. FETAC (2012) analysis of geographical distribution of its awards shows that 75% of awards were made in the South and Eastern region and 25% in the Border, Midland and Western (BMW) region[57]. Analysis of the registered providers of childcare training shows 32% in the BMW region and 68% in the South and Eastern region.

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[57] These regions are so designated by the EU Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics (NUTS) devised for Structural Fund distribution purposes.

One can surmise that local factors, not evident in the data, contribute to the inter-county variations. The absence of clear national policies governing provision may also be a factor; all of which warrant further research.

Childcare Training Provision in Ireland
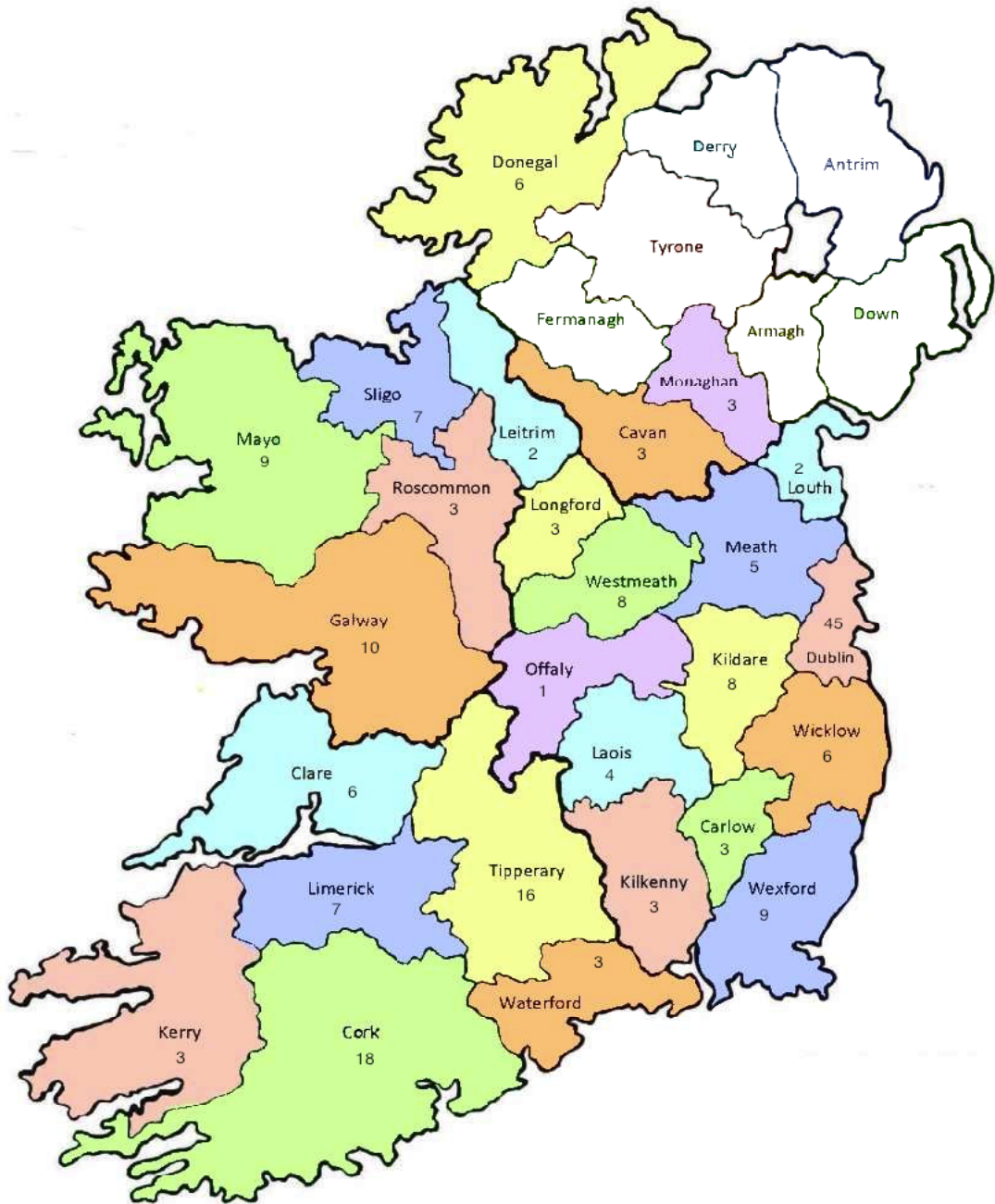
Diagram 3: Numbers of Childcare Training Providers by County

Table 2: Total population by people aged 0 – 4, all people[58], numbers of FETAC registered Childcare Training Providers and numbers of HSE registered Pre-Schools[59]

County	Total Population (All ages)	Population 0 - 4	Registered 'Pre-schools'	Ratio of Pre-schools to Pop. 0-4	Childcare Training Providers	Ratio of Training Providers registered pre-schools
Leitrim	31798	2456	42	1: 58	2	1:21
Longford	39000	3241	38	1: 85	3	1:13
Carlow	54612	4345	47	1: 92	3	1:16
Sligo	65393	4594	78	1:59	8	1:10
Roscommon	64065	4642	58	1:80	3	1:19
Monaghan	60483	4929	68	1:72	3	1:23
Cavan	73183	6177	68	1:91	3	1:23
Offaly	76687	6239	73	1:85	1	1:73
Westmeath	86164	6882	92	1:75	8	1:12
Kilkenny	95419	7501	99	1:76	3	1:33
Laois	80559	7538	85	1:87	4	1:21
Waterford	113795	8644	101	1:86	3	1:34
Clare	117196	8905	190	1:47	7	1:29
Mayo	130638	9199	134	1:69	9	1:15
Kerry	145502	10025	138	1:73	3	1:46
Louth	122897	10411	126	1:83	2	1:63
Wicklow	136640	11474	170	1:67	6	1:28
Wexford	145320	11539	149	1:77	9	1:17
Tipperary	158754	11947	192	1:62	16	1:12
Donegal	161137	12727	156	1:82	6	1:16
Limerick	191809	14194	196	1:72	7	1:11
Meath	184135	17502	221	1:79	5	1:44
Kildare	210312	18914	244	1:78	8	1:31
Galway	250653	18960	302	1:63	10	1:30

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[58] Data extracted from Table CDD06 Population by Age Group, Province County or City, Sex, Detailed Marital Status and Census Year, CSO 2011

[59] The numbers of registered 'pre-schools' was sourced from HSE List of Pre-schools by County, November, 2012 (www.hse.ie). 'Pre-schools' is HSE terminology and covers all those who are required to register irrespective of the 'type' of service provided.

Cork	519032	40188	478	1:84	18	1:27
Dublin	1273069	93156	1210	1:77	45	1:27
TOTALS	4588252	356329	4755	1:75	195	1:25

Gender

It is very evident that the vast majority of people involved in the training and practice of childcare are female (DJELR, 2002). This contrasts dramatically with the general profile of FETAC award recipients, 52% of whom are female (FETAC, 2012) but resonates with what has been found in other studies relating to childcare tutors internationally, as reported in Chapter 2.

Types of providers

Examining the data gathered for this study by provider type shows the national predominance of the VECs as childcare training providers.
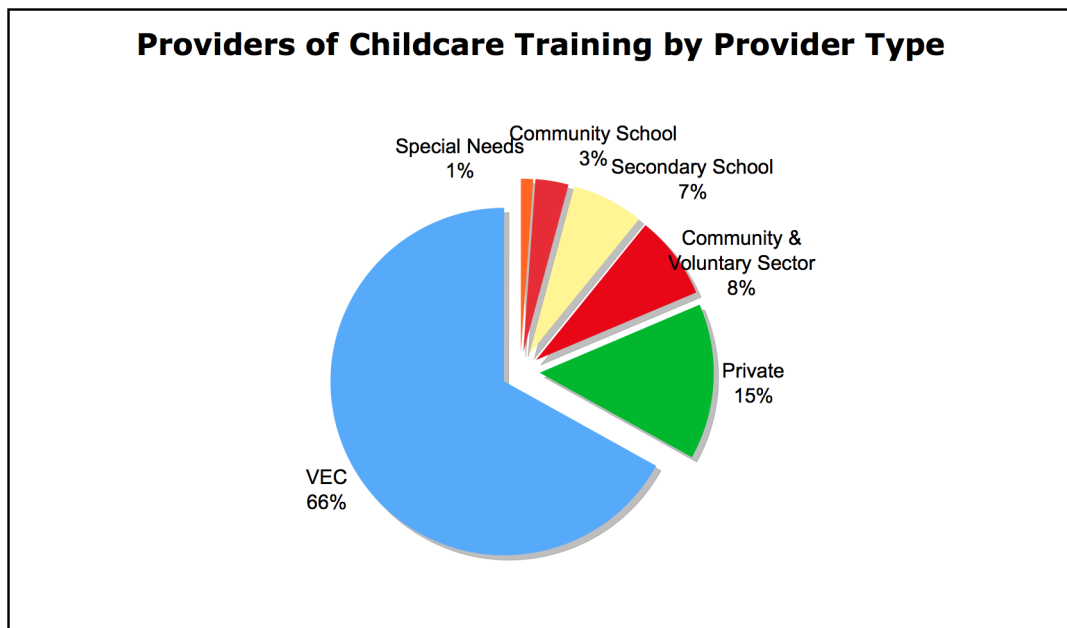
Diagram 4: Providers of Childcare Training by Provider Type[60]

DES funded VECs together with secondary and community schools account for 76% of childcare training providers[61]. Less than one quarter of the providers

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[60] The data was assembled from the FETAC list of registered providers published on the website www.fetac.ie. It was cross-referenced with data on the Qualifax website - www.qualifax.ie.

belong to the community, voluntary or private sectors. This data does not indicate the number of learners who participate in the childcare programmes and it is not possible to draw any conclusions regarding the numbers of programme graduates from each provider type. Neither does it convey whether all the providers who state that they provide childcare training programmes are currently offering training.

While recruiting respondents for this study I contacted a centre recorded on the Qualifax website as providing Level 5 Childcare programmes. However, the Centre Director explained that they are not currently providing any childcare training as one consequence of the current recession is that some childcare settings in the locality have closed, resulting in a decrease in demand. She advised that they are ready to respond if the situation changes.

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Diagram 5   (FETAC, 2012)   **Diagram 6 (FETAC, unpublished)[62]**
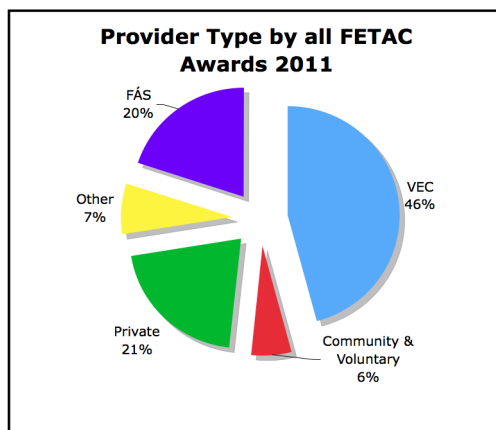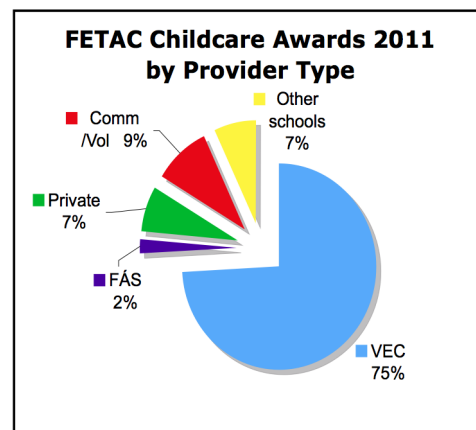
As stated earlier, 75% of FETAC Childcare awards are made to VEC learners while VEC providers make up only 66% of the total number of providers. This data may give an indication of larger learner cohorts than the other provider groups. In the same vein, Private Providers constitute 15% of the total but achieved only 7% of awards, it is not possible to state whether this indicates smaller class size, possibility of dropouts or some providers having the capacity

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[61] Towards the conclusion of this study (October 2012), the Minister for Training and Skills announced the disbandment of FÁS and the establishment of sixteen Education and Training Boards incorporating all the existing VECs as well as the training functions of FÁS. This will increase the predominance of the VEC/ETB sector in Childcare training provision (DES, 2012).
[62] The author is indebted to FETAC for unpublished data concerning Childcare awards made in 2011.

but not currently providing training programmes. It is of concern that the information concerning the number of FETAC awards does not differentiate between the full Level 5 Childcare award and component certificates awarded to learners. This is potentially misleading for the general public, particularly parents of young children, as they may be unaware of the difference between one or two component certificates and a full (eight component) award.

The following table (3) shows the breakdown of childcare training providers by county and type. The counties identified as having the highest number of childcare training providers also have the highest number of VEC centres. Of Cork's eighteen providers, seventeen are VEC centres; in Tipperary fourteen of the sixteen centres belong to the VEC sector. Dublin shows the greatest diversity in provider type, twenty-five of the forty-five centres are VEC centres while twelve are in the Private sector and seven in the Community and Voluntary sector. In several counties, Carlow, Cavan, Kerry, Kilkenny, Longford, Louth, Offaly, Roscommon and Waterford, it appears that all the providers belong to the VEC sector.

There may be some overlap in the VEC sector given that the VEC as a registered provider states that they provide Level 5 Childcare programmes and at the same time, its constituent centres may also be providers registered in their own right and also stating that they provide Level 5 Childcare programmes. This hypothesis was tested in the case of Offaly where it appears there is only one provider of childcare programmes – Co Offaly VEC; an investigation of the website provides a link to a 2012 –2013 Adult Education brochure that states that a FETAC Level 5 Childcare programmes will be provided in Banagher, Tullamore and Edenderry subject to sufficient numbers. (Offaly VEC, 2012). However, the individual college websites do not mention childcare programmes. What is clear from the Offaly data is that there are no community or private childcare training providers operating in the county.

Table 3:   Providers by County by Provider Type

Childcare Training Providers by County and Type

County	Data
Carlow	VEC: 3
Cavan	VEC: 3
Clare	Secondary School: 3, Community & Voluntary Sector: 1, VEC: 2
Cork	Private: 1, VEC: 17
Donegal	Private: 1, VEC: 5
Dublin	Special Needs: 1, Community School: 7, Private: 12, VEC: 25
Galway	Community School: 2, Secondary School: 2, Private: 1, VEC: 5
Kerry	VEC: 3
Kildare	Community School: 1, Secondary School: 1, Community & Voluntary Sector: 1, Private: 2, VEC: 3
Kilkenny	VEC: 3
Laois	Community School: 1, Private: 1, VEC: 2
Leitrim	Private: 1, VEC: 1
Limerick	Private: 2, VEC: 5
Longford	VEC: 3
Louth	VEC: 2
Mayo	Community School: 1, Secondary School: 3, Community & Voluntary Sector: 1, VEC: 4
Meath	Private: 1, VEC: 4
Monaghan	Community School: 1, Private: 1, VEC: 1
Offaly	VEC: 1
Roscommon	VEC: 3
Sligo	Secondary School: 3, VEC: 4
Tipperary	Special Needs: 1, Community & Voluntary Sector: 1, VEC: 14
Waterford	VEC: 3
Westmeath	Community School: 1, Private: 1, Community & Voluntary Sector: 2, VEC: 4
Wexford	Community & Voluntary Sector: 1, Private: 2, VEC: 6
Wicklow	Private: 3, VEC: 3

Legend: Special Needs, Community School, Secondary School, Community & Voluntary Sector, Private, VEC

Childcare awards accounted for six per cent of all FETAC awards[63] made between 2009 and 2011 inclusive. This translates into 18,085 awards in 2009; 20,735 in 2010 and 20,563 in 2011 (FETAC, 2012).

The mapping exercise is significant for the questions it raises more than those it answers. It does provide a picture of childcare training provision throughout the country. However, the information gaps exposed highlight a complex situation that has evolved in the absence of a national planning strategy as outlined in the literature review chapter. Planners and providers must rely on locally gleaned information when considering future development. For childcare training providers, the lack of information about the numbers employed in childcare facilities and the numbers of children availing of these services means that providing childcare training has to be on the basis of requests rather than on data[64]. This reactive approach increases uncertainty for childcare tutors as well as providers; a centre may have sufficient learners for a programme in 2012, but no indication of what will happen in 2013. In these circumstances, it is very difficult to expect providers to invest in providing professional development opportunities for childcare tutors. From the tutors' point of view there is little incentive to embark on further training when there is no information as to when or whether their services will be required again. On the other hand, the current situation permits providers to respond immediately to local needs. To develop coherent plans for future childcare programmes, providers would need reliable and consistent data regarding childcare facilities and staff. Information regarding childcare staff turnover would also be critical.

Comparing numbers of learners by provider type with the numbers of FETAC childcare awards by provider type throws some further light on the picture:

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[63] These numbers indicate the total number of major, minor, special purpose and supplemental childcare awards made in the respective years.
[64] This assertion is confirmed by the testimony of providers later in this chapter.

Table 4: Number of FETAC childcare awards 2011 by provider type compared with numbers of learners enrolled with the participant providers in this study
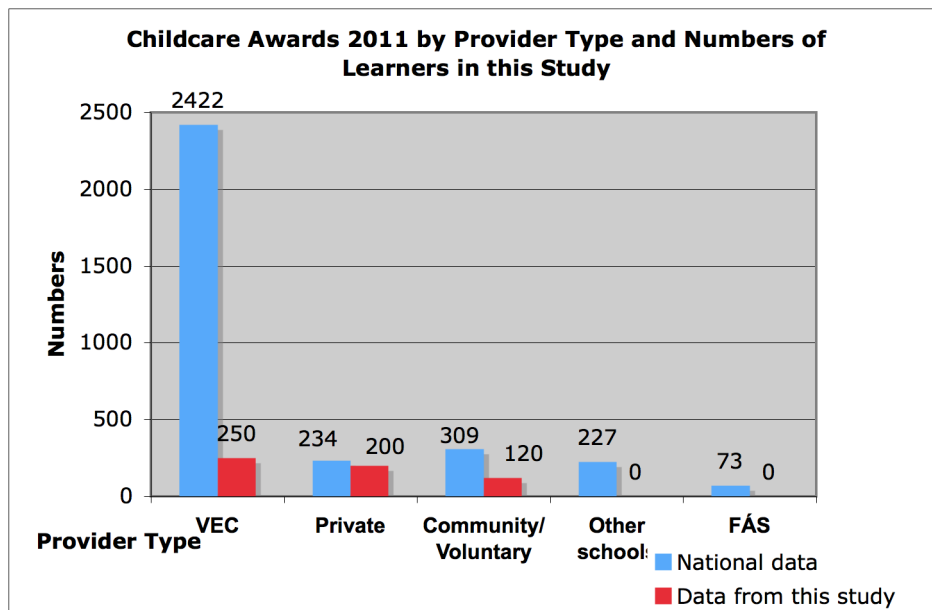
Nationally, the VEC and 'other' schools accounted for 84% of Childcare Awards made in 2011; the Community and Voluntary sector for 9%; the Private sector for 7% and FÁS for 2%. Some provider types were not included in this study, for example FÁS centres and 'other schools'. It is possible that some learners particularly in the 'private' and 'community/voluntary' sectors are funded by FÁS and are submitted for certification by FÁS, thus appearing in the 'FÁS' category rather than that of the actual learning centre. The major discrepancy is in the 'VEC' category; 74% of Level 5 Childcare Awards in 2011 were made to learners from VEC centres, whereas 44% of the learners in this study participated in VEC programmes.

Questions outside the scope of this study surface from the data, including the number of children availing of childcare in each county and numbers in employment per county. The number of childcare workers in each county would be relevant to this study in so far as the ratio of childcare training providers to childcare workers would demonstrate the training capacity available. It is important to remember that some private providers (including the provider who participated in this study) offer childcare training programmes by distance

learning; therefore, it cannot be assumed that a low number of providers in a
given county means a low number of qualified childcare workers.

Overall, some unevenness in the provision of childcare training on a county-by-
county basis is evident. Nationally, one wonders whether one registered pre-
school facility for every 75 children is a sufficient ratio. The variations among
providers types are more pronounced. What emerges is a picture of a range and
variety of providers, with VECs being the dominant provider. A diversity of
providers ensures variety, but prompts questions about ensuring quality.
Similarly, the flexibility of local providers responding to local needs is attractive
but further underlines the need for national standards, regulation and policies.

The Current Study

Diagram 7: Providers interviewed classified by provider type

Providers Interviewed by Type

Private 14%

Comm /Vol 29%

VEC 57%
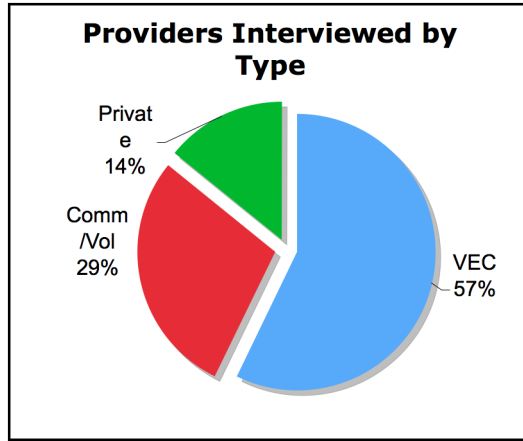
This study aims to explore childcare tutors' work environment; the following section profiles the seven provider locations and the nine centre directors/coordinators who participated.

In the study, 7 childcare providers were interviewed Four are part of the VEC sector - three adult education services and one PLC college[65]; the adult education services each provide training programmes in a number of different locations but responsibility for quality standards rests with the service. Two providers are in the Community and Voluntary sector and the remaining provider is in the Private, 'for-profit' sector.

Between them, these seven providers offer thirty-one Level 5 Childcare programmes to approximately 570 learners. The distribution of the courses among the provider types as well as the distribution of learners among learner types may provide some illumination of the national data.

Diagram 8: Childcare Programmes by Provider Type

Childcare Programmes by Provider Type

Voluntary/ community 21%

Private 35%

VEC 44%

Diagram 9: Learners by Provider Type

Learners on Childcare Programmes by Provider Type

Voluntary/ community 19%

Private 32%

VEC 49%

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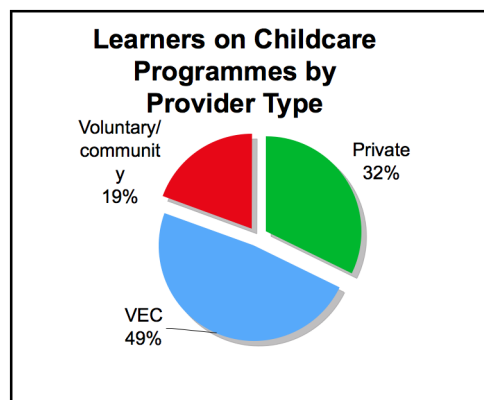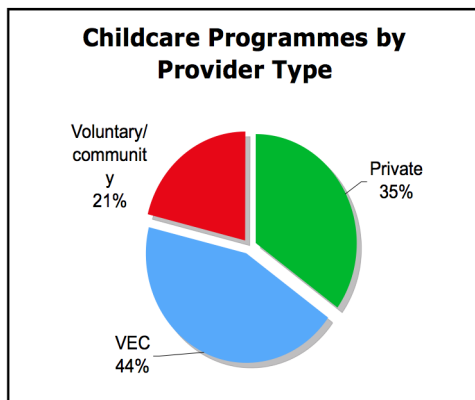
[65] As explained in Chapter 3, this study did not aim to achieve a representative sample of childcare providers, the intention was to gather data from a range of different contexts in which tutors work.

From the data in Diagrams 7, 8 and 9, it is clear that while the private sector represents 14% of respondents, it accounted for 32% (10) of the childcare programmes to 35% (200) of the learners. The VEC sector representing 57% of respondents delivered 49% (15) of the training programmes to 44% (250) of the learners. The Community and Voluntary sector representing 29% of respondents provided 19% (6) of the thirty-one courses to 21% (120) of the learners. In contrast to the national data, this study includes the numbers of learners and shows that the VEC providers to proportionally cater for higher numbers than the other two sectors represented. However, the differences are not significant.
The picture emerging from the data is similar to the national data and shows a sector dominated by the VECs. On-going evaluation of the sector will be required to monitor the effects of market dominance. In particular, safeguarding diversity of programmes, delivery strategies (especially the flexible delivery and learning strategies that distinguish the community and voluntary sector) and learner supports may prove challenging when faced with diminishing funding.
The following section introduces management personnel and their centres. It describes their origins, the context of their work and the dilemmas they frequently confront.

The Interviewees and their Centres

The following table is included for ease of reading.

Table 4: Study participants; centres, providers and tutors

Centre	Type	Centre Director / Childcare Coordinator	Tutor
Alpha	VEC	Alice / Catherine	Aoife
Beta	Comm/Vol	Barbara	Beibhinn
Gamma	Comm/Vol	Denise	Ciara
Delta	VEC	Fred/ Esther	Dervla
			Eilis
Epsilon	Private	Gillian	Grainne
Eta	VEC	Jennifer	Fidelma
Zeta	VEC	Isobel	Ide

The variety of contexts in which childcare tutors work, is reflected by the data gathered for this study as the following profiles demonstrate.

The Alpha Centre

Alice is the Adult Education Officer of a VEC adult education service situated in a city suburb. The service provides a range of adult education courses in a number of locations. It aims to meet adult learning needs through the provision of flexible and inclusive education in a supportive environment. The service is housed in a former vocational school building. In addition to hobby courses and adult literacy programmes, the centre offers FETAC certified programmes including Business Studies, Childcare, Eldercare and Organic Gardening. The service maintains an informative, easily accessible website. During 2011 – 2012 the service offered six modules that can lead to a FETAC Level 5 Award in Childcare or Community Care. The majority of modules are offered over twelve weeks in three and a half hour sessions. Up to sixteen weeks is allocated to some modules. Classes take place in the morning and in the evening. The centre opens for classes in September each year and stays open until July. In 2011 – 2012 the centre ran six childcare programmes for approximately 100 learners.

In addition, the centre provides tutor-led learning support sessions to students. There is one support session per week during which students can prepare assignments, develop their IT skills and do research.

There are approximately 100 students attending Childcare programmes in 2011 – 2012. There are usually between ten to sixteen students in each class group. The centre employs six childcare tutors.

Catherine's official title is 'Community Education Facilitator'. She works in the same adult education centre as Anne. Anne is Catherine's line manager.

According to Anne, Catherine is the Childcare Coordinator in the Alpha Centre. She has responsibility for liaising with tutors as well as establishing and coordinating programmes.

Both Anne and Catherine from the Alpha centre were interviewed. They chose for this to take place separately.

The Beta Centre

Barbara is the Training Manager in the BETA Community Education Centre. The centre began operation in 1999 and registered with FETAC in 2007. FETAC carried out a monitoring visit of Beta in 2010.

The centre is a private not-for-profit enterprise offering adult education, childcare education and a childcare facility. The centre aims to support individuals and communities in action to change poverty and injustice. It is a centre value that learners will be supported so that all achieve their educational goals. Courses are provided for men and women in the locality.

As well as childcare, the centre offers both FETAC and HETAC certified courses in Community Development, Community Leadership, Counselling and Responding to Substance Abuse. The centre usually offers three childcare programmes per annum, depending on funding. The courses cater for approximately sixty learners. Barbara from the Beta Centre agreed to be interviewed.

The Gamma Centre

The Gamma Education and Training centre is a private not-for-profit organisation based centre. It registered with FETAC in 2007. The centre is one of the services offered by a Catholic religious community. The other services include primary, secondary and special needs education; services to homeless people and the elderly. The centre is separate from but located within a third level college. It has access to some of the services of the college such as the library, however learners and tutors may only use the 'read-in' facility and may not borrow books for home study. In 2011 – 2012 it provided three childcare programmes for sixty learners. Some childcare programme graduates progress to third level programmes in college. Denise is the centre manager and also tutors on the Childcare programme. She worked for the parent organisation prior to establishing the Childcare training programme. Denise from the Gamma Centre agreed to be interviewed.

The Delta Centre

Fred is the Adult Education Officer of a VEC adult education service situated in a city suburb that became a registered FETAC centre in 2007. The VEC 'aims to be the leading provider of integrated education services that enable children, young

people and adults to fulfill their potential in a positive learning environment' (from the VEC website)[66]. The service is housed in a former VEC vocational school. According to the 2011 – 2012 course brochure, the service offers a wide range of courses in two locations. The courses include hobby style courses such as Calligraphy, DIY, Gardening, Jewellery Making and Yoga as well as FETAC certified courses in Reception Skills, Business Studies and Childcare. In 2011 - 2012, the service provided three childcare programmes for which approximately seventy learners enrolled.

The service does not have a website.

Esther's title has changed from the Education Development Officer to Workplace Education Coordinator and FETAC Coordinator. She works in a VEC adult education service. Fred is her line manager.

Both Esther and Fred from the Delta Centre agreed to be interviewed and chose to be interviewed together.

The Epsilon Centre

This centre is a private for-profit centre located in a Midlands town. When colleagues pointed out a demand for childcare training and a lack of providers, Gillian established the centre in 1995. The centre is registered with FETAC since 2005 and delivers day, evening and distance learning courses. It is located in a business park on the outskirts of the town in purpose built offices. It has two administration offices and two large well-equipped training rooms. The centre delivers about ten childcare courses some on behalf of FÁS, to 200 learners each year. Part-time courses follow a modular format, while the full time courses deliver the full award in an integrated manner. Gillian points out that, as a private provider, she does not have access to the Further Education Support Service[67] (FESS) and apart from FETAC briefings regarding developments she is unsupported. According to Gillian the quality assurance requirement regarding

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[66] This is an example of the dilemma regarding confidentiality; ascribing the quote to the web address, immediately identifies the respondent's parent body. The researcher is acutely aware that any reader can search the web for the quote and find its source. See Chapter 3 p.80.
[67] The support service FESS, is available to DES registered providers. However the FESS website with extensive resources is available to all providers. It is operated by City of Dublin, Cavan, North Tipperary and Wicklow VECs.

protection for learners (PFL)[68] spurred a number of private providers to form a network whereby they provide PFL for each other as appropriate and also offer support to each other as necessary. Gillian is concerned that the current economic recession is impacting adversely on her business. The centre is dedicated to providing childcare programmes but also offers the FETAC Level 6 Train the Trainer certificate[69] to its tutors. Gillian tutors and assesses in addition to managing the centre. Gillian from the Epsilon Centre agreed to be interviewed.

The Zeta Centre

The Zeta Centre is the only Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) college that participated in this study. This VEC centre is located on the campus of a VEC Community College and shares facilities including tutors with the secondary school. This can give rise to issues regarding role definition that are elaborated on later in this chapter (see Titles p 123). The centre provides a variety of courses designed to meet the needs of adult learners in the community. They usually run one childcare course each year for about twenty learners. Some immediate past-pupils also attend the PLC, however, the school and centre encourage the young people to experience a wider world and move beyond their immediate environs. Isobel, the centre coordinator liaises closely with the school principal regarding staffing and administration issues. She is a secondary teacher with responsibility for the PLC College. Isobel from the Zeta Centre agreed to be interviewed.

The Eta Centre

Jennifer is the Childcare Coordinator in the Eta Centre. The centre is one of a number of VEC centres located in a town about fifty kilometres from Dublin. The centre provides a wide variety of programmes aimed at early school leavers who avail of the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI). A number of other services operate on the same campus including an Adult Learning Service, Traveller Education Service and VTOS service. The BTEI centre offers programmes in five

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[68] The PFL obligation requires a for-profit provider offering programmes of more than three months duration to enter into a reciprocal agreement with another provider to take responsibility for fulfilling the provider's obligations to learners in the event of that provider being unable to bring a programme to its natural conclusion.

[69] This Level 6 module is designed to equip learners with the knowledge and skills necessary to design, deliver, assess and evaluate training programmes. For some providers, notably FÁS, the Train the Trainer certificate is a minimum requirement for tutors.

locations on a regular basis and in other locations as the need arises. Jennifer's responsibilities include establishing and coordinating programmes; she liaises with the Adult Education Officer (AEO) regarding the recruitment of childcare tutors. The service offers approximately five childcare courses each year in a variety of locations catering for approximately eighty learners.

She is a member of the local County Childcare Committee and liaises with childcare services in the area. The VEC employs an 'Internal Verifier' for its FETAC certified courses, the verifier who in addition to internally verifying learners' work, offers support to tutors around their teaching. Jennifer from the Eta Centre agreed to be interviewed.

Similar but different

The VEC adult education centres share many commonalities; they operate a number of centres, their tutors often work in more than one venue, their childcare programmes are provided in response to local demand; consequently tutors have no certainty of securing a contract from one year to the next. The other not-for-profit providers each offer three childcare programmes per annum depending on funding, while the private provider runs ten programmes and caters for the largest number of learners.

The centre profiles presage some of the issues the study set out to explore. It is evident that for many providers, childcare is one of many programmes offered. Inevitably, this means that the development of childcare programmes does not receive the level of attention available from dedicated childcare training providers. Demand for childcare training can fluctuate annually, contributing to job insecurity.

The following sections examine further the context and issues centre directors and FETAC Coordinators face in providing childcare training. It gives an insight into the childcare services provided by centres and how they were developed, before presenting findings on the quality assurance systems used, tutor selection and support. These findings highlight the variety and complexity of childcare provision. The impact of childcare regulations, policy and other features are then explored in the findings, which highlight challenges that arise from policy decision implications or the absence of policy. In other cases challenges arise

from the daily management of learners, tutors and childcare training programmes. The following section begins by exploring the stimuli that prompted the providers to provide childcare programmes. The first section explores the organic growth of childcare education provision.

Why Childcare?

Providers' testify that they made the decision to offer childcare training based on a perceived need in their localities. This approach highlights the lack of a national childcare training policy or coordinated strategy for its provision. Between 2005 and 2007, enquiries from organisations such as local crèches, community employment sponsors and County Childcare Committees regarding accessible, flexible training programmes for childcare workers prompted them to offer a course. Simultaneously, VEC guidance services reported large numbers of enquiries regarding certified childcare training from individuals, Social Welfare officers and Local Employment Services (LES). The VEC providers in this study review the demand for training from these sources annually. According to Isobel, the FETAC coordinator in the Zeta centre, a women's community group in the locality wanted to provide training to crèche staff,

> *... they decided that in order to offer training to a recognised standard*
> *and to increase numbers availing of training they needed to link up with a*
> *(established) provider. We were very aware of what was happening in the*
> *community and so we were able to respond to the requests and the needs.*
> Isobel

The other providers tell a comparable story, albeit from different viewpoints; Beta centre is located in a community that has extensive experience of disadvantage. The demand in the area for childcare training was such that following FETAC registration the centre increased the number of courses offered from two to twelve.

Thus, the flexibility that enables locally-based providers respond to local needs can be seen as a strength of current arrangements. However, the absence of a national approach to the provision of childcare training is even more surprising given that 75% of the Level 5 FETAC Childcare awards go to VEC learners, The data does not show the breakdown of awards between adult education and PLC colleges within VECs. There may be a more coordinated approach to provision among the larger PLC colleges. It does appear, that the lack of planning or local

co-ordination contributes to uncertainty, fragmentation and a certain lack of coherence.

Denise, the manager of the Gamma centre relates that her employer was involved in the early stages of childcare provision in Ireland and her account illustrates some important points in the development of childcare tutoring. Through their work with families, Gamma staff members identified,

> *... a need for education in meeting children's needs, not just parenting but back to the fundamentals of helping people understand how to meet children's needs. Our service was designed for people without qualifications interested in providing support to children.* Denise

The Gamma Centre believes that in order to support children, it is imperative to work in a family context. The need for training arose from the realisation that Family Support Workers[70] did not have professional qualifications and had no access to professional development services.

> *Some found themselves in very difficult situations where families were seriously at risk. It was pushing them beyond their competencies to ask them to work in such stressful and even dangerous situations. I did some training with them around boundaries, trauma and risk but I was aware that this was not enough, that there was a need for further education.* Denise

Having identified the need, the organisation took the view that the skills, experience and expertise of their professional staff should be shared. In 1995 the organisation registered with the NCVA. However, the Level 5 Childcare Award did not have any modules relating to 'the family', so, with NCVA support, the Gamma staff developed two modules relating to family studies and community services to families. These awards are now part of the Level 5 Community and Health Services Award. Some Childcare modules can be included in this award. Because their focus is on the development of the child within a family context, the Gamma Centre offers the Community and Health Services Award instead of a Childcare award. However, this means that Gamma learners do not have access to some Childcare modules such as 'Working in Childcare'. Denise stresses that child development and welfare is the focus of their programme.

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[70] The Family Support Worker Service offers support to families during difficult times with a view to maintaining children at home where possible. The Service offers home based support to families for an agreed number of hours per week (Pinkerton et al, 2004).
http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find_a_Service/Children_and_Family_Services/Roles_.html
(Accessed 12.07.12)

As well as training people who work in their own centres, the Gamma centre is open to people in the locality. Some local CE childcare projects were able to fund their learners to participate in the Gamma programmes. The centre is now registered as a FÁS Local Training Initiative[71] (LTI) and learners access the Gamma training programme through this gateway. It is an aim of Gamma training not just to improve the workplace skills of their learners but also to develop their personal parenting skills.

The evolution of the Gamma Centre highlights the strengths of flexible, locally driven, organic growth. It also illustrates the value of a modular award where a 'mix-and-match' combination can be finely tuned to local needs. The Gamma Centre experience also draws attention to the range of 'players' associated with providing locally based educational initiatives.

Gillian, the owner and manager of the Epsilon Centre, relates that she was always interested in childcare. Her background was in gymnastics and she was a Community Games team leader. While unemployed, Gillian attended an NCFE[72] childcare programme; the deputy CEO of NCFE suggested that Gillian could run courses in the midlands with the numbers of people from the area attending their courses. Gillian participated in a training programme on managing a training centre and opened the Epsilon centre as a childcare education and training college in 1995. She states,

> *I was [running] the only course [in the area]. When we started I had people queuing up in the street to get a place on our courses. As soon as I'd finish one course I'd have to start another, we only had the one location.* Gillian

Gillian now offers centre based and distance learning programmes. Learners on the centre-based programmes are mainly CE childcare workers; learners fund themselves for distance learning programmes. Since the downturn in the economy, the numbers of fee-paying learners has decreased dramatically. Gillian states that at the height of the economic boom she operated up to twelve courses

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[71] The Local Training Initiative programme is a project-based training and work experience programme in the local community run by local community groups. The programme allows local communities to undertake projects of benefit to their communities, while training participants in work skills with the goal of gaining employment or progressing to further training. http://www.FÁS.ie/en/Training/Local+Training+Initiative/default.htm Accessed 12.07.2012
[72] The NCFE is an awarding organisation recognised by qualification regulators in Northern Ireland, Wales and England.

simultaneously. At the time of interviewing, she had two fee-paying distance-learning programmes underway.

The experience of the Epsilon Centre highlights the impact of the vagaries of the economy on a 'for-profit' provider. Some differences are also evident between the Beta, Epsilon and Gamma Centres and the other four providers. The latter all offered childcare tutoring in response to felt local demand. Beta, Gamma and Epsilon came to offer childcare tutor training out of their wider commitment to provide a suite of integrated childcare services to local communities. This is a subtle but important difference among the seven providers in this study as the three centres are more firmly rooted in the world of childcare.

In all seven centres the growth of childcare education provision occurred organically in the absence of a national policy framework and continue to be responsive to economic and social needs in their local community. New policies have introduced national regulatory frameworks to the sector, to which local centres must respond . Some effects of three frameworks on local contexts are now considered - quality assurance, tutor qualifications and childcare regulations.

The FETAC Effect

Arguably the most important policy decision for childcare training providers and, indeed, all adult and further education providers, is the requirement to develop a Quality Assurance system and register with FETAC.

Although some providers in this study report that they found the development of a quality assurance system onerous, they agree that once implemented it brought structure to their provision of education programmes.

> *Putting the FETAC QA system in place has given us a more structured approach, we were doing most of it anyway but we are more structured now.* Fred, Delta Centre

> *It has helped us to reflect … it's the things people did anyway but now we think about it a bit more. We've always done that, now it's down on paper, probably we did it anyway.* Alice, Alpha Centre

While providers' initial comments suggest that their practices did not change following the introduction of QA, their further reflections in interviews as

outlined below demonstrate how policy change does impact on attitudes and ultimately, practice.

QA and Recruitment

FETAC requires all registered providers to develop and implement policy relating to the recruitment and development of staff. FETAC guidelines state that *'the provider should ensure that staff have sufficient experience and expertise to fulfill their designated roles'* (FETAC, 2008). Providers have interpreted this guideline and looked for people with the 'best fit' for the role. However, apart from the two dedicated childcare training providers (Epsilon and Gamma), the others indicate that clearer guidelines would be helpful.

The VEC responsible for the Alpha, Delta and Zeta centres advertises adult education positions inviting applications. Interviews are held and successful candidates are placed on a panel. Centres notify the VEC of their tutor requirements. It is VEC policy that centres source tutors from this panel. Although centres are not permitted to accept unsolicited curriculum vitae (CV), a manager or coordinator may ask a suitable person to submit a CV to the VEC.

In the Alpha centre, Alice shortlists applicants on the basis of their qualifications, experience of childcare practice, experience of delivering childcare training and experience of delivering FETAC certified programmes.

The Delta and Eta centres have similar styles. They shortlist candidates on the basis of agreed criteria; the Delta centre allocates 25% for qualifications, 25% for teaching experience and 50% for general suitability. They explain,

> *We've had one tutor with us for a long time. She came through the literacy service. She has a childcare background and has Level 5 childcare herself ... Qualification requirements are quite clear at second level. At adult education there's nothing. Within this vacuum, we've taken [people with] experience of childcare and tutoring in adult education.* Esther

The evidence suggests that experience of being a literacy tutor is a common pathway to becoming an adult education tutor within the VECs. However, describing a tutor as '*coming through the literacy service'* may mask a more complex reality. Catherine talks about the Alpha centre's first childcare tutor,

> *She came in through the literacy service and went on to tutor childcare through our Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS).* Catherine

However, she explains that the tutor previously worked with the IPPA as a childcare trainer and with '*various VECs*'. In the same centre, Alice alludes to some of the staffing challenges they face when tutors leave,

> *... we had a couple [of applicants] with related areas of expertise such as sociology, social sciences, social work or psychology background so they had a lot of expertise about child development. They might have had literacy training also. We also have people with a Montessori qualification. It's actually quite difficult to source tutors.* Alice

Even though the Zeta centre is a VEC PLC college, staffing issues differ. The PLC facility is an integral part of the Community College located in one of the two buildings on the same campus. Isobel explains,

> *When we started off we used our own tutors, home economic teachers, as part of their study involves childcare. One teacher in particular was new to the school and she was very interested in the whole area. So she took it and really developed the whole programme and set the standards that she regarded were required at Level 5.* Isobel

Isobel also tutored on the Level 4 programme

> *... my background is psychology and counselling so I could tutor some of the modules such as Child Development.* Isobel

She relates that when the previous incumbent retired '*we were left with a gap*'. Zeta centre aims to fill tutor vacancies according to secondary school[73] criteria. They checked, unsuccessfully, with the VEC Head Office regarding the availability of tutors with the required profile. As far as Isobel is aware, the centre has never succeeded in recruiting a tutor this way. This indicates that while a policy exists, in practice, a different set of procedures operate. Isobel adds that recruitment is the Principal's responsibility and s/he has a lot of flexibility. She illustrates this by talking about the vacancy that was filled by Íde who has a social work background,

> *... we looked at the lists first. It is really very ad hoc. [The vacancy was filled by] an acquaintance of someone on the staff.* Isobel

She adds that the centre is cautious when recruiting adult education tutors,

> *We would usually start off by giving a tutor one module and if they do well it builds from there. Personal contact and what you hear does have an influence.* Isobel

The private and community/voluntary providers show similarities to each other in their approach to recruiting tutors. They tend to focus primarily on people with

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[73] For a brief explanation of the structure of the Irish Education System see Appendix1

childcare experience. This contrasts with the VEC providers who tend, as shown above, to be more pragmatic in filling 'gaps'. Barbara is a case in point. Her initial training was with the IPPA. Subsequently, she established the childcare programme in the Beta centre. She identified people working in childcare and invited them to participate in the centre's City and Guilds certified adult education training programme. Since then, the centre identifies,

> *... the people who are strong in the classes ... they stand out because their hearts are in it. We look at their strengths and their ability to share with other people in the group. It is really important that they are able to care for adult learners, as well as teach them.* Barbara

Barbara then invites them to participate in the process explained by Beibhinn in the next chapter (p. 134)

In the Epsilon centre, Gillian takes a mixed approach to recruitment; while she advertises annually on the FÁS website;[74] like Barbara, she identifies tutors such as Gráinne, who participated in one of the centre's own childcare programmes. She establishes a panel of suitable people from which to draw. Her criteria for placement on the panel is,

> *'the highest qualifications possible in the subject area, plus a pedagogical qualification, a minimum of the L6 Train the Trainer but the longer version, not the three-day course. We also prefer two years post qualification experience either directly in childcare or in tutoring'.*
> Grainne.

In addition, Gillian provides further training as,

> *'(new tutors) don't have a clue about what the awarding bodies are looking for regarding the marking system or the assessment requirements'.* Gillian.

Denise, in the Gamma Centre with its focus on wider childcare issues had access to a pool of professionals. She hoped to use some of these as tutors. She clarifies her criteria for childcare tutors,

> *We were looking for people with professional qualifications but more importantly working with children on the ground so that it wouldn't be a theoretical programme. The tutors would have intimate knowledge of the issues families face and how they can be resolved.* Denise.

The plan encountered difficulties as those identified were already in full-time employment with the service and could not be released from their roles. However,

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[74] The FÁS website has a Jobseekers page. Accessed on 11 May 2012 it displayed sixty-nine positions as childcare assistants, thirty-three as childcare workers and one as a 'FETAC tutor', the discipline was not specified.

a part-time staff member started tutoring and eventually retired from her practice role to concentrate on tutoring. From time to time, Denise, out of necessity, employs tutors without a childcare background but she emphasises that childcare experience is her preference.

From this evidence, recruitment of childcare tutors appears quite random and unsystematic. Previous work in an allied or cognate field can be helpful but not required. The operative mode of recruitment for VEC providers is often informal networking and word-of mouth by colleagues. Community/private providers try the '*grow your own*' approach. Such practices underline and further contribute to the low status attached to childcare tutoring and highlight its blurred identity; issues that will be discussed further in the final chapters.

QA and tutor relationships

Some confirm that their QA system is helpful in configuring their relationship with their tutors, insofar as it lends further authority when outlining tutor role responsibilities and associated tasks.

> *... it's where people get guidelines about what they should produce and what their job entails.* Alice

Isobel (Zeta Centre) fears the FETAC system emphasises outcomes and consequently tutors' main focus is on the production of assignments for assessment. However, she recognises that as informality is a feature of adult education classrooms, the QA system helps tutors honour the approach while providing a well-planned programme.

> *I think a lot of the processes do work and they are very valuable. It would concern me if you take it to the extreme.* Isobel

Alice agrees that the introduction of a QA system has improved their provision in the Alpha Centre;

> *The tutor handbook and student handbook developed as a result of QA.* Alice

For Fred and Esther their QA system guides their engagement of tutors. Esther relates that there is a 'county wide' review of the QA system underway. She is a member of the steering panel. One of the issues they are considering is the meaning and implications of the policy in relation to tutors, particularly the meaning of '*appropriately and relevantly qualified and experienced*'.

Job Description and Contracts

A job description is a statement of the duties and responsibilities attached to a specific job. Formal procedures are in place in the Gamma and Epsilon centres. Gillian issues a job description to new tutors,

> *We provide a job description and a tutor contract. The job description sets out the tutor's responsibilities such as arriving at least 15 minutes before the start of class and give adequate notice of absence or arrange for substitution. They have to cover all the SLOs[75]. They must give us a monthly report; they must correct assignments within two weeks following submission. We have our own feedback sheets, so feedback as well as verbal must be also in writing. The tutors' responsibilities to the learners are outlined for example equal opportunities etc. All our policies and procedures are there and we ask the tutors to be aware of them.* Gillian, Epsilon Centre

The Gamma centre approach is similar; Denise has developed an 'Induction Pack' that she updates as necessary. She includes a history of the organisation, expectations of tutors, information on the students, a guide to the assessment process and support material on establishing a climate for learning. She then meets the tutors to discuss the students' learning needs, the programme, and the tutor's approach to working with adult learners.

While the VEC providers say that they don't give a written job description to tutors, each provider gives guidelines on the tutor's role in a variety of formats. It is also clear that the documentation supplied to new VEC tutors contains the elements of a job description, although a document formally entitled 'Job Description' does not exist. In addition to VEC documentation, each VEC centre has a well-developed approach to tutor induction. Zeta, the PLC, has a staff handbook and an induction process for new staff members. A designated staff member is responsible for induction. Isobel explains that new staff members are 'paired' with an experienced teacher and should refer any queries to her/his 'pair'. Resources developed by previous staff members (when available) are provided. In addition the centre outlines tutors' FETAC responsibilities at quality assurance meetings.

The VEC adult education centres give specific purpose contracts to all tutors. Each of the centres has developed its own induction pack that includes information on roles, supports to tutors and FETAC responsibilities. They may

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[75] SLOs: specific learning outcomes detailed in the module descriptors

include information on adult education methodologies, resources for tutors and students. In addition to the induction packs, each centre supports the induction of tutors in a variety of ways. Esther and Jennifer in the Delta and Eta centres, provide detailed briefings to new tutors on the organisation, the nature of partnership, and dealing with issues that arise. Esther supplies checklists of resources available and assesses the tutors' level of comfort at tasks such as writing assignment briefs. She documents issues that tutors raise and adds to the checklist as necessary. She states:

> *'All this is not in a single document'.* Esther.

The Beta centre demonstrates the most informal approach; established practice describes the job. Barbara recounts:

> *'(the tutors) have come through the system themselves, so they are quite familiar with the assignment work and all that. Then we are guided by the FETAC module descriptors to some extent. But we work very much as a team'.* Barbara.

In contrast, the Gamma and Epsilon centres use strong formal procedures to support their provision.

Support for tutors

Each centre manager/coordinator interviewed testified to offering support to their tutors in a variety of ways. The main needs observed include developing classroom practice, methodologies and strategies. They respond by offering on-going informal support, discussing issues that arise in the classroom, sourcing additional resources, providing updated information and by supporting learners. Both Alice and Denise advised that practical supports such as providing refreshments and easy access to photocopying are morale boosters.

Induction

Alice considers that comprehensive, focused induction is a crucial factor for developing effective tutors. Interviewees in the Alpha and Delta centres report that their tutors are invited to a generic VEC induction session that caters for all new teaching staff members,

> *One or two (tutors) have gone in the past and they didn't see how it related to them, especially if they were new. You have to look at domain areas and if there could be a cross county induction for all in that domain area… It would have to be well researched to see what people really need, not what we think they need, but to speak to Coordinators, Education*

Office), Adult Education Officers and school principals. Alice

According to Alice, coordinators in individual centres provide centre specific induction to new tutors. She suggests that a VEC training day consisting of a generic morning session followed by afternoon workshops focused on domain areas such as Childcare, Business and Information Technology would help meet in-service training needs.

Esther agrees that the generic nature of the VEC induction day does not meet the needs of new tutors.

Supporting tutors' classroom practice

Catherine, Alpha centre coordinator, initiated individual support sessions for tutors. Due to insufficient take-up, they abandoned the idea. The centre's plan to offer regular support to learners was more successful. Learners now avail of weekly support sessions facilitated by tutors. Catherine liaises with the tutors during these sessions to identify issues that arise. Alice contends that although geared for learners, tutors find the sessions supportive,

> *(Some) learners need support to complete and structure an assignment; while they are literate they have never done work for assessment. They don't have literacy difficulties but they have deficits. It's not as difficult to manage a group when the learners can manage the work they have to do.* Alice

Esther agrees, she describes the '*spiky profile*' of the learners as exemplified by those who,

> *... can manage the content and have experience but have difficulties with writing skills.* Esther

Some managers/coordinators such as Catherine regard their support role in a pro-active manner. Denise comments that while some tutors are quite independent, others need support,

> *I see tutors before class and get a general sense of how they are themselves, that's very important; if they are not in good form themselves it does come across to the students, I like to be aware of that.* Denise

As well as offering support, the managers/coordinators stress the importance of being open to tutors' support requests,

> *I am the support, tutors come directly to me when experiencing difficulties; we sit down and figure it out. At times it's resources, or a particular student not attending, how to give feedback to students, whatever. (Some want) clarification about what is ok to say to a student such as 'We're not going to submit your portfolio'.* Catherine

Meeting tutors informally, checking how their classes are going is mentioned by the majority of providers as an important support strategy and also as a means of identifying both tutor and learner needs.

> *Recently a tutor thought the standard of the current class was not as high as previous groups. I noticed the same and I had commented in my own notes that I was reducing the amount of work in my class plans. It's a check-in; I then relay our observations to the other tutor and work out how we will address that. The (first) tutor said that she tried giving handouts at the end of class, as the students appeared to turn off when she gave them at the beginning. She reported that the new strategy appeared to be working well.* Denise, Gamma Centre

Allied to classroom practice, Denise and Gillian comment that tutors may need help with assessment, both devising appropriate assignments and completing their assessment responsibilities on time.

> *In one instance a tutor left her correcting to do altogether and she just left. It fell to me then to pick up where she left off. So through experience we've learned we need to keep a check.* Gillian

So, while providers' beliefs that they offer support jars, as will be seen, with the testimony of the tutors, it is evident that their support is mainly reactive and not part of a coherent tutor development programme.

Support networks

Recognising that face-to-face communication is effective, the managers and coordinators in the Alpha and Delta centres addressed the support potential that developing domain networks would offer adult education tutors. The Alpha centre employs a number of childcare tutors, so Catherine organises meetings to discuss good practice, and critique and share resources. Catherine shows sample learner portfolios that demonstrate the amount and standard of work required, accompanied by appropriate grading. She has developed a 'resource pack' that outlines,

> *... all the resources available to them, including cameras, DVDS samples of (assignment) briefs and mark schemes, and a guide to laying out students' portfolios. It also indicates good practice around giving feedback.* Catherine

She believes that a successful programme depends on listening and reports that tutor and learner feedback have contributed to programme development.

Monitoring

In some ways, monitoring is the flip side of the support coin. All the providers report that they monitor the progress of the childcare programmes. While they hope that tutors experience monitoring as supportive, support is not its main aim. It is intended to assess the progress of the programmes, to identify strengths and challenges and take remedial action before problems arise. Their approaches to monitoring vary. Catherine, Alpha centre BTEI coordinator, keeps a close eye on all matters relating to the centre's learning programmes. She visits each learner group every two weeks, maintains e-mail contact with the tutors, while one of her colleagues contacts the tutors regularly by phone and reports back to Catherine. The tutors fax or email the attendance records to Catherine. She also holds review meetings with each tutor at the end of the first, sixth and twelfth weeks as well as a formal end of course evaluation meeting. One purpose of the meetings is to identify learner needs and consider resource requirements. She outlines tutors' responsibility to give written as well as verbal feedback to learners,

> *We tell them (the tutors) to write (feedback) down because of the ease of losing stuff when just listening. A particular student heard just what she wanted to hear, and commented 'Oh God was that feedback? I thought we were just having a chat'.* Catherine

Catherine asks tutors to submit their lesson plans, handouts, assignment briefs and marking schemes, before the programme starts. She relies on learner feedback for information on the tutor's ability to teach adults.

Whereas Alice, the Centre Manager, delegates the monitoring function to Catherine, she liaises closely with her regarding progress. She regards monitoring as multi-functional, receiving feedback from the tutors is as important as checking on progress. She values the expertise of experienced tutors,

> *... it's a two-way street in terms of feedback while there is monitoring, the tutors themselves inform us what's required and what needs to be done.* Alice

In particular, Alice focuses on the needs of learners and on the necessity for tutors to adapt to diverse learning needs. She comments that while the centre attempts to support all learners, they must meet the assessment requirements and produce work to the required standard.

She also comments on the importance of the role of the programme coordinator,

> *You have to have a very good coordinator, someone organised and informed about the (learning) area; someone who gets to know the*

> *students, their backgrounds;, who has an understanding of the diversity of*
> *the various communities as well as an interest in the domain area;*
> *understands FETAC and has a good understanding about how a*
> *programme should be organised, developed and delivered. In order to be*
> *able to stand over the programme, the coordinator's role is vital.* Alice

The programme coordinator offers support to learners, particularly as a motivator
to those whose formal education has not equipped them to write assignments. In
Alice's opinion this support is not a tutor's role, neither is it an indication of a
need for counselling but of

> *… someone who needs the encouragement of someone checking in or*
> *maybe help with study skills or just being able to discuss issues pertaining*
> *to the course. Alice*

Procedures in the Delta Centre resemble those in Alpha; the programme managers
report to Esther, the FETAC coordinator. Should issues arise, she manages them
with the advice and support of Fred, the Centre Manager. The Eta centre has a
different approach; they have developed the role of Internal Verifier to include
support to tutors, according to Jennifer,

> *I used to do it myself but I don't have time now. Jennifer*

Isobel the programme coordinator in the Zeta (PLC) Centre, while acknowledging
the QA requirements, has a more detached approach,

> *We get feedback from students at the end of the course. We do not monitor*
> *the tutors closely. Reporting is quite informal. We developed an open door*
> *policy in terms of the students coming to talk to us. Sometimes you could*
> *be inundated but we did develop a very open relationship with both the*
> *tutors and the students. You get a good sense of what is working well and*
> *what isn't. It's informal monitoring. Isobel*

She points out that as FETAC coordinator she has a monitoring role in so far as
she checks the learners' portfolios before submission for certification. She
observes that the quality of the learners' work is a good indicator of the tutor's
capacity as an educator. The secondary school structure and ethos of a PLC means
that monitoring teachers/tutors can be contentious and could lead to industrial
relations issues. They used have programme meetings to plan and review learners'
progress, but with changes in work practices following the Croke Park
agreement[76], the situation is difficult,

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[76] The Public Service or "Croke Park" Agreement is a commitment by public servants and their
managers to work together to change the way in which the Public Service does its business so that
both its cost and the number of people employed can fall significantly, while continuing to meet
the need for services and improve the experience of service users. < http://per.gov.ie/croke-park-
agreement/> (accessed 12.07.2012)

> *... it has become more difficult to have meetings as some of the part-time, pro rata teachers only work a set number of hours and therefore may not be available. It's hard if you are not being paid, to sit beside someone who is. Also, again because of Croke Park, other teachers may not be willing to come in at a time that would suit their part-time colleagues.* Isobel

However, Isobel and childcare tutors maintain informal contact with each other. She emphasises the flexibility within the PLC and states that she is aware of learners' issues and works with the tutors and school principal when necessary to provide the necessary resources to support the learners' successful participation in the programme.

Denise in the Gamma centre reports that she monitors the tutors' work *'quite closely'*. She explains that before a programme commences, each tutor must submit his or her class and assessment plans. She maintains an overview of class materials including theorists and texts used by the tutors. Following the completion and marking of the first assignment, Denise peruses a representative sample.

> *I look especially at the tutor's feedback to the students. I was surprised once at less than supportive comments the tutor was making so I addressed that.* Denise

Denise believes that the deactivation of the current Childcare Award and the introduction of the new CAS[77] childcare award will present opportunities to quality assure and standardise the Centre's provision.

> *We will have a course plan that each tutor will follow.* Denise

Denise maintains on-going contact with the learners both as Centre Manager but also as a tutor,

> *I meet with students individually twice during the course but I run into them all the time and while I wouldn't be asking them about tutors, you do hear about how they are getting on. There is an open opportunity to feedback.* Denise

In the Epsilon centre, Gillian's approach is somewhat similar to Denise's. She visits each tutor during the programme and they send her monthly reports that include their feedback to the learners as well as their assignment results. Mid-term and end of programme evaluations provide further information. She defends her hands-on approach by advising *'you have to keep checking'*, as even experienced

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[77] See Ch. 1 P. 25 for an explanation of the CAS

tutors may become lax about implementing centre policy. She also considers class
materials,

> *We review some of the modules and we do this continuously. We seem to*
> *have it right at this stage. We reflect on the feedback and that tells us if we*
> *need to change something.* Gillian

In the Beta centre, Barbara reports that when they began the childcare programme,
the tutors met weekly to plan and review progress and each other's work.
However, as the numbers of courses increased, they found that weekly meetings
were not possible. In Barbara's view, the centre's team teaching approach is in
itself, a monitoring strategy.

> *We have a kind of peer system in the tutoring team, the ones that are here*
> *a long time support others on the team, especially the newer people. That*
> *takes account of their teaching style, lesson plans, all that. At the end of*
> *each class, we have a form that is filled in by the tutors and education*
> *facilitators to reflect on what they have done, and then at the end of the*
> *term there is a bigger one, and at the end of the year a bigger one.*
> Barbara

Barbara did not mention how the feedback sheets are used.

The Beta and Zeta centres have similar relaxed monitoring styles. The Delta and
Gamma centres seek feedback regularly and use it to address issues that arise. The
Alpha, Eta and Epsilon centres employ strong monitoring procedures that involve
learners and tutors.

Overall, as may be evident from the two accounts, the providers were more
comfortable, fluent and coherent when discussing 'monitoring' than they were
talking about 'support'. The data, and the subsequent comments from the tutors,
poses a question about whether the same person can, realistically, perform the
roles of supporting and monitoring, without both being perceived as monitoring.

Professional Development for Tutors

> *There is no course or qualification that says the graduates are competent*
> *to deliver training programmes and assess learning.* Gillian, Epsilon
> Centre

The absence of an identifiable profile for childcare tutors leads to problems for
providers at the recruitment stage and also when considering a tutor's need for on-
going training. Providers' relate that their tutors may have a '*wealth of experience*
in childcare' (Barbara) or may be trained teachers (Isobel) but few tutors have a
combined familiarity with both the practice of childcare and the practice of
teaching adults. In these circumstances providers describe a complex web of

training needs. Providers addressed the macro dimension of training needs stating that knowledge of Childcare and Adult Learning *'go hand in hand'*. Unable to give financial assistance, the Beta centre encourages tutors to participate in relevant programmes. They also emphasised urgent, immediate needs such as *'writing assignment briefs'*, (Esther).

The specific professional development needs of tutors identified by providers can be categorised as follows:

Table 5 Provider's views of tutors' CPD needs

Subject Matter			Suggested Approaches to CPD
Childcare	**Adult Learning**	**Updates**	
The Value of Play	Teaching	Legislation	Practical Work
Engaging with Children	Assessment	Regulations	In-service
Different forms of play	Creative approaches to assessment	New theories	Self-development
Industry experience	Dealing with diversity – Mixed ability Language ability Mixed motivation	FETAC responsibilities	Support system including: Networks On the job training Mentoring

Attempting to prioritise training needs, Gillian says that the practice of childcare would be her first priority while acknowledging the importance of keeping abreast of developments in childcare theory.

Providers report that budget constraints militate against providing systematic structured CPD opportunities. In order to overcome lack of money, Esther suggests that a combination of self-development and subject networks could meet learners' needs especially in the area of updating knowledge and information. She contrasts the situation in adult education with that at second level,

> It would be quite different if the tutors were full-time and linked in like at 2nd level where on-going upskilling in every subject area for every new innovation happens. We don't have that facility financially or physically, and then you have the issue of attendance. Esther.

Isobel in the Zeta Centre agrees with the need for a support system for tutors.

> Even secondary teachers will look at a FETAC module and say 'I was never trained for this'. (Tutors) need ongoing training in both pedagogy

> *and subject matter, especially tutors who haven't worked in a childcare*
> *setting, it's important that tutors network with one another.* Isobel.

Esther emphasises the negative effects of labour market obligations on adult education. She challenges the assumption that adult learners are self-motivated and relates that learners fulfilling Department of Social Protection requirements to participate in adult education programmes demonstrate their unhappiness by poor attendance, low participation and a disappointing standard of work. She stresses that focused CPD is required to assist tutors develop teaching skills to overcome such hurdles.

QA and planning

Esther advises that the QA system facilitates the planning and scheduling of assessments. In the Delta centre they endeavour to ease the assessment load and maximise learning.

> *We're doing this because we've seen a lot of duplication and overlap.*
> *Some programmes allow a team teaching approach to modules,*
> *dovetailing of different modules. Some programmes lend themselves very*
> *nicely (to integration of assignments). We ask how can we deliver a*
> *programme in a manageable way?* Esther.

She relates that tutors and programme managers have used an analysis grid to discover commonalities among modules leading to an award. This requires the tutors to work together with the programme manager to plan their teaching and assessment strategies. By way of illustration, Esther recounts that in the Childcare Award[78] they have merged the Work Experience module with Working in Childcare. The result is that one Learning Journal meets the assessment requirements for both modules. However, this methodology is not possible when modules are delivered as stand alone units[79].

In the smaller centres, Denise and Gillian concur that their QA systems both support and structure their work. In the Gamma centre, Denise uses the QA document as a tool to review a programme and to establish the requirements for a new programme. Denise also related how involving outsiders has added value in

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[78] The list of modules that comprise the FETAC Level 5 Childcare Award can be found in Appendix 2

[79] This duplication can also arise when modules are delivered sequentially. Some argue that some degree of duplication is useful in that it gives the learner further opportunities to embed their learning.

so far as she has found the comments made by some External Authenticators thought provoking and supportive.

Some drawbacks

Tutors' expectations of providers and providers' expectations of tutors are often left unvoiced and do not always coincide. Catherine identifies a potential hazard that can arise when employing a tutor who has or is working in another centre. The QA requirements may not match and, the tutor's perception of what is required, may differ radically. She referred to learners' portfolios that did not reflect the standard required in the Alpha centre,

> *… (the tutors) were totally taken aback by our requirements. What they had delivered before was totally different. I was given a portfolio that had five A4 pages for Child Development. The essay was one A4 page[80].*
> Catherine

Esther avoided a similar issue when she engaged a tutor who had previous experience of working for different providers; the tutor anticipated the likelihood of differing requirements and enquired at the outset, '*I teach in another centre, so what do we do here*?'

Barbara finds complying with the QA system arduous.

> *… it is a lot of work. A lot of work we were already doing, but I suppose it is coming up with the evidence and evaluating it. Getting it together. Putting it together was a huge piece of work, and evaluating it is another huge piece of work. I am not one for documenting, I am more of a doer, so coming up with the evidence is a big challenge for me; I have system in place eventually.* Barbara.

It is clear that introducing a QA system has assisted most centres improve and strengthen their overall service. Implementation has highlighted the value of communication, highlighted potential risks and facilitated evaluation and planning.

Impact of Childcare Regulations

All providers interviewed for this study remarked on the growth of demand for childcare training since 2006. According to respondents, the imperative stemming from the introduction of regulations has compelled established childcare workers

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[80] Catherine is referring to the integrated child study that requires learners to 'present a shapshot of the physical, social, emotional, language and cognitive aspects of a child's development at a particular point in time'. (D20005 Child Development, FETAC 2001). The Child Study is a major piece of work.

to participate in training, unwillingly in some cases. Thus, learner motivation shifts from intrinsic to extrinsic. Alice (Alpha) remarks:

> *The vast majority are women, they see it as a career opportunity or area of interest and they see the potential for employment. Their CE schemes and their communities are promoting it. Some people may feel that they need the qualification if they want to hold on to their job*. Alice

Communicating with tutors

Because the majority of tutors are part-time, contact with the centre is often limited to class time. There is no staff room culture. E-mail is a communication tool frequently used by coordinators to keep in touch with tutors and to disseminate new or updated information relating to subject matter and quality assurance. It is particularly important for tutors who work in the Gamma, Delta, Eta and Epsilon centres who may not have immediate access to the coordinator.

> *If they're working elsewhere or tutoring at night they can be isolated from the rest of the tutors.* Esther, Delta Centre

Gillian supports her tutors by emailing updated information to them. She requests that tutors read it and incorporate it into their class plans. She also visits her tutors to see how the courses are progressing.

Denise believes that managers/coordinators have a responsibility to facilitate communication among tutors about the topics being covered in class. Referring to 'attachment theory'[81] she notes that some concepts arise in a number of modules and in order to assist the learners' understanding, tutors need to integrate the various points of view.

In the Beta and Zeta centres support to tutors is informal. Isobel emphasises the importance of good workplace relationships, Barbara seems to echo this view,

> *They can ring me anytime if there is a difficulty. I ask them not for an actual report, but for some insights into the participants that I can bring to management, to give a picture of their lives other than the academic stuff.* Barbara

Professional identity is enhanced through collegial contact and the development of a distinct culture among practitioners. Structural arrangements for childcare

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[81] Attachment theory is a psychological theory used in education and developmental psychology. Bowlby and Ainsworth are its principal exponents.

tutors, particular the dominance of part-time contracts, hinder the development of workplace collegiality.

Training

Identifying and providing training for tutors raises many intricate issues. Alice explains that tutors work part-time, there is no expectation of continuing availability for work. Correspondingly, the centre cannot guarantee work beyond the current programme. Long-term planning is impossible in such circumstances. She clarifies that the situation in PLC colleges and for VTOS programmes may differ from the rest of adult education sector. She comments,

> *The dynamics of change are so quick; we don't know what's going to happen.* Alice

Isobel, in the PLC seems to agree,

> *Structures for training don't exist; they are at best ad hoc.* Isobel

She comments that formal training only happens when provided by the VEC, and references a current programme for VEC adult education practitioners in conjunction with UCD. She relates that the programme justification was to enable tutors achieve credits to satisfy the Teaching Council registration requirements. She does not know if the course achieved this aim. It is significant that Isobel working in a PLC was the only interviewee from the VEC centres to refer to this programme[82].

Gamma and Epsilon centres deliver childcare training programmes funded by FÁS; it is a FÁS requirement that all tutors on these programmes must have a training or teaching qualification such as the FETAC Level 6 Train the Trainer certificate. Both these centres have facilitated their tutors to obtain this certificate. Denise's testimony resonates with Alice's views,

> *These are casual employees. … My own position is unstable. I don't know whether the course can continue from a funding point of view. Lack of stability is a feature of the sector. If I knew that I would have these tutors over the next four or five years I would like to support them to go to further training. As it is I have said that if any of them are thinking of having a career in teaching, I would support them, I can't pay for them but I'd like to support them.* Denise

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[82] The course '*Teaching Adults: Concepts and Practice'* was a CPD course developed and delivered by County Dublin VEC in conjunction with UCD Adult Education Centre for teachers/tutors of adult learners. The VEC advertised the course in all its adult and further education centres. Graduates received a VEC certificate of achievement. Isobel was the only person who seemed aware of this course.

Esther identifies similar barriers that VEC centres face when trying to organise in-service training programmes for tutors,

> *One of the difficulties is time; all tutors are part-time so it's not like a school, we can't close and have in-service for a day. Getting a time that suits everyone is very challenging. It's even difficult fixing a time for a staff meeting.* Esther

Alice concurs, remarking that the issue of effective in-service training has been discussed at local level '*for years*'. The Eta centre is proactive offering short in-service workshops to tutors. Participation is voluntary but perhaps attendance is helped by the payment of a training rate.

In the Beta centre, training for tutors appears to have a different focus. The centre introduced the Capicatar[83] programme that Barbara describes as a tool for self-care that focuses on energy building and relaxation techniques.

Providers did not address the issue of tutor remuneration. However, low pay ripples away just beneath the surface in many conversations. In general, tutors are paid an hourly rate for their class contact time. Attendance at meetings or training is unpaid unless the provider has managed to access special funding. Therefore, participation is voluntary and dependant on goodwill. Uptake, predictably, is uneven.

Titles

In Zeta centre, sharing resources including staff with the secondary school raises a particular dilemma regarding nomenclature, drawing further attention to some of the issues associated with blurred identities. Isobel explains that in a secondary school context the role of 'tutor' denotes a teacher with pastoral care responsibilities for a class group. While she prefers the title 'tutor', secondary teachers object to its use. On the other hand, adult learners associate 'teacher' with school and would rather 'tutors' facilitate their learning. Isobel's way of dealing with the subject could be described as an Irish solution to an Irish problem,

> *When we are in this building we are 'tutors', when we go over to the other building we become 'teachers'.* Isobel.

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[83]Capicatar is an international network that operates in communities affected by poverty, violence and trauma. Using a popular education approach they teach wellness practices designed to lead to healing, wholeness and peace in the individual the community and the world. See http://www.capacitar.org/country.asp?CID=20&lang=1 (accessed 12.07.11)

Alice recounts that custom and practice decree the use of 'tutor' to describe those who work as adult educators. She reports that it came into use to distance the process from the language of 'teaching'; she suspects that it may be regarded as connoting a higher status related to the role of a tutor in a university. In her view it would have been preferable to retain 'teacher', she asks,

> *'what is the difference between a teacher and a tutor, do they do a different job?* Alice

However, there are further layers to this issue. The teachers/tutors in the Zeta centre are not paid according to the adult education scale but are on the part-time secondary school teacher scale according to their qualifications. At the time of writing a part-time secondary teacher's basic hourly pay scale is €46.85 for qualified teachers and €40.85[84] for unqualified teachers. Alice illustrates the complexity of the salary issue when referring to the difficulties she encounters in recruiting childcare tutors.

> *People get paid the basic rate even though they're teaching Level 5. They may get an offer in a [secondary/PLC] school where they'd get a higher rate and may have better long-term prospects or they may get to tutor modules on the Skillvec[85] programme and that would be at a higher rate. There are different rates but they are on the basic rate unless they were on a self-financing[86] programme, then they would get a higher rate.* Alice

Language and nomenclature relating to various aspects of childcare tutors can be confusing and even alienating. The dominant understanding and connotations of 'teacher' and 'teaching' are seen by some as at variance with the ethos and fundamental values of those who work in the adult education and childcare arenas.

Further Challenges

In addition to responding to changed economic circumstances, the demands of QA as well as learner and tutor issues, the providers encounter a number of other problems.

Making Connections

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[84] DES, 2010 Schedule to Circular Letter – Pay 0004/2010. In addition to the basic rate secondary teachers qualify for additional allowances including one for undertaking assessment of learners' work prior to submission for certification.
[85] Skillvec is a consortium of all VECs. The SKILLVEC project was set up to devise and deliver two sector-specific, FETAC-certified awards to HSE support staff and their supervisors on a national basis.
[86] The VEC rate for a self-financing Level 5 programme is €41.78. (DES, 2011)

Contact between VEC providers and local childcare organisations appears to be focused mainly on recruitment of learners. The VEC adult education providers endeavour to maintain links with the County Childcare Committees as well as with local childcare service providers. Before the start of a childcare programme, Catherine in Alpha and Esther in Delta contact a variety of organisations including local childcare providers, the County Childcare Committee, CE supervisors and local resource centres.

> *I send information to as many places as possible because our programmes are free for (those eligible for) BTEI.* Catherine

An advantage of winning a FÁS contract to deliver a childcare programme is the accompanying ready-made learning group; the provider does not have to recruit learners. Gamma and Epsilon centres both deliver programmes on behalf of FÁS but also offer part-time courses to fee paying learners. Denise would like to be able to visit learners on work placement but time rarely permits;

> *I don't get to visit placements enough, I try to meet the students on placement but.... I'd like to have more contact with the Partnerships to talk about the quality of the work that we do and to learn more about their programmes. I hope to visit the County Childcare Committee, local service providers and to explore progression routes for students.* Denise

Work placements

Denise and Gillian were the only providers to mention relationships with childcare providers in terms of work placements, quality of work and progression for learners. This is significant in that their education services are dedicated to childcare. Gillian the owner/manager of the Epsilon centre also operates a crèche. Through her membership of the National Children's Nursery Association[87] (NCNA) and former membership of Barnardos[88], she receives pertinent information regularly. In contrast to the other providers, Gillian maintains contact with workplace supervisors. She briefs the workplace supervisors and explains the students' learning goals. Epsilon tutors visit the workplace while the learner is on placement. Gillian stresses the importance of developing a good rapport with the childcare providers of work experience placements;

> *... they were very wary at the beginning but now it's more of a partnership. someone phoned me saying, 'Your woman fell asleep*

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[87] In 2011, the NCNA and the IPPA amalgamated to form Early Childhood Ireland.
[88] Barnardos campaigns for the rights of children and works with families and communities to support children whose well-being is threatened.

> *yesterday, what should I do?' I asked her what would she do if it were a*
> *member of staff, so she said that she would send her home and tell her not*
> *to come back until she gets herself checked out'; so I said to her 'well,*
> *that's what you do'.* Gillian

According to most of the providers, sourcing placements is a learner

responsibility. Few have formal links with the supervisors. In some instances

workplace supervisors know the coordinator and initiate contact should an issue

arise.

> *We don't provide training or instruction for workplace supervisors. The*
> *resources aren't there. The supervisors' understanding of their role comes*
> *through the student. There have always been students on placement*
> *around here, so we have an expectation that they have developed an*
> *expertise in their role as supervisors.* Isobel

Isobel explains that lack of time and funding militates against establishing links

with workplace supervisors. The centre has no funds to pay tutors to visit

supervisors and learners on placement.

Denise stresses the importance of workplace learning, explaining that it is only in

the workplace that learners understand the relevance of the theories they have

studied.

> *(When a learner asks) 'why are we learning about cognitive*
> *development?', or 'what does cognitive development look like?' or 'how*
> *can I assist the dev of a child's cognitive ability?' They have to practice to*
> *get that.* Denise.

The Alpha and Epsilon Centres are the only centres in this study to have formal

links with the work placement supervisors. Even with such links, serious

problems can surface. The Alpha centre encourages its learners to find placements

in settings that offer a different experience to their current workplace. On her first

day of work experience, a learner from the Alpha centre was admitted to the

setting via an intercom voice that directed her to a specific room,

> *... When she went to the room the other person told her, 'this is your*
> *room' and left her with fourteen babies. The manager never even met her.*
> *We sent a report to the HSE. Legislation guided us in reporting to the*
> *HSE, it was morally, legally and ethically wrong. The HSE let us know*
> *that they followed up but that was the end of it.* Catherine.

Barbara is a member of the County Development Sub-Committee for Childcare;

she also has links with the VEC through the BTEI scheme. Located within and

closely associated with an identifiable community, the Beta centre trained many

local childcare workers. Although the centre does not provide training for

supervisors, some received their childcare training in the centre and currently tutor on the programme.

Barbara identifies a potentially serious issue regarding learners' work placements. While she is happy with the standard of supervision, she is unwilling to guarantee the objectivity of the supervisors' reports concerning the learners' work placements;

> *It is a tricky one; you don't have a lot of control over that. When it is people that we know you can have dialogue with them. We have a tutor who runs two centres, we know her and she has students coming in and out of here, so that is really the only way we can monitor that.* Barbara

The supervisor's report assesses the learners' ability to practice childcare. Questions regarding the validity of the reports are of grave concern. Supervisor training and on-going contact between centres and supervisors could minimise the danger.

Overall, this evidence points to a disturbing disconnection between classroom learning and workplace learning. Arrangements regarding the securing and monitoring of work experience placements seem at best *ad hoc.* As demonstrated in Chapter 2, learning by professionals and semi-professionals is greatly dependent on a meaningful and coherent relationship between what is learned in the classroom and what is learned 'on-site' in a workplace.

Time

The issue of time is a recurring theme in the providers' testimonies; the length of time allocated to programme delivery, time available for programme planning and review, time spent on work placements are common concerns. The providers report that an urgent issue they face concerns obtaining essential Garda Clearance[89] for learners. According to Catherine, problems have arisen since the centre changed from offering a major Level 5 Childcare award over two years to a modular approach whereby learners enrol for individual modules,

> *Previously, we ran programmes over two years and organised Garda Clearance. Students would have completed their work experience in that time. Students found their own placement. We gave them a covering letter*

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[89] Known colloquially as 'Garda Clearance' the Garda vetting unit provides a service to organisations whose personnel working in a full-time, part-time, voluntary or student placement capacity have substantial unsupervised access to children and/or vulnerable adults. The service is available to organisations that register with the unit and not to individuals.
(http://www.garda.ie/Controller.aspx?Page=66&Lang=1 accessed 13.07.09)

> *outlining insurance and garda clearance. This year we offer single modules so that's a new challenge, the issue of Garda clearance is huge. They say it takes two weeks, it doesn't, it takes much longer. We have to figure it out by January when next people start.* Catherine

Denise tells a similar story,

> *Observations are fine, but they need practical experience. All learners need to spend time in childcare settings. That is a real frustration; Garda clearance is the issue.* Denise

Catherine proffered a 'Sophie's choice[90]' solution to the difficulties of obtaining Garda clearance in a short time frame; i.e. to restrict enrolment to people working in a childcare setting whose employers secured clearance on their behalf. She estimates that such an approach would preclude ten per cent of their current learner group from their programme.

It appears that for most providers, programme duration is dictated by available funding rather than by learning needs. Consequences include pressure on tutors and learners to complete course work and assessment portfolios, insufficient study and preparation time, few opportunities to link theory to practice through reflection, inadequate opportunity to explore personal and practice issues. These effects hamper the professional development of individual learners.

Assessment of applicants allows providers identify learning deficits and access literacy support for learners. This means learning deficits should not impact adversely on the learning experience or programme delivery. Some have flexibility to extend the time allocated to the learner to complete the course, while others curtail programme content and lessen the challenge of assignments.

> *There is a huge variation in the general standard of education; some have literacy difficulties. So the starting point is varied. Within the class we have learners of many nationalities and among the indigenous Irish there's a wide variety of backgrounds.* Isobel.

Fred's concern regarding the dilution of adult education values seems well founded.

Expectations

Providers speak of dealing with 'expectations' as frequently problematic. Stakeholders, including CE supervisors and owner/managers of childcare settings

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[90] Sophie's Choice: From the novel and film of the same name, an impossibly difficult, forced choice. The choice is between two unbearable options, essentially a no-win situation.

want their staff members to acquire a Level 5 qualification, as that is the statutory

requirement. However, they often underestimate the demands of the programme,

>*I think people expect that because it's childcare, it's easy.* Catherine

She suggests that some childcare workers who would benefit from more basic

training feel compelled to enrol on a Level 5 programme. Such pressure can

increase a learner's sense of inadequacy and damage their confidence.

>*There were a few I had to say 'you are not ready, you need to start with a Level 3 or Level 4'. It was really difficult to say that because where are they going to go?* Esther

In practice, Esther refers such learners to the literacy service and hopes that they

can access a Level 3 childcare programme. This is an option, as literacy services

do not charge fees and therefore are accessible to all learners.

Learners' expectations can be equally difficult to manage; a number of providers

including, Gillian, Catherine and Esther, report that some learners are obliged to

register on a childcare programme in order to retain their place on a CE project[91].

Within the learning group their lack of interest can be de-motivating for fellow

learners.

>*... they are there because they were sent. This has a huge effect on a group. You try to make it interesting, but they don't want to be there.* Catherine

She suggests regarding childcare an easy option may be due to conditioning,

>*People are labelled; because they are women they can do childcare.* Catherine

Denise raises an issue specific to childcare that underlines the need for support

both for learners and for tutors. She says that because the programme focuses on

the many aspects of childhood and child development, learners may encounter

uncomfortable issues arising from their own experience of childhood or their

approach to parenting. Denise has referred learners for counselling but is

concerned that their employers may not recognize their need for on-going support.

The identification of the above issues underlines providers' sense of responsibility

for the welfare of their learners and their commitment to providing positive

learning experiences for them.

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[91] See Ch 4 Tutors, for further development of this topic

Future hurdles

Lack of time for programme planning and development impacts on providers in many different respects. Isobel, anticipating the introduction of the new Childcare CAS award refers to programme planning, says

> *Time will really be a challenge. Every tutor knows the huge amount of work you have to put in the first time you teach a new module.* Isobel

Gillian expresses frustration with FETAC's apparent lack of appreciation of the demands on providers. She believes that VEC and community providers are better resourced to meet the challenge of developing learning programmes to meet validation requirements. As Epsilon provides Level 5 and 6 major awards, Gillian must develop and submit sixteen programmes based on the new Component Specifications[92]. To ensure receipt of programme approval from FETAC in time for courses due to start in Autumn 2012 she needs to complete programme development by June 2012. She explains that her part-time staff members are fully occupied,

> *... I haven't started it yet because I'm trying to keep up with the current workload[93].* Gillian

VECs throughout the country have formed cluster groups to develop programmes. In addition, they have special validation arrangements with FETAC. VEC childcare programmes will be available to all VEC centres providing childcare training. Some providers are hopeful that the new awards will address some of the drawbacks,

> *A lot of the course content is a bit dated at the moment. It needs to take into account what is happening within the industry. Hopefully the VEC validation process is nearly finished because we need the new programme.* Isobel

Contrary to Gillian's belief, community providers do not have access to extra resources unless they are linked with a local VEC. They must develop and submit their own programmes. The three respondents in this category regard programme validation as a major hurdle,

> *Well I suppose it is validation. I think FETAC has given all the work back to the centres, a huge amount falls back on us and it is demanding They are changing the system, and it is hard to keep ahead of it.* Barbara.

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[92] For an explanation of CAS awards see Ch 1 p.25
[93] The interview with Gillian took place in March, 2012

The challenge of validation shines through the providers' testimonies. It is clear that all are aware of forthcoming changes. While some are intimidated by the task ahead all welcome the change and look forward to providing programmes designed to meet the learners' needs and the needs of the childcare sector.

New Reality

Values can be threatened or compromised by the need to respond to government policy decisions. VEC adult education providers state that their primary role is to respond to the adult education needs of the local communities. However, the needs of the economy impinge; the need to supply a trained workforce can sometimes mean placing undue time pressure on learners and tutors to complete a programme. Fallout from the current economic recession affects the sector negatively; in the Delta centre, Fred reflects on the impact a changed environment is having on the adult education sector generally:

> *… Productivity and value for money are the criteria. With the Teaching Council looking at the standardisation of qualifications, adult education is beginning to be regarded as a mainstream sector. It's a massive field and needs to be harvested.* Fred

He fears that this instrumentalist approach may lead to the disappearance of valuing education as a good in itself.

Coupled with more recent policy initiatives such as the Labour Market Activation Fund[94] (LMAF), some providers warn that the ethos of adult education, in particular the value of voluntary participation, is at best under threat and in many instances eroded.

Fred and Esther emphasise that this phenomenon is visible across all courses.

For public sector providers, funding mechanisms can impact on the recruitment of learners and also constrain adherence to adult education values and ethos.

The instrumentalist reality has already impacted on the Delta centre; in common with Epsilon and Gamma providers, they find that contracts for childcare programmes may have conditions attached. A County Childcare Committee contracted the Gamma centre to deliver a Level 5 Childcare Award to a group of learners. The committee stipulated that all tutors on the programme must have

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[94] The fund operated by the DES provides almost 12,000 training and education places for unemployed people

industry experience and at least a Level 6 childcare qualification. Esther reports that although they have confidence in the ability of their current tutor, '*she doesn't have the piece of paper*'. She found it very difficult to find someone with the combination of childcare, adult education experience and qualifications. Through networking with colleagues in other centres, she found a tutor. Currently, providers of FÁS funded programmes must guarantee that all tutors have at least a Level 6 'Train the Trainers'[95] qualification. Esther testifies that the Delta tutors '*are steeped in*' an adult education ethos and expresses concern that 'qualified' tutors will need induction and '*costly in-service*' in order to meet the tutoring demands of the sector. She states that at the moment the centre is receiving '*huge numbers*' of CVs from primary, secondary and third level teachers who have come to regard a job in adult education as '*real teaching*'. In her experience some struggle:

> *… it's a whole new experience for them and they often have trouble adapting; to understand that you can't expect students to be at a certain level. This is the real world and this is what adult education service is about … The danger now is we're trying to fit round pegs in square holes, with secondary or even primary teachers, pushing them into adult education because they have a teaching qualification, but we're talking about adults. There is an ethos.* Esther

A combination of the recession, austerity measures, efforts to tighten regulations and standardise qualifications continues to impact on childcare tutoring as well as on adult education generally. Learners with more instrumentalist motivations can challenge tutors to become more skilled. The adult education sector is, like never previously, being seen as an attractive career option for those whose initial training may be in a different sector of teaching. These shifts draw further attention to the need CPD including early mentoring for childcare tutors.

Teaching Council Requirements for Tutor Qualification

In addition to QA and programme validation, education providers are now grappling with the implications of the new Teaching Council regulations regarding qualifications for adult education tutors. In the adult education arena, some regard the move to a wholly graduate profession as a mixed blessing; in

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[95] The Level 6 E30179 Train the Trainer module introduces learners to the theory and practice of adult education. FÁS registered providers require their adult education tutors to have a training or teaching qualification. Level 6 is the minimum acceptable qualification.

particular, long standing, established and experienced tutors who '*don't have the piece of paper*' may be squeezed out.

Esther and Fred express concern that the requirement for a qualified adult education workforce may mean that publicly funded childcare providers[96] losing long serving tutors with experience in both childcare practice and adult education. They are particularly concerned about one childcare tutor, who from 2013 will be considered unqualified. This woman started as a volunteer in the literacy service, was good at the job and progressed successfully to tutoring Levels 3 and 4 and then '*inherited*' a childcare position at Level 5. Fred cautions,

> *People with educational qualifications have to be inducted into the adult educational ethos. Some have come through second level and it's a completely different mindset.* Fred

Summary

In most of the centres cooperating with this study, respondents stated that they began offering childcare training programmes in response to a need expressed by people in their local communities. This responsive approach was also tied into the lack of more systemic knowledge about the national conditions of childcare provision. This chapter outlined an initial mapping of the national profile, highlighting the questions it raises and the need for additional research. Respondents relate that they regularly experience difficulties when trying to recruit tutors for their childcare programmes. They point out that guidelines concerning tutor qualifications and experience do not exist, nor has an agreed profile of a childcare tutor emerged. Centre managers and coordinators respond by trying to find 'the best fit'; they look for experience in childcare and in teaching adults as well as in subject matter expertise. In itself, subject matter expertise causes further problems. For the FETAC Level 5 Childcare award, the knowledge range is broad and does not neatly coincide within any single discipline, so the manager makes a judgement as to whether the applicant tutor will be able to meet the demands of the programme and the needs of the learners. Respondents also report a shortage of tutors capable of delivering a childcare programme. VEC

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[96] The Teaching Council requirements do not apply to community, voluntary or private providers but only to publicly funded providers. However, the likelihood is that if only for a public perception all providers are likely to recruit Teaching Council compliant tutors.

Centre Managers and Coordinators network with each other; news of 'good' tutors spreads and the network is utilized when a tutor is required. Overall, recruitment is haphazard, unpredictable and uneven.

The approach to monitoring tutors' work varies widely. The private and community centres have smaller numbers of learners and so the manager and coordinator roles may be combined. In each of the three centres, the manager/coordinator also does some tutoring. In the smaller centres, the managers tend to have greater involvement in the learning programmes; they are familiar with the course work being undertaken by the learners and how the tutors are responding to the learners. In common with the managers and tutors in the VEC system they regard themselves as fulfilling a support role to the tutors. In the VEC system, monitoring can be challenging; there is no cultural heritage of peer monitoring or support in the second level system. This issue does not affect the adult education sector to the same extent as the further education sector, where many former and current second level teachers work.

The managers and coordinators testify that lack of time to monitor childcare tutors is a major challenge. Sourcing funding is challenging for some. Others talk about increasing amounts of paper work as well as time spent sourcing tutors and following up on learners' issues. All the respondents addressed the challenges inherent in the move from the current FETAC (NCVA) childcare programme to the new Common Award. The private/community providers have to develop their programmes according to the new specifications and submit them for validation before they can offer any further childcare training programmes; the VEC providers can avail of the centrally devised programmes but the managers and coordinators from all centres recognize that the new system will pose significant hurdle for tutors. They expect that many will struggle to meet the demands of the new programmes and are concerned at a perceived lack of time and support available.

The providers categorise the tutors' professional development needs in three interlinked areas: subject matter, pedagogy and FETAC. They are particularly concerned that tutors are aware of innovations in theory, practice, legislation and regulations in the subject matter area. Some managers and coordinators spoke of the changing profile of the adult learner; the self-motivated learner was accepted as the norm. However, providers report that pressure on childcare practitioners

and people in receipt of state benefits to participate in learning programmes and achieve certification has brought about changes in the learner profile. They state that tutors need to learn new strategies to respond to learners who demonstrate lack of motivation, poor participation and disinterest in the subject area. Reluctant learners on childcare programmes may also be reluctant childcare workers, creating a difficult situation in the childcare setting. This issue requires further investigation but is beyond the scope of this study.

Some major themes emerging from this data are, the threat to adult education values and ethos; the tyranny of conditions attached to funding mechanisms; difficulties resulting from a part-time workforce and responding fully to learners' needs. Providers' commitment to providing high quality training is underlined by their recognition of the value of their QA systems. These themes will be explored further in the Chapter 6.

Chapter 5 Findings – Tutors

The data presented in this chapter tell the story of the tutors' interviewed for this study[97]. Two goals of the overall research were to profile a small number of childcare tutors and to identify and describe their professional development need. Specifically, the interviews sought to:

- develop a profile that includes information on the tutors' education and work experience backgrounds;

- examine their current tutoring situation including their practice, rewards, challenges and concerns;

- explore the learning they have gained through their work;

- identify their professional development needs;

- explore some of the challenges facing education providers of childcare training programmes;

- explore the impact of welfare and education sectoral tensions and contradictory logics on the education of childcare practitioners.

For confidentiality purposes, as with providers and centres in Chapter 4, pseudonyms are also used for the tutors.

The picture emerging from the tutors' testimony is quite different to that painted by the centre managers and coordinators. Their perspective is that of classroom practitioners, learner-centred, concerned with pedagogical issues such as learning needs, experiential strategies and concerns regarding the relationship between the classroom and placements. Generally, management concerns are not recognised unless they coincide with the tutors' own.

Tutor Profiles

Throughout Ireland as elsewhere, many adult education providers function by employing part-time tutors to provide training to a wide variety of learners (Jütte, Nicoll and Olesen, 2011; DES, 2008). As seen in the previous chapter, depending on

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[97] The interview guide is in Appendix 4

the size and structure of the provider, the activities of the tutors are coordinated by a centre manager, FETAC coordinator and / or adult education organiser. In general, the tutors are not staff members, but are hired and remunerated at part-time, hourly rates[98]. As already noted, the childcare world is a predominantly female one so it is not surprising that participants in this study were all women. Short profiles of the eight tutors who were interviewed follow:

Tutor 1 Aoife	Aoife has a B.A. in English and experience as a Montessori teacher. She has a particular interest in children with special needs. In addition to her work as a Childcare tutor, Aoife works with young people with special needs and as a literacy tutor on a voluntary basis. She has been a Childcare tutor with her current employer for six years. She works for a VEC adult education service in three different locations. She tutors in excess of twenty hours per week. She previously worked as a childcare tutor with a not for profit, private provider for three years. Aoife is paid the part-time adult education tutor rate.
Tutor 2 Beibhinn	Beibhinn left school at fourteen years of age and in preparation for emigration to Australia participated in a childcare programme prior to the availability of certification. She worked as a childcare assistant in Australia for six years before returning to Ireland. She enrolled on a Level 4 FETAC certified programme in childcare with a community provider and progressed to Level 5. During her time as a learner, Beibhinn was asked to join the centre staff as a part-time 'education facilitator[99]'. She participated in a centre provided tutor

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[98]The pay rate for new tutors of self-financing (fee-paying) FETAC levels 1 – 4 programmes is €36.51 per hour; at Level 5 it rises to €41.78 per hour and to €47.40 at Level 6 (DES, 2011a). The part-time hourly pay rates for new teachers are €40.10 (qualified) and €36.76 (unqualified) (DES, 2011b) Non-casual part-time secondary teachers are paid an hourly rate based on a percentage of the appropriate incremental salary scale plus allowances (ASTI, 2012, TUI, 2012). According to VEC sources, tutors on courses funded by the exchequer, such as BTEI and Adult and Community Education, are paid €46.85 per hour provided they are qualified secondary teachers and €40.85 per hour if 'unqualified'. Tutors on 'sponsored' courses are paid the basic adult education rate - €36.51, €41.78 or €47.40, depending on the programme level.

[99] This provider developed the role of education facilitator to support learners and tutors. For some the role is a stepping-stone to becoming a tutor.

training programme and started to co-tutor with experienced tutors. She also completed the Level 6 Childcare Supervision programme. She continues to tutor for six hours per week with this provider. Beibhinn works as a childcare assistant two afternoons each week.

Tutor 3 Ciara   Ciara has a B.A. in Social Care and has completed the FETAC Level 6 Train the Trainer programme. She is a qualified Marte Meo[100] therapist. She worked for a specialist childcare provider for eight years and with the same organisation as a Family Worker for seven years. She continues to work for the organisation's education programme and has been a childcare tutor for seven years. Ciara tutors for six hours per week for this voluntary, not for profit training provider.

Tutor 4 Dervla   Dervla's previous experience includes working as a Kindergarten assistant in a Steiner school[101]. She then moved to the centre where Beibhinn currently works. There, she co-tutored with an experienced childcare tutor and participated in the centre tutor training programme where she did other uncertified courses such as 'group dynamics'. She progressed to tutoring on her own and when a tutor became ill in another centre she was asked to substitute. She then took over tutoring the Level 4 FETAC certified childcare programme in the new centre.

Dervla has been a full-time crèche supervisor for five years and began tutoring Level 5 childcare evening classes in 2009. She tutors

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[100] Marte Meo is a training and intervention programme of communication. It is used in services from birth to old age. http://www.martemeo.com/en/news/dcu-hse-marte-meo-research-colloquium/ accessed 30 April 2012

[101] Austrian educationalist Rudolf Steiner opened his first school in 1919 in the Waldorf-Astoria factory in Stuttgart, Germany. Today there are Steiner schools in 43 countries including four in Ireland. Steiner's education approach was linked to his own personal philosophy, known as anthroposophy, which focuses on the existence of an objective, intellectually comprehensible spiritual world. His work on developing intellect emphasised the roles of both creative and analytical thinking. This guiding principle is shared by Steiner schools today. Schooling's goal is seen as: "to produce individuals who are able, in and of themselves, to impart meaning to their lives". The aim is to educate the whole child, "head, heart and hands". Source http://www.iskaireland.org/ and http://www.yours.ie/mums_kids/school_days_a_guide_to_steiner_waldorf_schools_in_ireland (accessed 21 October 2012).

for three hours per week with a publicly funded FETAC registered training provider. She is paid the adult education tutor rate.

Tutor 5
Eilis

Eilis worked as a childcare assistant and as a childminder. She completed a FETAC Level 6 programme in Supervision in Childcare. She volunteered as a literacy tutor and participated in the National Adult Literacy Association (NALA) tutor training programme. She has a Higher Certificate in Arts in Literacy Development. As a Literacy tutor, she began to tutor FETAC Level 3 general learning programmes. The childcare tutor in the centre retired and as Eilis had shown interest in childcare she was asked to take on her role. She has been a childcare tutor for sixteen years and currently tutors for two hours per week in one location. She works for one publicly funded FETAC registered training provider and usually works in two locations. Eilis is paid the adult education tutor rate.

Tutor 6
Fidelma

Fidelma is a qualified Nursery Nurse; she has a B.A. in Humanities in Montessori Education. She is currently enrolled on a B.A. in Training and Education programme. She began her working life as a childcare assistant and after two years became an assistant manager in a childcare facility. She then managed a Montessori school for seven years following which she managed a large community childcare service for six years. When the childcare tutor in the local centre became ill, Fidelma was asked to take the class for one night. Unknown to Fidelma, the Back To Education Initiative (BTEI) coordinator was a participant in the class. She indicated to Fidelma that a position as a childcare tutor would be advertised and suggested that she apply for it. She continued managing the childcare service and worked part-time as a childcare tutor. As her tutor hours increased she resigned from the childcare service and for the last ten years has tutored full-time, on a part-time basis. She currently works for two publicly funded FETAC registered training providers in three

locations. She tutors in excess of twenty hours per week. Fidelma is paid the adult education tutor rate.

Tutor 7 Grainne	Grainne spent many years working in the Hotel and Bar industry. She wanted a career change. She had done some occasional work as an administrative assistant with a local FETAC registered private childcare training provider. She decided to enrol on a Childcare programme and having completed Levels 5 and 6 she began a FETAC Level 6 Train the Trainer programme with the same provider. She is currently enrolled on a B.A. in Adult and Community Education programme.

When she finished her childcare training she began tutoring on the provider's childcare programmes. Her employer offers programmes in Munster and Leinster, so Grainne could tutor in Dublin or Cork or Westmeath. She has tutored for the last four years but is currently working with the Centre Director developing programmes to meet the standards for the new FETAC Childcare awards.

Tutor 8 Ide	Ide has a Bachelor in Social Studies degree and a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW). She worked as a Social Worker. She retired to rear her family and subsequently began child minding. When two childcare tutors suddenly retired from a College of Further Education, the Principal (a relative) asked her if she would take on their hours until the end of the school year. She did and four years later she is still tutoring. In order to become more familiar with the reality of childcare, Ide joined the Irish Preschool Playgroup Association[102] (IPPA) with whom she has participated in a number of training workshops. She reports that the organisation is an invaluable resource. Ide works on a part-time basis for six hours per week. As she works in a Secondary School, Ide is paid as a part-time second-

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[102] Formed in 1969 to support playgroups the IPPA (Spring et al, 2007) and the National Children's Nursery Association have amalgamated to form Early Childhood Ireland (ECI)

level teacher[103].

Evidence from the tutor profiles suggests that the personal attributes of the tutor strongly influenced their engagement as childcare tutors. Apart from Aoife, all the tutors interviewed for this study were either asked to become a childcare tutor (Beibhinn, Ciara, Dervla, Eilis, Ide) or were prompted to apply for a tutor position (Fidelma, Grainne). In each case, the provider expressed a view, based on their personal or professional knowledge of the person that s/he '*would be able*' to tutor effectively. Thus, their engagement with childcare tutoring seems more reactive than proactive, an early indication of uncertainty concerning role requirements. The tutor profiles are further developed through an examination of their practice. During the interviews tutors spoke of their relationships with learners, their classroom practice, their concerns about shortcomings of the programme they deliver as well as proposals for its development. The emerging picture shows that although job satisfaction is high, respondents face many challenges. The interviews explored these challenges in more depth. Further data from the interviews are now presented, organised around the emerging themes of learner issues, approaches to tutoring, programme appraisal, work experience and on-going professional development.

The tutor context

When speaking of their tutoring, the tutors tended to focus exclusively on their relationship with their learners in the classroom. There is scant reference to colleagues or to the bigger organisational picture. This narrow view conveys a separation or isolation that is borne out in their testimony.

Asked about their motivation for tutoring, the majority of the respondents focused on their interaction with the learners and seeing the learning process develop. Beibhinn '*loves to see the participants here*'; according to Dervla, '*it's connecting with the students*'. Aoife states '*what I love to see is when the participants realise*

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[103] There are three part-time rates for teachers (post January 2011). They are Qualified casual hourly rate (incl. 22% holiday pay) of €40.10 , Unqualified hourly rate (incl. 22% holiday pay) of €36.76 and a Qualified non-casual rate paid to teachers according to their own personal point on the incremental salary scale plus allowances divided by 735. This will give your own personal hourly rate. There is no additional payment for holiday periods as this figure includes 56% holiday pay.Source www.asti.ie , accessed 21 October 2012.

they like it'; Ciara agrees, '*the best bit is the light bulb moments, people's faces showing real energy, the start of a journey*'. Eilis has a similar view, '*seeing the students come in unsure and by the end they are so pleased*'. Grainne focuses on what the learners do, '*when we get students involved and bring out the best in them*'. Fidelma states simply, '*I like the students*', Ide also reports '*I enjoy being with the students*'; reflecting on the process, she adds, '*a lot of the learning comes through the sharing of experiences*'. Two respondents attested to their commitment to childcare, Fidelma states, '*I'm passionate about early years and care*'. Aoife conveys her excitement saying that she enjoys most,

> *the whole child development area, people don't realise it's so complex. There's always something new, you can't say you know the subject'.* Aoife

Their views indicate a facilitative rather than didactic teaching approach with an emphasis on reflection.

Developing a relationship of trust with learners was high on tutors' agenda. They also show keen awareness of the necessity to be balanced and fair: Dervla advises, '*you have to get to know new students and make a connection*'; Grainne advises

> *... (you must) have no favouritism, you may not intend to show favour as such, but if you depend on one or two in the class to do things then that is also favouritism. It's a challenge not to be over friendly. You have to treat student A the same as student Z.* Grainne

Respondents' accounts of their approaches to classroom practice vary widely. Some tutors assist the learners to take ownership of their learning environment by establishing or agreeing a class contract.

> *Every single time we start a new course they (learners) make the contract up. They say what they want to say on it.* Beibhinn

Other approaches vary,

> *I set very clear guidelines for the class about attendance, punctuality, respect for each other, all that kind of thing. We do it as a group; it's not just me telling them. We follow through on them.* Fidelma

Grainne and Dervla ensure confidentiality is part of the learning contract and emphasise that such responsibility includes the work placement.

> *... we have strong rules about confidentiality. Nothing goes out of the class; we don't use names of the childcare facility where they are on placement.* Grainne

Dervla, Grainne and Beibhinn start at the beginning,

> *I start with a welcoming approach, then, I review what I did and check in with how they have got on. Then we start the learning.* Dervla

Beibhinn mentions the importance of the learners' lives outside the classroom,

> *... they all have problems, we start with circle time[104] and they get out what they have to get out and then get down to work, they're brilliant.* Beibhinn

Grainne shows a keen awareness of time management and demonstrates her use of a wide range of teaching strategies:

> *I do roll call, then when the students are on work placement I get feedback about how they are getting on and you hear good things and not so good. That takes a lot of time as some of them can rattle on. We re-cap on the previous day and then we start on the material for the current session. It may involve using notes, or the projector for short films or a You Tube video or a DVD, it depends on what you are doing, I've done quizzes to get the knowledge out of them in a different way or you might have them up doing a presentation depending on the module that you are doing. I centre the activity around the module.* Grainne

Some of these testimonies seem to imply that the 'real' learning begins following the preliminaries of checking-in, re-capping and reflecting on practice; perhaps indicating an incomplete rather than holistic understanding of learning. However, they also show the learner rather than the topic at the centre of the process.

Eilis, Fidelma and Ide confirm the usage of varied classroom strategies. Fidelma emphasises the links between theory and practice,

> *I use different teaching methods such as small group work and big groups, PowerPoint, handouts etc. I also make the link with childcare practice. I think that because I worked in childcare I am able to relate a lot of the theory to practice. I bring (relevant) documentaries into class.* Fidelma

Ide varies her approach and comments on the importance of listening,

> *I do a mixture, group work, instruction, reading from a book, brainstorming. I try to move people around, to mix the class up. I try to get people to give their own experience – what do you do / what happens in your childcare setting? I try to get people to reflect back and to share their learning. Some people are hesitant about engaging. The same people tend to speak up. I try to catch the muttered comments some just need encouragement.* Íde

Eilis uses simulation to bring practice into the classroom,

> *... rather than listening to me all the time it's more inclusive if they listen to each other, they really enjoy the practical exercises. It's not just all writing, listening or reading.* Eilis

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[104] In this centre, Circle Time offers some quiet time to allow learners relax and '*catch their breath*', before sharing their immediate concerns with the group.

However, she does not mention experiential or practical strategies in her summary comment, '*plenty of handouts, discussions and explanations, they're my techniques*'. Overall, while variations are evident, the tutors convey enthusiasm for the work they do, particularly their interaction with the learners. Each appears to have evolved classroom strategies on a trial and error basis so that practice variation rather than common strands emerges from the interviews.

Learner issues

Aoife and Ciara give further indication of the respondents' approach to teaching people rather than subjects, when they stress the importance of sensitivity and the flexibility to change tack as required when learners' issues impact on the classroom,

> *... some come in and interrupt the class, so you abandon the plan and listen, you realise that the plan will not work today and you have to go with it.* Aoife

Alongside such flexibility, Aoife returned to the importance of adhering to boundaries, particularly in relation to personal issues. Respondents identified a number of interrelated issues that affect learners' participation including, negative experiences of formal education, personal and economic background and circumstances, level of ability and literacy issues. The data illustrates their awareness and a range of the complex interpersonal skills required of adult education tutors.

> *... a lot of them are older women who have been working in crèches for years, they open up as the course progresses.* Eilis

As well as negative experiences of formal education, many learners are dealing with significant personal issues. Beibhinn asserts,

> *... some women have struggled all their lives, some have very difficult backgrounds. Sometimes they open up about their problems, occasionally, you might have someone who'd break down and we refer them to counselling.* Beibhinn

Ide elucidates further,

> *... a lot of them are mothers. They have so many issues that doing some thing for themselves is not a priority. If a child gets sick they have to go home, understandable; but if there's an issue next week and maybe the following week suddenly they've missed three weeks and at that stage they give up.* Ide

Awareness of learner backgrounds is important according to Aoife,

> *.... the challenge is the mixture of backgrounds. You have to be very sensitive when talking about sticky issues such as 'background' and 'abuse' and*

> *issues like that. If you are talking about abuse and all the stuff that comes up you have to be aware of what's happening in the classroom. I try to give the facts and not to relate to anyone in particular. I give examples but you have to be very aware of the people in your group.* Aoife

Sensitivity is also manifest as they observe their students struggle, for example, with

literacy and financial issues:

> *Literacy can be a difficulty that you have to deal with. In this VEC they do assessments on students before the start of the course, so it's not so much of an issue here. I worked with a community group and literacy was a huge issue.* Fidelma

The recession impacts on some learners: according to Eilis,

> *... numbers are dwindling away, with the recession people cannot afford to come, particularly when we know that classes are cheaper elsewhere. The crèches no longer fund the students; they have to pay for themselves. Some are single mothers and they can't afford €296 per module. In other centres it's €130 a module.* Eilis

The group of tutors interviewed for this study share a strong person-centred view of education. They indicate sensitivity to and empathy with the diversity of learners who present in their classes and translate this care into being supportive of the learners. That is not to imply that they don't recognise challenges.

Learner motivation

Among the challenges tutors encounter in the classroom are learner attitudes,

varying ability levels, assessment and other pedagogical issues. Job seekers on

Community Employment programmes may find themselves working in childcare

and obliged to participate in training, tutors report that some Social Protection

payments are conditional on learners' participation in training,

> *On some courses 90% are there because they want to be, 10% are there because they have to be and they don't want to be – they are the ones that cause problems during the course. Generally speaking the students mix well, they integrate, but the 10% - I call them the party girls, they come late to class, don't hand up work, don't participate and miss a lot of time, that makes it hard on the others. The 'party girls' are the downfall. Often they are reasonably okay at the start of the course, I mean they come late and miss days but they do submit their work but when it comes to the last couple of modules they really don't bother.*[105] Grainne

to Aoife reports that some parents regard childcare as a foolproof position for their

daughters, '*they think it's just minding kids and anyone can do that'*. Raising an

ethical issue, Beibhinn is unequivocal, stating that some learners are unsuitable for

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[105] The tutor explains elsewhere that the learners are CE participants who are obliged to participate in relevant structured training programmes in order to retain their place on the CE programme.

childcare as the reluctant learner interferes with the smooth running of the programme and hampers the formation of positive learning communities. Grainne's testimony[106] gives rise to concern for the quality and dispositions of some programme graduates particularly in relation to their practice in childcare settings. Awareness of and sensitivity to diverse learning styles, motivations and abilities brings many challenges. Learners who demonstrate a high level of ability also challenge. Ciara, demonstrating reflective practice, relates:

> *... two people had a very high level (of knowledge and ability) and I was seduced into their questioning which was far beyond the level required. I remember thinking 'oh that's really interesting'. The other members of the group were interested also. Then I remember thinking, 'oh I shouldn't really have done that, it's way beyond what's required, I lost track. I should probably have said something like, 'that's interesting, maybe you'd like to do some more reading on that, here are some references for you.' That year I worried I lost a few people. Now, I refer back to the module descriptor to check what is required at this level. I say to learners "if you'd like to read some more then here are the references".* Ciara

These accounts illustrate the variation in the adult learner profile; some already highly qualified learners who wish to change careers either from choice or necessity, may find a Level 5 programme isn't sufficiently challenging. Ciara's comments raise the issue[107] of appropriate training programme level for learners. An employer may not take ability into account when requiring a staff member to enrol on a childcare programme[108]. Although this clearly contravenes providers' commitment to fairness to learners, the provider is in a Catch 22[109] situation; the learner's sponsor insists on the learner achieving a Level 5 award while the provider may recognise that Level 5 is quite inappropriate.

Usually, taking the learning environment beyond the classroom and into the workplace motivates those who find classroom learning difficult. However, tutors report that the work experience element of Level 5 childcare training programmes is problematic.

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[106] In Ch. 4 Esther addresses the issue of compulsory participation on childcare programmes.
[107] This issue is dealt with in greater detail in Ch. 4 p.109
[108] This evidence is supported by the managers and coordinators' accounts in Chapter 4 p.109
[109] From the Joseph Heller novel 'Catch 22' indicates that the logical solution to a problem is precluded because of other compulsory conditions.

Work placement

The Work Experience module is an integral part of all FETAC Level 5 major awards. It is the only module that has a compulsory work experience element[110]. Only learners acquiring a full award will of necessity complete this module. While some childcare workers are working and learning concurrently, learners on full-time and some learners on part-time FETAC Level 5 programme may spend no more than fifteen days on placement. Most tutors agree that this is inadequate. Their disquiet arises largely due to the absence of links between the workplace supervisor and the tutor. Although respondents agree on the centrality of work experience[111], only Fidelma and Grainne have regular contact with workplace supervisors. They also visit their learners while on placement. In general, neither providers nor tutors give training or briefings for workplace supervisors. The learner is frequently the only contact between the training provider and the workplace. Therefore, it is unknown whether the learner conveys the purpose of the placement to the workplace supervisor, discusses learning goals or requests particular experience opportunities. At the end of the work placement, to satisfy FETAC assessment requirements, the supervisor completes a report template that focuses on generic work skills such as punctuality and adaptability. Childcare skills do not feature on these reports. Learners ask their workplace supervisor to complete and sign the form and that satisfies requirements and ends the supervisor's commitment[112].

Work placements serve a number of functions for learners, as well as providing opportunities to integrate theory and practice; a good work placement introduces learners to a wide range of practical care and educational activities.

A call for more practical content was echoed by a voiced by most respondents,

> *I'd like to see more practical hands-on experiences in the Level 5 programme. There's a lot of subject matter and not enough on the practicals of play and Arts and Crafts. I think song sessions, music sessions, how we can help children play is important. This sometimes gets left behind with all the theory. Some people are very creative but may need help to get there.*
> Dervla

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[110] Other modules such as 'Early Childhood Education' requires learners to complete a Skills Demonstration but this can be completed in a simulated situation.

[111] Described as 'a planned, experiential learning activity', Work Experience is a compulsory component of FETAC level 5 major awards. Learners are required to spend fifteen days on a work placement. (FETAC, no date given)

[112] As learners themselves generally source the work experience placement, the tutor must rely on the credibility of the learner to ensure the correct completion of the report.

Although all agree on the need for a greater emphasis on work experience during the programme, Dervla was the only tutor to highlight the importance of practicing skills that learners can bring immediately into a childcare setting.

Grainne emphasises that, as well as specific childcare skills, generic workplace skills such as reliability and timekeeping need to be emphasised. Fidelma, Aoife and Dervla suggest that it is only through experiential learning - classroom or workplace - that learners confront their own biases:

> *One girl couldn't stand sand and wouldn't let kids play with sand, but one day during child development and play she saw the point.* Aoife

> *It's all very well having the theory behind it, but if you don't have messy play and free play and allow them (learners) have these experiences while training, the childcare workers who don't like messy play won't do it. They won't understand the importance of play for children. I think practical experience is so important.* Dervla

Yet another disadvantage of the gulf between the centre and the workplace is illustrated when a learner is not well served in her work placement:

> *I have one student on a CE project and she is an excellent worker you can see that she is meant for the caring profession, but in her crèche/playschool she is on kitchen duty. She finds out how many children need lunch and she goes to the kitchen and says "classroom X needs ten sets of sandwiches", the sandwiches come out on the trolley and she brings them back to the classroom. She and a colleague stay in the classroom while the staff are on their break and they supervise the lunch. Then they clean up the class and the kitchen. To my mind, that's not working in childcare.* Eilis

This comment exposes exploitation in a number of regards. Firstly, the learner does not have the opportunity to relate classroom learning in the workplace; secondly, she has little opportunity to practice and develop her workplace skills. The learners involved took no action other than relating the issue in class. As the learners involved are adults, this minimum response may result from a lack of awareness of possible courses of action or a lack of the confidence required to demand fairness. Such issues expose a need for the development of personal skills. It is noteworthy that the tutors' only response was to record the issue; this could be out of respect for the independence of the learner or as issues that occur outside the classroom are beyond the tutor's remit, she has no authority to intervene.

The learner and tutor's inaction on this issue[113] exposes the consequences of an absence of formal links between centres and workplace supervisors. In particular, it shows that some learners feel powerless to address an unsatisfactory situation. One must conclude that learners are the losers in the communication gaps in this network.

In some instances, experience in the workplace, causes some learners to challenge their classroom learning. Adults' capacity to take charge of their own learning and the challenge this can pose for the tutor is neatly illustrated by Fidelma's testimony:

> *Some learners can't see the relevance of the FETAC modules in a childcare setting, their bottom line is "how can I use this in my workplace?" The ability to do child observations is a fabulous skill and very necessary, no one doubts that, but when they have to link the observations to the theories they say "but when I do an observation in a childcare setting I want to know what the child is doing, it doesn't matter what Maslow said about the hierarchy of needs, that's irrelevant".* Fidelma

Relevance is an issue for Ide also:

> *if Aistear[114] and Siolta[115] are not being implemented in their childcare settings they don't see the relevance of it. It's not a priority for them. They don't see the importance of it.* Ide

These responses may indicate that although tutors 'teach' the theory, the links with practice are unclear. Furthermore during classroom reflection on practice the tutor is possibly failing to facilitate these connections for learners. Conversely, it may indicate that Síolta and Aistear have not been fully implemented, that learners do not perceive evidence of its implementation and that work experience supervisors are not bringing it to learners' attention. It is further evidence that the failure to establish formal links between the tutor in the class and the supervisor in the workplace impoverishes the learning experience, calls the quality of the award into question and may be a disservice to childcare service users – young children. This finding, the poor and non-existent links between classroom and workplace, is one of the most disturbing deficiencies identified in this study.

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[113] The centre's response to this issue contrasts with the situation related by Catherine in Ch 4, where the centre made the HSE aware of unsafe practice in a childcare facility.
[114] Aistear is the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009);
[115] Síolta is the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education (CECDE, 2004)

Planning and Preparation

Having spoken about their practice, the tutors addressed the careful preparation that is needed to work flexibly. They all showed a strong awareness of a need to structure their tutoring according to the individual FETAC module descriptors. The question, '*To what extent does the Module Descriptor*[116] *guide your preparation and teaching*?' elicited a range of responses from the simple, two words, '*very much*' to more fulsome descriptions. In Beibhinn's and Grainne's centres, the Provider develops the curriculum, session plans, class materials, assignment briefs and marking schemes centrally and tutors deliver the course in accordance with the Provider's materials.

Other centres devolve the responsibility for devising and assessing a programme to the tutor. Ciara reports,

> *I stick to it very tightly. I read it all the time and check regularly that I haven't deviated.* Ciara

Dervla is similar,

> *... it guides me in how I break down the module in how I teach it. It helps me structure my lesson plans and write briefs.* Dervla

Fidelma reports that, initially, she regarded the module descriptor as the letter of the law but as she gains experience she includes material not specifically identified in the descriptor. According to Grainne,

> *The descriptor is good and gives great pointers. They are excellent; there is good feedback on the marking sheets and what you have to mark them on.* Grainne

Íde states frankly,

> *It does, otherwise I wouldn't know what to do next. You need a guideline.* Íde

However, comments suggest that some tutors regard a module descriptor as a prescribed curriculum rather than a statement of learning outcomes to be achieved. Consequently, instead of developing an integrated learning programme based on the acquisition of knowledge and skills, outcomes and assessment dictate class planning. The approach leads to a situation where, if a topic is not mentioned in the learning outcomes, the tutor does not include it. Fidelma and Ide are keenly aware of the shortcomings of this approach, pointing out that for example, all childcare

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[116] Each module descriptor consists of a statement of the learning outcomes to be achieved and an indication of the required assessment strategies. FETAC module descriptors may be viewed at www.FETAC.ie, Awards info/Awards directory/childcare

training curricula should include Síolta and Aistear as well as issues such as child abuse.

> *If you are just working on the module descriptor how are you supposed to know about new developments, innovations and regulations?* Ide

Planning and preparation are common threads running through respondents' description of their tutoring practice. They all devise lesson plans while Aoife and Eilis talk of 'back-up' plans. Dervla emphasises the importance of planning,

> *I prepare as well as I can, I have a schedule, how I am going to approach it nothing off the cuff, that doesn't work.* Dervla

Beibhinn who co-tutors has a planning meeting before each teaching session. Others spoke of the class materials they prepare including PowerPoint presentations and handouts. Aoife demonstrates her reflective practice by journaling,

> *… it's different everyday. I have my lesson plans and a backup plan, but I always have a notebook to write down what I've just said or done or changed. It would be structured enough, I like plans but if I have to deviate, I do. I like to know what I am doing, I couldn't go in without a plan.* Aoife

Although she loves her job and engages in reflection, Dervla spoke of being nervous; she fears,

> *… going blank, finishing up earlier than you planned so you need to have extra material prepared for times like that. Then I wonder did I not prepare it as well as I thought.* Dervla

The focus on preparation and planning shows the seriousness with which tutors approach their work. It also illustrates further the range of pedagogic skills that they have developed whether through personal or formal learning. Preparation and planning also emerges as an important topic for on-going professional development, particularly in order to encourage an integrated, holistic approach to the tutor's role.

Knowledge of Childcare

In sharp contrast to their ready identification of the 'how' of teaching, their hesitant responses regarding the knowledge requirements of the role is a striking feature of their testimonies. One tutor suggested that caring for children is '*common sense*' or self-evident.

> *I've always been around children and I think a lot of it is practical common sense when it comes to childcare.* Ide

Respondents recognise the importance of being aware of developments in childcare policy and practice. Although there is no established information conduit regarding developments between the childcare sector and the FETAC Level 5 childcare

education sector, the respondents try to ensure their class materials reflect the current situation. Some access information through childcare providers, another tutor joined the IPPA,

> *the onus is on the tutor to keep up to date with what is happening. I joined the IPPA and went to their training workshops; that is what I did to boost my own development.* Ide

The introduction of the quality framework Síolta[117] and the new curriculum Aistear heralded major changes in childcare practice. Childcare tutors need to understand the principles involved and the practice implications for childcare workers.

> *Keep up to date with legislation, the ECCE scheme, subventions, Síolta, Aistear. These things can slip by unnoticed unless you have access to someone who knows all that is happening. Things do slip by and as a tutor I should be aware.* Fidelma

Some tutors including Dervla, attended briefing sessions regarding the innovations but these were not widely available.

The tutors speak of friends who may be doing a childcare degree, working for the HSE childcare inspectorate, the local county childcare committee or a childcare provider as being especially useful sources of information. However, most accept that this approach to maintaining current information is less than optimal.

Although tutors spoke about what their learners' need to know, the majority did not address what they themselves need to know. Gentle probing elicited responses related to the content of module descriptors. Given the length of experience of some tutors, it is possible that their knowledge is so embedded that experiential and academic learning are intertwined and they no longer remember acquiring it or operating without it.

A number of tutors, although aware that the new Levels 5 and 6 Childcare Awards will be mandatory from September 2012, express strong opinions on the programme they teach and commented on the need to update current module descriptors. They expressed the hope that the new programme will reflect the changing childcare environment. Again, specific knowledge relating to children's development and care appears to be a strong contender for inclusion on any CPD agenda.

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[117] For an explanation of Síolta and Aistear, see Chapter 2 Literature Review p. 35

Programme Variation

Quality training for any occupation should develop capacities to respond to different contexts. This is especially pronounced with regard to the work of childcare tutors. A feature of learning programmes based on FETAC module descriptors is the wide variation in curricula and methodologies possible. Childcare programmes in Buncrana may differ substantially to those offered in Borrisoleigh or Balbriggan. It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure that the learning programme offered in any centre meets the needs of the learner, is appropriate to the context and reflects the goals stated in the module descriptors.

Some tutors commented on issues that arise when a learner has completed some childcare modules in another centre,

> *... (The learners) tell me that in the other centre the class is meant to be two hours with a break, but it is usually no longer than 1hr 40mins. They say that they don't learn as much. They only focus on the assignments. They don't spend the time learning the work. One student did Child Development in the other college and one night the tutor brought in her little girl, as she had no child minder. The child was a distraction the whole night and she felt they got nothing done. Every one came out of that group with a distinction and I know that one of the girls is definitely not distinction material.* Eilis

Beibhinn remarks

> *... (in another centre) they said that the Tutors are like teachers, they treat them like school children. These are grown women in their forties. They gave them the (assignment) brief, no handouts, no support. One girl I was talking to a couple of weeks ago was saying that she used to go home and cry her eyes out and think, "I can't do this". One woman had dyslexia and used to write her work – not type – and then would rip it up thinking she would fail. This woman is now doing marvellous in the Friday BTEI class. She said she couldn't believe she was getting taught this way.* Beibhinn

These testimonies show that for some learners, their experience of adult education may echo that of formal education. Again, it appears that the learners and tutors simply related this information; no feedback was given to the centre. Seeking learner, tutor and stakeholder feedback is an essential component of providers' QA systems. This raises questions, beyond the scope of this research, about the effectiveness of feedback procedures.

Programme Evaluation

All respondents assert confidently that the Level 5 Childcare Award can prepare learners to become proficient childcare workers. Furthermore, and in spite of

drawbacks such as inadequate work placement arrangements, they believe that the programme they deliver provides a good initial training for their learners. However, some qualify this opinion; Eilis reports that knowing the learners for two years she believes that 80% become proficient, whereas Grainne suggests that she would be prepared to employ '*about 50% of them if I had a crèche*'. On the other hand, Grainne states:

> *All the learners have improved from where they were at the start of the programme. No matter what course you do, if you are willing to learn you will always learn something.* Grainne

The respondents identify specific skills and attitudes that their learners develop. Aoife reports that one of her learners,

> *… saw a child acting up in the supermarket and she felt sorry for the mother. She said that before she would have thought he was just a brat but now she wondered what was upsetting him, was it the lights, noise etc. They do come out changed. They learn a lot.* Aoife

Dervla talks about how her learners come to understand theory by putting newly learned strategies into practice in their childcare settings.

Yet again the issue of work placement deficits materializes. The tutors offer no indication of feedback concerning the quality of programme graduates. In the majority of education centres learners' connection to the centre terminates at course end. Opportunities are lost for gathering valuable feedback regarding the strengths and shortfalls of newly qualified childcare workers. Connecting with managers in childcare settings could provide priceless information and feed into the education centre's programme development.

Relationships with management

The differences between childcare programmes also impacts on tutors. Fidelma refers to '*different criteria*' that may pertain in centres.

> *I've always worked in just one VEC catchment but this year I am working in a new one and I am absolutely petrified even though it has been perfect for the last nine years. Of course I make changes, that's progression, but I am dreading the May assessment period.* Fidelma

As Fidelma is one of the more experienced tutors, it is noteworthy that she expresses this level of anxiety. She is aware that she is well regarded by learners and the provider she has been working with. Her worry indicates a lack of clarity regarding providers' expectations and requirements. That Fidelma has not had opportunities to dialogue with either management or colleagues in the new centre demonstrates the

isolated nature of the role. It may also indicate the provider's awareness that Fidelma's learners are happy, leading to the conclusion that Fidelma is also. Ciara and Eilis confirm that Fidelma's lack of feedback or formal appraisal by centre management is not unique.

> *I've been here all these years and I've never had a professional evaluation, an opportunity to have an appraisal to hear 'the learners say this and that' or,' here's an area you could improve or develop'. You need to be pretty motivated to keep directing yourself. A lot of the time I feel that the assignments tell me that I'm doing ok.* Ciara

Eilis articulates a similar absence of feedback from the Provider,

> *I get no feedback from the centre, apart from the students. The FETAC Coordinator gives me feedback from the students' evaluations. I get feedback from the External Authenticator (EA) (on the learners' work). The EA was pleased or says "you could do this or that". But I get no feedback direct from the centre on what I do. Feedback is good because you learn from it. If they didn't like something, how could you change it?* Eilis

Lack of feedback and appraisal raise issues regarding the relationship between the provider and the centre tutors, firstly, what happens to feedback and secondly, how the Provider oversees or quality assures the tutor's work. FETAC guidelines on policy relating to staff recruitment and development refer to identification of training needs but do not mention 'appraisal' specifically. Most of all, the lack of feedback is indicative of ineffective communication strategies and highlights the distance between the tutor and the organisation.

Challenges

While many aspects of the tutor's role are demanding some issues are particularly problematic. Tutor isolation is a very significant finding that is at odds with the learner-centred pedagogy of adult education and childcare. As outlined earlier this reflects the low status and precarious nature of the job. It is also evident in different challenges faced by tutors that are explored in the following sections.

Isolation

Aoife, one of the most experienced tutors, regards the role as isolated, '*it's a kind of a lonely job'*. Eilis seems the most isolated,

> *I don't get support from anyone; there isn't anyone to give me support. There's very few tutors that have any experience with Level 5.* Eilis

She adds that when she started tutoring on the Level 5 programme she felt very alone. She says she didn't get any support from the centre with developing

assignment briefs and marking schemes. However, she says the Coordinator gave her a sample marking scheme from '*a website*'[118] and she used that as a template. Fidelma elucidates the problem of isolation further explaining that even in a large busy centre with many tutors, there may be only one childcare programme. Consequently, there are no colleagues. She adds that even if the centre provides more than one childcare programme it is likely that the other childcare tutor(s) work completely different schedules, so the chances of meeting in the course of the normal working day are slim. In addition, she has found that some coordinators know very little about childcare, so while they can help with resources they cannot be a 'critical friend[119]'.

Support

In contrast to the isolation experienced by Eilis and Fidelma, three others, Aoife, Beibhinn and Dervla (who all worked for the same provider at different times) report that they are able to consult current and former colleagues for support. In addition, Aoife indicates that support is available from a number of sources - in the form of VEC training, from the FETAC coordinator and Centre Director as well as

> *a network of friends who work here and in other centres. We get together to swop notes and discuss how to deal with a topic.* Aoife

Dervla agrees,

> *There's a network of people and we share information, new initiatives especially how to teach something new.* Dervla

With one exception, all the tutors identified the Coordinator as their most important source of support.

> *The coordinator is always the first person. She'll come any time to talk things out.* Dervla

> *The Coordinator, she has taught these modules herself.* Ide

Others qualify their acknowledgment of the Coordinator as the primary source of support,

> *From my coordinator or my husband, that's it, friends, and colleagues. Unfortunately I don't know that many childcare tutors.'* Fidelma

> *I get some from my coordinator and that's about it. I get informal support*

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[118] The website in question is possibly www.fess.ie of the Further Education Support Service.
[119]' Critical friend' has its roots in the critical pedagogy of the 1970s. Brighouse and Woods (1999) describe the critical friend as someone between 'the hostile witness' and 'the uncritical lover'.

from my friends and colleagues.' Ciara

Ciara's and Fidelma's comments demonstrate that while practical and moral support is important, the opportunity to discuss and work with colleagues is critical. Ide took responsibility for her support needs by joining *Early Childhood Ireland* (ECI). She made friends with other childcare tutors at training days with whom she discusses her class materials and assignment briefs. Ide relied on her own resources to join ECI; neither her time nor costs are refunded. What is important to note here is that these tutors are individually proactive is seeking peer support; the absence of any systemic support structures for tutors from providers or the State is striking.

Resources

Initially, respondents answered the question '*Do you have sufficient resources to meet all your teaching needs*?' in the affirmative and referred to physical resources such as computers, recorders and other classroom equipment including DVDs and books.

As they considered the query further, their responses give clues about how providers operate; Eilis says '*I give notice for what I need*'. Ide offers a similar account,

> *When I want something photocopied, there is a procedure; I submit what I need and say when I need it and pick it up on the day; occasionally it's not ready. Ide*

According to Fidelma, '*... the centre here is great, any books etc. that you look for you will get*'. Aoife's on-site resources are good yet, she buys her own books '*because I like having them*'. Dervla cautions that although the resources in her centre are plentiful, some need updating. She suggests that resources need to be managed actively,

> *I need to know what is available in order to get it. There isn't a resource manager. I'd have to look for new stuff such as DVDs. Dervla*

She further suggests that the centre tutors could collaborate to develop a 'resource book' containing material for each module. Dervla also points out that her Centre Coordinator gives her books '*that she thinks may be of use to me*'.

Some Providers develop resource material that they make available to their tutors. Beibhinn and Grainne work in two such centres. Beibhinn spoke of her centre's resources differently. As well as mentioning resource folders containing assignment briefs, handouts and other class materials, she talks about the '*higher tutors*' who developed the materials and states '*XXXX is a fantastic tutor, we have learned so*

much from her'. Beibhinn's comment shows uncritical acceptance of material that she had no role in preparing. It may also indicate a different approach to tutor training where co-tutoring is not an equal partnership but more of a mentoring approach.

Ciara was the only tutor to answer instinctively '*No! God help me!*' She broadens Beibhinn's concept of resources to include personnel; she considers individual and group learning support for the learners essential. Also she would like access to online journals and publications to facilitate her own background reading. Finally, she suggests that having equipment such as whiteboards would pre-empt the '*fiddling in the classroom, that can be disruptive*' when setting up equipment. Fidelma, Ide and Grainne, echo the requirement for additional human resources pointing out that learners' skill deficits in literacy or IT can impact adversely on their participation on a childcare programme. They advise that personally, they lack the resources to address the deficits. Lack of familiarity with computer skills causes anxiety for learners and uses scarce tutor time:

> *A lot of childcare workers are not computer literate; I end up doing a lot of IT with the students.* Fidelma

When prompted to consider resources to meet needs such as keeping abreast of developments in childcare, the issue of isolation resurfaces. Eilis says that her provider has no resources to help her keep up to date,

> *I have to do that myself. I go on the Internet to make sure I am giving up-to-date information.* Eilis

Fidelma talks about her approach to keeping on top of her subject,

> *My only resource about new innovations, legislation, regulations etc. is that I am very friendly with a development worker who works with the county childcare committee. She is my saving grace. I phoned her this morning, questions like 'what's happening with the ECCE scheme,[120] is the subvention on it's way out?' or other questions and she will give me the answers or I can discuss the implications of things like Aistear and Siolta – what they will mean in practice. I still don't think I'm 100% on it. It helps to discuss.* Fidelma

Ciara liaises with her former colleagues who still work in childcare to ensure that she is aware of the latest developments. She comments that she would appreciate

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[120] The ECCE subvention refers to the funding of the free pre-school year in Early Childhood Care and Education. This year is available to all children between the ages of 3 yrs and 4 months and 4 yrs and 6 months. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is responsible for the scheme.

peer supervision if it could be provided. Grainne reports that she enrolled in an adult education programme as,

> *I think I need to know a lot more and doing courses is the only way to learn. The Internet is great for looking up things but you have to be in the humour to do it.* Grainne

The tutors' consideration of necessary resources demonstrates their commitment to providing quality training. In their own time, they try to keep abreast of developments. Their uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of their efforts is a further example of the isolation they experience. Additionally, when speaking about essential knowledge for the role they did not emphasise their research. This is a further example of the distance between the tutor as a person and their lack of certainty regarding role requirements.

Although it appears that 'housekeeping' items such as photocopying and classroom equipment are readily available, tutors state clearly that there are insufficient resources available to meet learners' support needs.

Educating adults

Some tutors show sensitivity to the conceptual differences involved in teaching adults as opposed to children. According to Fidelma,

> *.... it's <u>adult</u> education, they are returning to education and we have to be able to help them feel safe and comfortable in a learning environment.* Fidelma

Eilis advises,

> *... be aware that you are teaching adults, establish trust; they have lives, jobs. Try to explain everything. Encourage them to ask questions.* Eilis

Ciara demonstrates a conscious adult learning approach,

> *I refer to the class as adults, there's a dialogue in the room. Sometimes I become the teacher and at other times I'm a facilitator I move from input to discussion. My role changes quite a bit, there's give and take. I always say that there's no expert, including the teacher!* Ciara

Fidelma believes, '*my job is to make the difficult parts of the course as interesting as possible*'. She believes that making classes '*interesting and fun*' builds a climate conducive to learning.

Dervla shows how her own experience as a learner influences her classroom approach,

> *I don't have a piece of paper and read from it. I feel that doesn't work. When I was in Education it didn't work for me. I zoned out. When we did practical work I was grand, to think about something and work out a solution, I loved*

> *that. I found with the group I am working with now that that approach works*
> *for them. So far so good.* Dervla

Although Eilis uses small and large group work, her approach may be more
traditional:

> *I deliver a certain amount and I normally do group work. I break them into*
> *groups and give each group a different aspect. Then they come back*
> *together. There's more learning that way.* Eilis

It is clear that these tutors have developed individual teaching styles; they appear to
rely on learner feedback to evaluate their approaches. Dervla's comment shows that
she has developed her teaching style based on her own needs as a learner. While an
emphasis on experiential learning is important in adult education, tutors should be
aware of the learning style of individual learners and be able to adapt their
approaches appropriately. The tutor profiles show that the experience of tutoring has
prompted some to consider their personal on-going educational development;
Grainne and Fidelma are engaged in adult education degree programmes, while
Beibhinn remarks,

> *I'd love to do the degree, but money, money, money – I have four children,*
> *maybe I'm too old.* Beibhinn

Beibhinn's comment may indicate a view that education is primarily for young
people or more likely, that for adults with financial commitments, their own
continuing education is, of necessity, low priority.

Diversity

Many childcare classrooms reflect an increasingly ethnically diverse Ireland. This
changed reality presents childcare tutors with new challenges. Seven of the eight
tutors interviewed spoke of the barriers facing speakers of other languages. Tutors
respond to learners who have difficulty understanding, writing and speaking
English. Grainne remarked how the reasonable fear of making public presentations
is exacerbated when English is not a learner's first language,

> *One young woman from Iran was very shy and I tried to encourage her.*
> *Eventually she did get up but she didn't like it and I said she'd have to do it*
> *again. I told her she could do a presentation on anything she liked – a*
> *subject that she felt comfortable with that she wouldn't need notes for. So*
> *she did it on her religion and she was delighted but did say she was petrified.*
> *Everyone else had two presentations done before she started but then she*
> *came on really well after doing the presentation on religion, she had no*
> *problem after that even doing presentations on childcare subject matter. If*
> *she hadn't done a presentation before assessment time she would have failed*

the presentation, the practice is very important. Grainne

Beibhinn and Fidelma give extra help with explaining subject matter and with

preparing assignments to learners whose first language is not English. Learners from

some countries are more familiar with didactic teaching methodologies; a discussion

based, experiential approach may not engage the learner.

> *... I know by the body language with foreign students, discussions don't work well. They kind of switch off and they talk to each other in their own language.* Eilis

Ciara is concerned that the cultural diversity of learners is not reflected in the

curriculum, '*the teaching is very western'*. Her observation hints at the added value

inherent in embracing diversity. She does not regard lack of mastery of English as a

problem but conveys a desire to capture cultural enrichment possibilities.

The researcher is aware of anecdotal evidence that child rearing practices that differ

from Irish norms sometimes cause problems for parents and childcare workers in

childcare settings. None of the respondents raised this issue, indicating that learners

on work placements have not encountered it or if they have they have not brought it

back to the classroom for analysis and discussion.

Pedagogical Challenges

Working with mixed ability groups is also challenging. From Ciara's point of view,

> *The biggest issue is the broad range of abilities in the room; some need more time. Trying to pitch it to bring those people on while maintaining the interest of the others who have no problems with the material is the real challenge.* Ciara

It is clear that some tutors use assessment strategies to monitor their learners'

progress. Beibhinn and Ide commented that reactions to assignments are a useful

barometer of learning and support needs.

> *..... some baulk at the first assignment. It could be a long time since they've written anything in a formal classroom setting and the first sight of the (assignment) brief they wonder how are they ever going to do the task.* Ide

Some tutors find designing and structuring assignments challenging. Writing clear

assignment briefs requires analytical skill and the ability to write clearly and

succinctly. Even with clear guidelines, some learners require a lot of support,

however, the degree of assistance is as likely to indicate a poorly written brief as a

needy learner.

Concern about accurate assessment of learners' work surfaced frequently during the

interviews. For most, this reflected a desire to assist learners demonstrate their

learning rather than apprehension about the forthcoming visit of the external authenticator.[121] Recognising that learning can be assessed validly in a variety of ways FETAC encourages tutors to design assessments to suit learning styles and contexts. Fidelma reported,

> *I tried non-literacy based assessment, but It's very difficult to mark. It's "where do I start?" I think I'd need training in it myself to be able to extract the core information from it. When you look at a written assignment, you can see the introduction, the middle and the conclusion but when someone is speaking it, they get going, they are comfortable and then they are finished and that's it. It's very time consuming. You need a different kind of marking scheme in order to be fair to the learner.* Fidelma

Fidelma was the only tutor to refer to non-traditional assessment strategies; adhering to the familiar, most tutors ask learners to submit written assignments. Fidelma's query '*where do I start*?' indicates a paucity of information, support and feedback that would facilitate innovative approaches. It also demonstrates the disadvantages associated with isolated practice. Fidelma has no tutor colleagues; apart from her coordinator, her main source of support regarding childcare comes from a development worker with the County Childcare Committee. Therefore, she has no forum for critically analysing her efforts to develop her range of pedagogical and assessment strategies. For the isolated practitioner engaged in isolated practice the lack of a structure for analysis and feedback means that unless the initiative is immediately and obviously successful it is likely to be abandoned. This isolation is seen to undermine sustainable development. Experimentation requires confidence; solitary pursuit of an elusive aim requires time, patience and great confidence. The tutors' accounts of their practice show both time and role confidence deficits. Nevertheless, their practice shows commitment to learners and determination to surmount problems.

Assessment emerges as another important topic for CPD work.

In responding to pedagogical challenges, some tutors advocate a cooperative approach to preparation, with tutors coming together to explore ways of developing coherent programmes by linking modules, developing class materials, assignment briefs and marking schemes. This recommendation demonstrates awareness of the benefits of integrated programme provision as opposed the delivery of a number of

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[121] The external authenticator is an integral part of the assessment process. The provider contracts an independent person, who is registered with FETAC to authenticate the provider's assessment process prior to submission of results to FETAC for certification.

stand-alone modules. Recognising the advantages of peer support, respondents suggested that tutor networks and a dedicated website would facilitate such a process.

The tutors also assert that increasing workplace learning opportunities and connecting the workplace and the tutors would strengthen the overall learning experience and increase confidence in the quality and value of programme graduates.

Role requirements

It is instructive to examine the interviewees' opinions on the configuration of qualities, skills and knowledge required by childcare tutors. They highlighted the qualities or dispositions and skills of a good tutor rather than focusing on a particular body of subject knowledge.

The following table outlines the qualities, skills and knowledge the respondents consider important. The skills or competences[122] respondents considered vital cover a wide range of areas reflecting a nuanced view of teaching as multi-faceted. The specific skills identified by tutors are grouped under five headings in the table, viz. pedagogical skills, childcare skills, sensitivity to learners, analytic and reflective skills and skills of collegial collaboration. On subject matter expertise, the respondents are much less specific; they suggest that a childcare tutor should be knowledgeable, have practical experience, value adults as independent learners and have specific qualifications.

Table 6:   Childcare Tutor Profile

Qualitites	Skills - Pedagogical	Knowledge
Someone who listens x 2	The ability to teach	Be knowledgeable
Someone who takes part x 2	The ability to impart knowledge	Have subject matter knowledge x 4
Someone who is ready to learn	The ability to facilitate a class	Know quite a lot
Someone who is patient x 2	The ability to prepare lesson plans, design assignments	Have practical experience

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[122] The term 'skill or competence' is that used in the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, the first object of the act is 'to establish and develop standards of knowledge, skill or competence'. While the term 'competence' is a source of debate it is used in this study as it relates to the further education field. The Act is discussed in Chapter 1, p. 22

Someone who is thick skinned	**Skills re Childcare**	Have practical experience of childcare x 4
Someone who is aware of the different levels of education in a group	The ability to explain and impart the essence of childcare theory and practice	Use their experience of childcare
Someone who associates with the learners	**Sensitivity to learners**	Value adults as learners
Someone who will help learners with difficulties	The ability to adapt to different learning styles	Understand the needs of adult learners
Someone who is open	The ability to use different teaching approaches and strategies	Have specific qualifications
Someone who is interested	The ability to establish trust	Be qualified
Someone who believes in the learners, who encourages x 2	The ability to recognise and affirm learners' prior experience and knowledge	Have childcare training at Level 5, 6, 7 or higher
Someone who shows understanding	The ability to handle conflict	
Someone who makes the learners feel safe, at ease x 2	The ability to use language appropriately	
Someone who treats everyone as individuals x 2	**Analytic and Reflective Skills**	
Someone who is fair and objective x 2	The ability to relate theory to practice and vice versa	
Someone who doesn't stand at the board and lecture	The ability to assess for learning and give feedback	
Someone who shows respect	The ability to research	
Someone who is outgoing, friendly and approachable	**Skills of collegial collaboration**	
	The ability to develop team or collaborative approaches to learning	

It is evident from this compilation that good tutors are described as sensitive, caring people who respect their learners' individuality and differences, demonstrate interest in their overall welfare, create safe learning environments, engage and encourage students in their work and, most of all, are open to listening to their students. Respondents spoke freely about what a childcare tutor needs to be able to do and the kind of person that makes a good tutor. Some emphasised personal qualities whereas others placed more weight on the practical aspects of classroom practice and

knowledge. More experienced tutors place the learners and their needs at the centre of the learning process whereas others tended to focus on qualifications and experience of the tutor. Other than stressing the value of practical experience, confidence was markedly absent in their identification of essential knowledge. The tutors' classification of desirable skills and qualities is lucid and authoritative. In contrast, their description of a fundamental knowledge base lacks any definition. The lack of a clear role profile adversely affects the confidence of the tutors in this study. Additionally, the majority of their employers, lacking certainty themselves, do not affirm their tutors effectively. In spite of the extensive background preparation and research they undertake to fulfil the responsibilities of their role, they hesitated when asked about the knowledge requirements of the role. In contrast, the development of Occupational Profiles (DJELR, 2002) was critical for the advancement of the Childcare sector and profession. The profiles clearly state the skills and knowledge requirements as well as the key tasks and responsibilities associated with each profile. The existing childcare occupational profiles could guide tutors on the knowledge requirements of their own roles, but it is unclear if any tutor or manager is aware of their existence. A similar profile would be useful for childcare tutors.

Time

The demands of accommodating a system are evident in relation to 'time'. Tutors' hourly pay rates make no allowance for preparation or assessment. Nevertheless, tutors made no reference to their unpaid work but some expressed grave concern about the time allocated to complete a module. Occasionally, the learners' rate of progress dictates the pace of learning. Ciara relates,

> *I would love to give the group more time, often a group will have specific issues, the group (that I am working with at the moment) needs more discussion time.* Ciara

In Beibhinn's opinion,

> *I feel we don't have long enough, especially for the two year course; there is so much in the Child Development module it's difficult for them to grasp it all. That's why I loved the BTEI group, we had a whole year just doing Child Development.* Beibhinn

It is quite unusual to allocate an entire year to one module[123]. Such a generous allocation may mean that the learners were not Level 5 standard but the teaching programme was geared to helping them achieve the award.

Rules attached to funding often dictate tight time frames for delivery.

> *... last year, we got funding for a group from the Labour Market Activation fund[124] to do the full* Level 5 Award, *that's eight modules. I didn't think we'd be able to get through it, but all the eleven girls graduated and they all got work.* Beibhinn

As with all teaching, the tension between having to cover course material while being solicitous of learners' needs is evident in some tutors' responses, Aoife says,

> *... you can't let yourself get too worried about "oh the course is nearly finished and they don't have their assignments handed in'; you have to listen. You'd come out with your head on your knees.* Aoife

One of Fidelma's programmes also had a very liberal attitude to time,

> *.... literacy was a huge issue, but the joy was that I wasn't confined to a time. It was an in-service course within their local community. I've been with them now for three and a half years and they are just on to their third level 5 module. During the first couple of years, although it was geared towards childcare, it was really literacy that we were doing. We had to get their confidence as well as their skills up.* Fidelma

Beibhinn and Fidelma's comments clearly illustrate the extent of the challenge that some learners face when contemplating a return to learning. It also illustrates the degree of sensitivity and empathy tutors require to facilitate the process successfully. The learners' needs and abilities clearly dictate the pace of these programmes, however, such responsiveness and flexibility is unusual. The examples illustrate the level of input required to overcome the deficits that some learners experience and the reality of meeting the needs of disadvantaged learners. It is also clear that inflexible time frames further disadvantage those whose learning journeys need careful nurturing. Ciara relates how time constraints mean that in order to accomplish the theoretical or class based elements the practical obligations are kept to a minimum. It appears that even experiential learning within the classroom is curtailed,

> *I think the course would benefit massively from being longer and that's*

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[123] The credit value of the new Child Development component is 15. The class contact guideline for teaching this component is fifty hours.

[124] The Labour Market Activation Fund is an initiative that aims to provide education and training places for jobseekers. Training places are mainly for people who worked in Construction, Retail or Marketing or who are long-term unemployed. The Fund is managed by the Department of Education and Skills. (Citizens Information Board)

> *really about giving them time to reflect and more time for scenarios for practice. Role play takes so much time, you have to have enough time for discussion and debriefing.* Ciara

Ciara's concerns echo those expressed earlier by Fidelma and Eilis about the necessity of including practical childcare strategies in the programme content. It also shows her awareness of the necessity to develop reflective practitioners. However, it underlines the risks to the quality of the programme and its graduates associated with time restrictions due to insufficient funding. The funders of childcare education programmes bear a share of the responsibility for stipulating inflexible and inadequate timeframes. A cynical observer might suggest that extending the programme length would benefit primarily the tutors who are on hourly rates. Nevertheless, there is plentiful evidence of the tutors' commitment to their learners.

Continuing Professional Development

For childcare tutors to flourish, as evident throughout the literature chapter, continuing professional development provision needs to be available, relevant and focused. Experienced tutors Aoife and Eilis, stressed new tutors' need for support, Aoife instances new tutors being given a module descriptor and no further guidance. Eilis reiterates this view,

> *... (there are tutors) coming into adult education without any teaching background and looking for someone to help them with how to mark. Students know and are not happy. Often there isn't any consistency. The tutor comes in at the deep end and doesn't know what to do. She learnt as she went along. But to be fair to the students, she should have done tutor training first. Tutors need to know what they are going to do and how they are going to do it. The students will always know whether a tutor is able to teach.* Eilis

Aoife and Eilis both work for adult education services that provide in-service tutor training. While Aoife describes the training as '*fantastic',* at the same time she acknowledges that many tutors say that they '*didn't get it'* and are unsure how to use a module descriptor. Eilis maintains that she gained her skills by doing a NALA tutor training programme and advocates tutor training as a pre-requisite for all tutors.

Respondents recognise that tutors' pedagogical skills need a solid foundation as well as ongoing updating. All state that specific, focused tutor training is essential. They identified a number of pedagogical skills including, managing a variety of learning

styles, developing new teaching strategies and responding to special learning needs and challenges. Some suggest that work placements would assist trainee tutors learn to deal with the broad range of backgrounds and experiences that may be present in the classroom including difficult situations such as outright conflict.

> *Train the Trainer taught me the all the theory of adult learning and I'm aware of the diversity of learning styles, but the practice, of having different learning styles in the same room, I didn't find it massively practical in that regard.* Ciara

While initial tutor training is regarded as important, the tutors did emphasise that to maintain and develop their expertise, on-going skill development is vital. In addition to pedagogical skills, Ciara and Dervla turned their attention to technology in the classroom,

> *Technical stuff, I'd love a whiteboard, that's a new area for me; using technology more. That would make a huge difference in the classroom. I think the power of visual learning is incredible, so I'd love access to videos and film footage that I could use.* Ciara

As has been mentioned already, a focus on child development and care and varied forms of assessment would also be important topics in any CPD programme. As well as formal CPD opportunities, tutors referred to the developmental potential of peer support. Linking with other tutors was singled out as a critical component of PD, especially for new tutors. Experienced tutors can support and experience the challenge of dialogue with new colleagues.

> *Sharing resources gives opportunities for people to share ideas. As a tutor you can get stale, so getting ideas from others would be very helpful.* Eilis

However, attempts to seek support don't always end happily, Ide recounted an early experience at a training day,

> *... (the training) was generic, not applied to childcare. I met someone there who lives very near me, I was delighted, someone to help me. I went up to her afterwards. Some tutors keep their materials very close to their chest and are not very willing to share even when you tell them that you are just starting out. I don't know why.* Ide

Changes to the format of training days was suggested by tutors who work for VECs; they suggest that while generic training focusing on FETAC requirements and responsibilities is necessary, childcare tutors should have opportunities to meet to air common issues and pool resources.

> *Don't tell us what to do, leave us for an hour to share with each other and pool our resources. Yes, have feedback about what we need and the issues that have arisen, but leave us for an hour.* Eilis

Fidelma suggests developing a website for childcare tutors to facilitate sharing ideas but she warns that it is unlikely that any childcare tutor would have the time to establish or manage it. This suggestion shows the self-reliance that tutors have to develop. She has no expectation that her employers will offer focused training for childcare tutors, at the same time recognising its importance.

Concern for their future as tutors was evident. Acknowledging their lack of formal tutor qualifications, they are fearful that Teaching Council regulations may restrict their involvement as adult educators. Fidelma has a degree in Montessori education, is a qualified nursery nurse and currently studying for a BA in Training and Education. She states:

> *I would hate a situation to come in, that in order to do my job I would have to go back and do the degree in Childcare. I would do it, but you hear different things. Even though I have Montessori you hear you may need to be very subject specific and Montessori and childcare while related are not the same.* Fidelma

The absence of clear information on matters affecting the tutors' future status highlights a lack of any collective involvement or action on their part. No representative body that could provide accurate current information exists. The view of childcare tutors as independent, unconnected and isolated is further strengthened.

Summary

The most striking feature of the childcare tutors interviewed is the female nature of their world. All are women. Additionally, they only spoke of their learners as female. Apart from gender, the tutors' accounts display a remarkable heterogeneity. Their formal education ranges from early school leaving to third level degrees. Their previous work experience extends from hotel work to social work. Those with a background in childcare stress its importance for their practice as tutors. In contrast, tutors who do not have experience of practical childcare did not identify it as a lacuna in their tutoring toolkit.

The respondents' pathway to tutoring was chiefly by personal contact rather than through the more formal recruitment practices associated with many occupations. None of the tutors is a full-time employee. They are paid as part time staff. Not

receiving entitlements that full time staff members enjoy reduces the status of their work and fuels their uncertainty regarding future employment.

They describe childcare tutors as sensitive, caring people who respect their students' individuality and differences, demonstrate interest in their overall welfare, create safe learning environments, engage and encourage students in their work and, most of all, are open to listening to their students.

Initially, informants placed little emphasis on the importance of subject matter knowledge. However, when addressing the challenges they encounter as tutors they stressed the importance of keeping abreast of theoretical and policy developments in the sector.

Some of the challenges the tutors encounter are pedagogical in nature including dealing with mixed ability, diverse backgrounds, literacy and assessment. All the tutors highlight the value of experiential learning and the problems that arise from an inadequate work experience element for the learners. This and other issues derive partly from the precarious state of the Irish economy in 2012. Tutors report that as a result of involvement in a CE programme, some learners are obliged to participate in a certified childcare programme. The learners' powerlessness to choose, leads to lack of commitment to the learning programme. The time allocated to a programme often depends on funding; tutors experience pressure to 'finish' the course when they would prefer that participants' learning needs dictated the pace. As the FETAC Level 5 Childcare Award consisting of eight distinct modules can be delivered as a whole or in part, tutors report that some learners will look for the most affordable option and move from one provider to another.

The haphazard nature of the childcare tutor's reality results in a sense of isolation for many. They report limited collegiality. Consequently, the absence of a systemic support structure leads to difficulties in accessing information, resources and professional development. Lack of feedback from their employers compounds their sense of isolation.

As well as the urgent need for an effective support structure, the tutors highlight a need for ongoing CPD particularly in relation to pedagogical issues such as facilitating adult learning. Some express disquiet that they lack a recognised tutor and/or childcare qualification; they are concerned that future regulation of the adult education sector may preclude them from practice.

The findings underline again the various tensions associated with childcare tutoring, including: high expectations versus low esteem; providers' focus at variance with that of tutors; isolation and uncertainty rather than professional confidence; warm caring inclinations but limited pedagogical competence; classroom rhetoric and workplace realities.

Chapter 6   Discussion

This study began with five major goals: to profile a small number of childcare tutors; to identify and describe their professional development needs; to map FETAC Level 5 childcare training provision in Ireland; to explore some of the challenges facing education providers of childcare training programmes and to explore the impact of welfare and education sectoral tensions and contradictory logics on the education of childcare practitioners.

The picture that emerges from the data is complex and nuanced. This chapter, building on the findings, seeks to focus on a number of key themes. These include: the identity of childcare tutors; support; status; the policy implications of professionalism; social justice and diversity; continuing professional development and language.

The chapter begins with a distillation of the main findings, moves on to discuss specific issues and concludes with some recommendations.

Main Findings

A diverse sector – childcare provision and the implications for training

While the literature confirms and laments the lack of research on adult education practitioners in general and on tutors of childcare in particular (Mueller, 2010; Buiskool et al, 2009; Robson, 1998), it paints a picture of a sector whose practitioners are distinguished by their assorted backgrounds, range of qualifications and variety of prior experience. This research study has begun to map the national profile of provision of FETAC level 5 childcare training in Ireland, giving a sense of the national picture for the first time and highlighting a series of the issues and questions that this profiling raises. As seen in Chapter 4, the picture that emerges of the 195 providers is one of a variety of provider types and uneven geographical distribution. At the time of the study, 66% of childcare training providers nationally operated under the auspices of VECs, 15% are classified as 'private' or 'for profit' with the remaining 19% made up of second-level schools and those working in the community and voluntary sector (8%). Curious anomalies arise in relation to the location of providers. Relatively high concentrations of providers in Dublin (45),

Cork (18) and Tipperary (16) contrast with the situation in Offaly (1), Leitrim (2) and Louth (2). One unifying feature that is highlighted internationally is that the vast majority of practitioners are female. The findings of this study corroborate this literature; as the national profile of FETAC awards recipients is 52% female, in the realm of childcare it is almost 100% female (FETAC, 2012). The only male participant encountered in this study was in an authority position as a centre director.

Of the 59,383 FETAC childcare awards issued between 2009 and 2011 (FETAC, 2012), 75% went to students attending VEC run courses. Mapping the provision of FETAC childcare awards was hindered because FETAC data does not separate the full Level 5 Childcare award from component certificates awarded to learners. Thus, when someone says s/he has 'a FETAC level 5 childcare award', it may represent only partial completion. This is potentially misleading for the general public, as they may be unaware of the difference between one or two component certificates and a full (eight component) award.

The provision of childcare training programmes is not centrally coordinated or planned; training programmes are provided in response to local demand that is difficult to forecast. Analysis of census, HSE and FETAC data would assist the development of a coherent approach to provision, could identify personnel requirements and facilitate the development of relationships with ECCE providers. Programme provision is driven by the multiple logics operating in the sector, especially the dual responsibilities and impulses from the economic and child development logics outlined in earlier chapters. This leads to tensions, ambiguities, contradictions and a frequent lack of clarity regarding the role of the childcare tutor.

Providers

The providers' testimony details some strengths of the adult education sector and addresses various challenges that they face. On the positive side, they describe their provision as responsive, flexible and inclusive. However, the worsening of economic conditions has grave implications. Funding is targeted to particular programmes aimed at boosting employment skills but seemingly without reference to learners' needs and abilities. Some learners are obliged to participate in education programmes in which they have little interest, with negative consequences for the

rest of the class. This seems to be driven by the short-term needs of government and economic planners rather than the needs of children, childcare providers or tutors. Providers of childcare training encounter many problems. The absence of national provision planning means that local providers respond to local, changeable demand. Therefore, unable to guarantee continuity of employment, they are faced with the need for on-going recruitment. Recruitment is unsure due to the absence of an agreed childcare tutor profile. This contributes to and is shaped by the low status of the profession outlined in chapters 1 and 2.

Providers' approaches to programme development vary. VEC providers give childcare tutors autonomy to develop curricula, course materials and assessment strategies. They find that some tutors have difficulty responding to these demands. Other providers supply complete teaching resource packs. While tutors may find the VEC approach demanding, it allows tutors to respond creatively to learners' needs. The second more restrictive approach needs regular review to avoid becoming formulaic. It may also constrain the development of tutor skills. This diversity of approaches to curriculum and resource development points to the need for more systemic planning and consideration of the implications for childcare development and pedagogical needs of the sector. This is also highlighted in the other issues addressed by providers that impact adversely on learners. Funding restrictions mean tight, sometimes unworkable, time frames for programme delivery. Certain initiatives specify a particular programme level. Learners needing support suffer; some fail to complete the programme. Providers acknowledge the importance of work experience for childcare learners but report that delays in acquiring Garda clearance compromise its access. Assessing these issues from the logic of economic necessity versus childcare development gives very different imperatives. The tensions between these dual logics are evident in the discourses of tutors as well as providers as revealed in Chapter 5.

Childcare tutors

Despite their varied backgrounds and experience, most tutors in this study reported themselves inadequately equipped for a teaching role on FETAC Level 5 childcare programmes. This lack of professional self-confidence is compounded by a blurred identity, part-time contracts and perceived lack of support from providers (Buiskool

et al, 2009, Hyson et al, 2009)[125]. The practice of childcare, and by extension, the tutoring of childcare practitioners, are regarded as low status occupations. The data in this study also demonstrate how, professionally, childcare tutors are isolated. Many have no contact with other childcare tutors. They do not inhabit common teaching spaces. There are few naturally occurring opportunities for professional dialogue.

Tutors' relationships with their employers vary from very positive to unsatisfactory. Some report lack of support, poor communication and unavailability. Happily, other tutors tell a contradictory story. A commonality between both is that this relationship is dependent on the individual contexts and relationship rather than being something developed and supported by a coherent childcare provision sector. This points to the individual and isolating effect of the constrained type of professionalism currently occurring in the sector.

Most tutor respondents find their work satisfying but challenging. Coping with reluctant learners, poor standards of literacy and language comprehension as well as meagre programme duration causes anxiety. However, they overcome the issues and find their work satisfying. They believe that the FETAC Level 5 Childcare award can prepare learners for important ECCE roles, with one caveat. All are concerned that the duration of work experience placements stipulated within the Level 5 award structure is inadequate. This problem is compounded by the absence of formal links between the learning environment and the workplace reflecting the dual logics from child development and economic approaches. Five of the seven providers have little or no contact with workplace supervisors. No evidence was found of dialogue between representatives of childcare practice and childcare training. All strongly advise that this deficit be addressed.

The lack of a representative forum contributes to tutors' isolation and their inability to bring concerns to the attention of national education and ECCE organisations. Efforts to improve their learning programmes based on their experience are at best isolated attempts. Their valuable learning is lost as a consequence of the individualist and isolated nature of the profession.

Reflecting this isolation, there is little information available regarding tutors' participation in professional development. By and large, tutors working with

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[125] See the following sections 'Improving training programmes' and 'The adult education workforce' Chapter 2.

community, voluntary and private education providers take responsibility for meeting some or all of their CPD needs. For those working within the VEC sector, some CPD opportunities are offered. However, the evidence from this study suggests that, while of value, these CPD interventions do not meet childcare tutors' needs, particularly for pedagogical ability and subject matter knowledge. Given, for example, the centrality of insights into child development for the overall childcare sector, this is a serious weakness.

Tutors' concerns about the future are a stark reminder of the consequences of being in an isolated profession without representation. While purporting to be a representative body, a striking feature of the Teaching Council is the absence of representatives from the adult education sector. This highlights the low status of adult education and ECCE sectors in education in comparison to the formal schooling sectors. Worries abound that the introduction of tutor registration regulations may affect them adversely. Control of the adult education sector's workforce is effectively ceded to the formal, established education bodies and, almost inevitably, leads to a narrow rather than a broad conceptualisation of 'teaching' towards schooling rather than the education of adults. Very relevant to childcare tutors is the validation of secondary teacher qualifications by the Teaching Council for the adult education sector that, however inadvertently, undermines the status, esteem and confidence of current childcare tutors as well as the ethos of the overall adult education sector. The lack of a representative body for childcare tutors is unfortunate and is allied to the absence of a wider body to represent adult educators[126], which hampers the development of the sector.

Key themes

The overall evidence from the tutors in the study is that their position is uncertain; as a result, the foundation for their practice is vague and tentative. This uncertainty originates from a lack of systemic planning or reflection and the dual economic and child development logics that have driven developments in the sector. The individual nature of the profession and the precarious and isolated state of tutors further exacerbates the situation. Thus, concern grows that childcare tutoring – and

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[126] see Ch 2 'Status' p.58 – 59

by extension the practice of childcare nationally – is being built on an insecure platform. Three key themes are now discussed in more detail in the light of this - identity, diversity and status.

Identity

The importance of identity is underlined throughout the literature on childcare and the training of childcare workers. One of the major themes in *Aistear* the curriculum framework for ECCE is 'well-being, identity and belonging'[127] and it neatly illustrates the interdependency of these three concepts. Sugrue (1997) suggests that lay theories inform the development of teacher identities. The dominant archetype of the teacher in Ireland is one of a strict but fair transmitter of knowledge, while the discourse of authority, submission and subservience still prevails**.** He advises that initial teacher education (ITE) courses that endeavour to supplant lay theories based on this stereotype with current, research-based educational theories are likely to fail unless they assist the students to become aware of and interrogate their personal theories.

While this archetype exists within the primary and secondary sectors it does not appear to reflect the views of adult education practitioners as expressed in this study. It may be that the profile of the adult educator is so new and amorphous that no archetype has emerged, and hence whatever lay theories exist, are severely underdeveloped. While theories on adult education reveal a very distinctive professional and sectoral identity (Jarvis, 2010), this is not evident in the piecemeal, diverse and isolated experiences of the tutors and providers participating in this research. It is also possible that as a developing sector without a definitive, designated entry route, new entrants and their mentors adopt the craft approach of 'sitting by Nellie'[128] as a practical induction strategy.

In Sugrue's (1997) study, the student teacher respondents identified a number of aspects of a 'teacher' including:

- *a 'teaching' personality*
- *a disposition to care and nurture*
- *a capacity to control learners*

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[127] See Chapter 2 Literature review p.40
[128] The phrase is used to describe on the job observation of an experienced employee. Some consider this approach haphazard, as the experienced employee may not be a skilled tutor and could pass on bad habits as well as good practice.

> • *an ability to deliver curriculum content, transmit information (Sugrue, 1997)*

This profile differs somewhat from the essential characteristics outlined by participants in the current study. It was apparent in the Sugrue study that the schoolteachers with whom the respondents' had come into contact influenced their views of 'good teaching'. This is less obvious in this study as Beibhinn is the only tutor who had experience as a learner in a specific adult education setting and it is clear that the tutors she encountered initially have informed her views. However, interrogating the tutors' responses regarding the 'ideal tutor' (Ch 5, p. 163) indicates that they consider tutors should be able to *'manage conflict'*, *'explain and impart childcare theory and practice'*, *'teach'* and *'prepare lessons'*. Such views resonate somewhat with the archetypal teacher outlined by Sugrue and reflect a 'banking' (Freire, 1971) view of learning. On the other hand, the adult education rhetoric of learner directed, voluntary participation, joint enterprise and recognising and valuing prior experience (Government of Ireland, 2000; Knowles, 1980) is present in the dispositions of adult education tutors outlined in the responses such as; *'respectful'*, *'encourages'*, *'ready to learn'*, *'collaborative learning'* and *'doesn't stand at the board and lecture'*. Thus, the evidence points to tension and lack of connection between dispositions and actual practice. It also indicates that the participants have not interrogated the values and narratives that inform their practice, highlighting the need for greater critical reflectivity in their training (Williams, 1989; Brookfield,1995).

Developing positive identities - tutor recruitment and practice

Beibhinn and Eilis[129] instanced learners who had negative experiences in other adult education centres. This issue warrants further investigation. Extrapolating from Sugrue's study (op.cit, 1997), it is likely that some adult education tutors integrate traditional teaching narratives into their practice. Such practice is likely to further alienate those for whom formal education was difficult and unsatisfactory. What is clear is that in the absence of constructive adult education narratives, new practitioners require support to develop positive identities.

Respondents in the current study agree that, ideally, childcare tutors should have a theoretical base as well as a practice background. However, there is little agreement

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[129] See Ch 5 Tutors p.150

concerning the nature of either aspect; one respondent suggested that her parenting experience combined with her academic qualifications equipped her to meet the requirements of her tutor role. Others stressed the importance of extensive practice experience and a broad academic background that encompasses child development and the practice of both pedagogy and andragogy. The critical nature of these questions becomes apparent when considered alongside the testimony of the providers who report difficulty recruiting suitably qualified and experienced tutors while at the same time are unable to define what they mean by '*suitably qualified'*. A review of the literature demonstrates the complexity of the problem; Cochran-Smith (2000) asserts an absence of agreement regarding the preparation of educators; Burke (2002) talks about an evolving craft traditionally viewed as combining technical and professional expertise. While Horgan and Douglas (2001) acknowledge the global prevalence of the issue intimating reluctance among researchers to catalogue the skills and knowledge required in the ECCE sector.

As a consequence of such ambiguity, problems are manifold. Advertisements seeking childcare tutors receive numerous replies, many from people who having completed the FETAC Level 6 *Train the Trainers* module consider themselves capable and qualified to teach childcare despite having neither a practice nor academic background in childcare. The data shows that with the exception of Aoife, none of the tutors in this study were recruited through a public advertisement process. For almost 90% of respondents, the access routes to childcare tutoring were: word of mouth; substitution for absentees and personal contact. This information must be considered in relation to providers' QA agreements with FETAC. Each provider develops a policy and procedures regarding 'Staff Recruitment and Development'. This policy describes the recruitment criteria and processes and identifies the qualifications and experience required for the particular role (FETAC, no date given). Without an agreed profile for a childcare tutor, providers endeavour to get 'the best fit'. VEC providers in this study report that they must recruit from a central panel, however, apart from Aoife, due to lack of suitable candidates, that did not happen. When an individual VEC college sources potential candidates the provider asks them to submit their CV to the VEC and their appointment is sanctioned centrally.

A striking aspect of the tutor profiles is the diversity of qualifications and experience among the respondents. This is not surprising, as so far, a particular qualification or

range of qualifications has not been identified as essential or even desirable for a tutor of childcare. Furthermore, as one respondent remarked, a childcare qualification does not confer an ability to teach. However, the range of qualifications and experience among the eight respondents indicates that education providers either do not have an agreed qualification specification for the role, or engage childcare tutors on the basis of their qualities and skills. Providers must trust the tutor's ability to acquire and impart the necessary subject matter knowledge.

This *ad hoc* approach to recruitment impacts almost inevitably on the quality of childcare programmes. Providers state that they may appraise a tutor by asking them to tutor one module; if the tutor seems competent they are then offered additional work – if it is available. This system can work satisfactorily when the provider offers single modules but it would compromise a holistic approach for learners trying to achieve a concurrent full award. Providers did not disclose their approach should a tutor fail to meet expectations. The absence of detailed job descriptions and new tutors' experience of induction – a sink or swim approach – further contributes to a blurred identity.

It is also clear from the evidence obtained in the current study that the non-existence of a defined identity or professional pathway for childcare tutors impacts negatively on existing and potential tutors as well as on providers of childcare training. Questions about the learners' quality of experience are especially pertinent. Robson (1998) extends the effects to the general public, linking public confusion about the adult education sector – and the ECCE sector – to difficulties ascribing a status to its practitioners.[130] This situation could be ameliorated by adult education and childcare providers developing agreed parameters for the education and experience of childcare tutors in the various subject areas, thus clarifying the role and functions for all stakeholders.

Providers generate contracts that state tutors' responsibilities in general terms but do not give a clear description of the role. Tutor uncertainty regarding the implementation of their tutoring role was widespread; some reported difficulties in developing a programme based on a module descriptor; writing assignment briefs

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[130] See Ch. 2 Literature Review p.54

and constructing marking schemes presented big challenges; others lacked confidence in their interpretation of the national standard; many spoke of feeling isolated and unsupported. These serious deficiencies underline the poor collegiality and scarcity of mentoring associated with childcare tutoring. The initial unease reported by the tutors regarding their role is hardly surprising considering that only one of the eight had prior teaching experience and two had neither teaching nor childcare experience. Starting a new job is daunting, even when beginners have had appropriate training or have an expectation that training will be provided, whereas tutors in this study experienced a sense of being 'thrown in at the deep end'. It is important also to consider this issue from the point of view of the learners, who have reasonable and justifiable expectations that their tutors at least are able to teach, familiar with the subject matter and competent to assist them achieve their goals. However, a contradictory picture emerges when the testimony of the providers is examined. Each provider attested to giving extensive support to the tutors. Their testimony shows that some offer practical support such as photocopying and sourcing resources. All report giving assistance with issues such as classroom management, preparation of materials, assessment for and of learning, tutor – learner relations and assistance with difficulties that arise. Two centre directors acknowledge that the generic induction programme offered by the VEC is ineffective; they advise that induction should include a subject area focus. The degree of variance in the perceptions of support warrants further investigation, but it is clear from the evidence that tutors' lack of confidence in their role is an issue that is not addressed adequately in the workplace. The lack of support intensifies the isolation and insecurity experienced by tutors, deepening their anxiety.

While providers, childcare experts and researchers hesitate to circumscribe the tutor's role, the tutors participating in this study showed no such reticence. They readily identified a range of desirable qualities as well as essential skills and competences for the role; however, they were somewhat vague about the knowledge required by tutors. They stressed the importance of being able to teach childcare theory and practice in an adult learning environment and suggested that all tutors require '*subject matter knowledge'*. None explored, interpreted or elaborated on the composition of subject matter knowledge. It is possible that responses such as '*know quite a lot'* or '*be qualified'* indicate a lack of confidence in their identity as

childcare tutors in so far as they imply that 'others' have the authority and duty to define 'knowledge'. Overall, this identity predicament among childcare tutors should be a matter of considerable concern for policy makers, childcare providers and practitioners and, ultimately, anyone concerned about the welfare of children who avail of ECCE.

Status

The poorly formed identity of childcare tutors contributes to the lack of status they experience. The low status indicators that childcare tutors in the current study experience including low hourly pay, part-time contracts and lack of job security, compound feelings of poor self-esteem and lack of confidence. In spite of nine years experience, one tutor spoke of being 'petrified' in a new setting[131], another after three years tutoring still fears '*going blank*'[132]. The data show that these conditions also mean that the organisation of adult education centres is such that tutors are unable to achieve collegiality, a common sense of purpose or mutual support. Isolation and fragmentation is maintained. The assertion that such conditions are complicit in compromising quality is given weight by research that shows that tutors are a '*major influence on the quality of learning*' (TLRP, 2005). The TLRP study (2005) advises that giving tutors autonomy to collaborate and innovate and providing challenging in-service development opportunities would increase professionalism and lead to higher quality experiences for learners.

Status issues that emerge from the data mirror those highlighted in the literature. Dunn (1998) suggests that identity depends on relationships between the individual, the group and the community. As chapter 1 outlines, as far back as 1998, the Green Paper on Adult Education recommended the formation of sectoral groups to advocate for and improve the employment situation of tutors. The proposal was supported by the White Paper and its importance highlighted by Buiskool et al (2009) more than ten years later. The literature review notes that researchers (Brady, 2008; Jephcote & Salisbury, 2009) identify the lack of a professional organisation as a key factor sustaining low status. Such an organisation would present an image to the public thereby increasing understanding not just of the tutor's role but also of the adult education sector in general. The failure act on these proposals has contributed

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[131] See Ch 5 Tutors p.151 Fidelma
[132] See Ch 5 Tutors p.148 Dervla

to the lack of a publicly recognised identity, thus perpetuating low status. This is aggravated by the tensions and contradictory impulses operating in ECCE as a consequence of the dual logics from the economic and child development sectors.

Efforts to achieve status

It is useful to examine the strategies employed to achieve status by other 'semi-professions' (Hoyle, 2001) such as social workers, guidance counsellors and mediators; each of these groups established a representative body[133] to set standards and promote the profile and interests of their members. Professional bodies, as well as promoting the sector that they represent, set training, qualification and CPD standards and requirements for their members. In this way they could be regarded as having a self-regulatory and quality assurance role. Nevertheless, governments may enact additional mechanisms such as mandatory registration to safeguard the public. The Health and Social Care Professions Act became law in 2005 and requires practitioners in the designated sectors to register. Employment, whether in the public or private sector, will be dependent on being registered.

Similarly, in the teaching sector, registration with the Teaching Council became mandatory from the beginning of the 2012/2013 school year. For payment purposes, teachers in schools recognised by the DES must be registered. For the majority of tutors who contributed to the current study, registration is an issue that has created concern and anxiety. They worry firstly, that they may not meet the standards required for registration[134] and secondly, that the time required and the expense of training programmes that would enable them to achieve that standard may be prohibitive. At the time of data collection, while some respondents were registered with the Teaching Council, the majority were unsure about whether they would need to achieve a Further Education qualification in order to maintain their registration. Such anxiety for childcare tutors is compounded by the absence of a representative body for such workers but also by the non-representation of adult educators *per se* on the Teaching Council itself.

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[133] The Irish Association of Social Workers established 1971; The Institute of Guidance Counsellors established in 1976 and the Mediators Institute of Ireland established in 1992.

[134] Regulation 5 of the Teaching Council (Registration) Regulations 2009 states that until April 2013 applicants must have a suitable primary degree or equivalent. From that date applicants must have a Council approved qualification in Further Education.

While primary and secondary teachers have their views represented on the Council, those in adult education have no such access (see Ch 2, p 55/56). In addition, teacher unions represented the views of primary and secondary teachers during the development stages of the new regulations, but adult education or ECCE have no such representation.

A significant difference between registration in the Health and Social Care and the Teaching sectors is that registration is required only for teachers in DES registered schools. While these schools cater for the majority of adult education learners, significant numbers of providers in the community and private sectors may continue to employ unregistered tutors. While it is hoped that providers would ensure that all tutors could provide a high quality service, nevertheless, the potential for creating a two-tier system is obvious. Additionally, it could transpire that funding for training courses will be dependent on the employment of registered tutors; or, pre-school childcare providers may favour graduates of courses that are known to have registered tutors.

The task of elevating status and achieving a more positive identity should not be underestimated. The replacement of traditional norms and organisations by modern and post-modern society, suggests new groups must establish identities that are independent of those traditionally ascribed by society (Dunn, 1998). Therefore, although the failure to develop sectoral representation reflects the low status of the sector, it does present an opportunity to build a new, positive image. This would not just inform public opinion but would bolster the confidence of adult education practitioners and facilitate their participation in sectoral development.

Policy implications of professionalism and professionalisation

From 2013, people wishing to register as further education teachers with the Teaching Council will require an approved teacher education qualification. In contrast with the secondary sector, the Teaching Council regulations do not specify subject focused basic qualifications for further education teachers[135]. In the childcare sector this means that the current situation continues, i.e. guidelines regarding the

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[135] The Council's Programme Requirements state 'It is also understood that students on a further education teacher education programme must have the subject knowledge in the area that they teach within the requirements of Regulation Five of the Teaching Council (Registration) Regulations, 2009'. (Teaching Council, 2011)

knowledge and experience required for specific teaching roles are inadequate. In order to clarify the situation, it will be necessary for the various vocational interest areas to work with education providers to develop tutor profiles.

As previously noted, the adult education sector is not represented on the Teaching Council. This absence impacts negatively on the sector in a number of ways. For example, it is important to draw attention to the fact that registered secondary teachers may register as further education teachers with no requirement for further training. The same consideration is not afforded to people registered as further education teachers. This has implications for adult learners as well as for people wishing to work in adult education. As demonstrated in the literature, adult education practitioners tend to retain allegiance to their original vocational area (Buiskool et al. 2009; Robson, 1998). If this area is the practice of second level education it is likely that without further training, secondary teachers will bring their established teaching methodologies into the adult education classroom. As well as the challenge of adjusting to helping adults learn, secondary teachers are confronted with moving from the comfort of an established curriculum to devising curricula based on learning outcomes. In order to ensure quality learning experiences, it is likely that teachers moving from secondary to adult education will need ongoing mentoring and opportunities for interrogation of their practice. From the point of view of the adult educator, the ease of transfer for teachers from secondary to adult education may act as a barrier to recently qualified adult education practitioners. Changing demographics cause fluctuation in school populations with consequent redeployment of teachers from a school with diminishing numbers to areas where numbers are increasing. Within the VEC system, there are many examples of secondary schools that, faced with dwindling numbers were reinvented as PLCs. Many of the teaching staff continued their employment on a full-time basis seamlessly moving from secondary to adult/further education (Tierney and Clarke, 2008). These teachers have security of tenure and the possibility of progression within the profession. Vacancies in non-school subjects are more likely to be filled from the ranks of adult education practitioners employed on temporary contracts and with no possibility of progression within the system.

Based on the literature and the data it appears that the main barriers to developing professionalism within the Irish adult education childcare sector are firstly, the lack

of a professional body for adult educators; secondly, the failure to proceed with the Adult Learning Council and thirdly, the lack of representation on the Teaching Council. Given the lack of structural support for the sector, it is possible that adult educators compliant with Teaching Council regulations will begin to demand improved working conditions. Such a movement could result in a focus on professionalisation of the sector rather than on professionalism (Hoyle, 2001; Ackland, 2011). Nonetheless, the absence of appropriate representation is hampering the professional development of childcare tutors. This is most dramatically evident in the narrow representation of teaching interests on the Teaching Council.

Social Justice and Diversity

The White Paper on Adult Education (DES, 2000) identified the diverse backgrounds of practitioners as a distinguishing feature of the sector. Recognising the contribution of community groups and individual volunteers to the development of the sector this policy document pledged to facilitate practitioners achieve certification thus avoiding a high attrition rate particularly in the areas of literacy development and community education. Current Teaching Council policies make little or no reference to the accreditation of prior learning and so appear to undermine such aspirations.

The possibility of tutor attrition consequent on the introduction of the Teaching Council regulations is of particular concern. Six of the providers in this study are located in areas that experience social, economic and educational disadvantage, their tutors work with people for whom returning to education is challenging. Tutors offer high levels of support to the learners to assist them achieve their learning goals. Programme graduates, many of whom are women with family responsibilities, often progress to employment in childcare facilities within their own communities. This fulfils some of the aims outlined in the Adult Education White Paper, such as, to engage in social and economic life and participate in development of their communities. There are also strong resonances with the ECCE White Paper (Government of Ireland, 1999) that focuses on quality provision for children experiencing disadvantage.

Four of the eight tutors who participated in this study do not have third-level education and expressed concern about meeting registration criteria; three of them

work with people who experience significant disadvantage. Community based education is vitally important as it engages learners who are unlikely to venture outside their immediate environment. The loss of tutors experienced in working with these learners would disadvantage not just the learners, but also children in local childcare facilities, the community in general and the learners' families in particular. Furthermore, when non-traditional learners interact with tutors who have progressed from being adult learners to childcare workers to tutors it provides concrete evidence of the possibility of progression through learning to the workplace. This example illustrates how top-down national policy can often ignore on the ground practical realities and have unintended consequences that impact harshly on already disadvantaged people. The Teaching Council should consider more flexible arrangements that balance numerous factors when deliberating on the needs of the adult education sector.

Continuing Professional Development

There is clear correlation between the literature and the data concerning CPD. The literature suggests that for adult education tutors CPD is as important as ITE (Whitebook & Ryan, 2011; NAEYC, 2009; Horm, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 1999). Both tutors and providers in the current study appear to agree with this, though with some important variations. The providers' appear to value CPD, partly because of the absence of a dedicated ITE programme that would qualify tutors to teach childcare and assess learning. However, it seems there is a certain reticence on the part of providers to acknowledge tutors' needs for ongoing CPD perhaps because such acknowledgement would imply a responsibility on their part to offer CPD opportunities to their tutors. The providers said they would welcome CPD initiatives provided they did not make excessive budget demands on their scarce resources. On the other hand, the tutors stressed their need for on-going support. They enunciated clearly that they need support from peers and from management regarding their teaching, subject matter areas as well as policy and practice developments. It is of particular significance that a number of the tutors experience their role as isolated; some said that the only support they receive is from their own families. At the same time, the providers outlined the many ways in which they offer support to their tutors and suggest that tutors are well supported.

To reconcile these viewpoints it is necessary to interrogate the data further. Providers refer to meeting tutors formally and informally to discuss the progress of learners as well as the level of ease or difficulty the tutor is experiencing. Providers describe these interactions as important support strategies. However, the majority of the tutors interviewed were unaware that the providers view these interactions as 'support'. While the tutors may experience the meetings as supportive, they fall short of meeting the support needs the tutors describe.

For three of the providers, Beta, Gamma and Epsilon, childcare training is their principal function. These providers are closely involved in both the practice and the theory of childcare. They take responsibility for ensuring that their tutors are aware of developments in the field and advise on their incorporation into class materials. Each of these providers facilitates tutors to participate in adult education training programmes either by providing in-house training or by allowing tutors time for study and participation in courses provided by other institutions.

Childcare is one of many subject areas available in VEC colleges. As childcare is not a traditional discipline, it is unlikely that college management will have deep understanding or awareness of the complexity of childcare practice. Therefore, while management personnel may be able to offer support on teaching and assessment, their tutors must take responsibility for keeping abreast of childcare developments. While some tutors related how they use friends, colleagues and childcare organisations to access information, others were not so well connected and even appeared unaware of the importance of updating information. Although tutors and providers acknowledge the importance of sourcing and disseminating current information, strategies to ensure this happens appear *ad hoc* and unreliable. Overall, the factors already mentioned as impacting on childcare tutors such as diverse backgrounds and entry routes, vague job descriptions, lack of profiles, part-time contracts, low status and professional isolation, also contribute to uneven, fragmented and incoherent practices regarding continuing professional development.

Reflective practice

According to the literature, reflection on and interrogation of practice are critical tools for the professional development of adult education practitioners (Mueller et al, 2010; Williams 1989). With the exception of the tutors pursuing formal adult education programmes, the approaches to CPD outlined by the tutors and providers

in this study show a complete absence of such strategies. Some providers spoke of the possibility of developing 'communities of practice' that could potentially facilitate reflection. Practice communities could also play a role in identifying and meeting tutors' support needs and allow the sharing of resources and updating of information. To achieve these aims, practice communities would need adequate resources including facilitation and leadership. Tutors may require incentives to encourage their on-going participation; these might include assistance with preparation of assignment briefs, cross moderation of assignments, exploration of teaching strategies and regular updates on relevant materials. From the data emerging from the tutors in this study, it may be important also for tutors that participation in such CPD activities would be cost neutral.

The usual focus of CPD is on developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes that assist a person to undertake their professional responsibilities. In the context of this study, however, CPD has, currently, an extra sharp focus – that of meeting the Teaching Council requirements. From April 2013 onwards, applicants for registration must have a basic degree and a further qualification or certified accreditation of prior learning plus a teaching qualification (Teaching Council, 2011). This means that new recruits will be more qualified than many existing registered adult education tutors, at least on paper. Some tutors in this study expressed concern that if contracts are offered on the basis of qualifications they may find themselves at the bottom of the list of 'qualified applicants'. In addition, unregistered tutors, particularly those with personal experience of disadvantage, working with adult learners in literacy and community settings will not be able to progress to tutoring certified programmes unless they embark on a degree programme followed by a teacher training qualification. Given the precarious nature of employment in the adult education sector, it is difficult to imagine candidates choosing to undertake an adult or further education teaching qualification. Especially when by following a similar route, they could achieve a qualification for the secondary sector. The secondary school qualification would not alone open the door to a long-term professional career with security of tenure and progression opportunities but also allow them to register in the adult education sector. In other words, the secondary school qualification offers choice, the adult education qualification confines a registrant to that sector alone. Should this scenario evolve, it is possible that the majority of the adult education sector workforce although

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qualified as per Teaching Council regulations, may not have specific adult education training.

In many professional organisations the accumulation of CPD 'points' is a prerequisite for membership as well as for maintaining one's place on a statutory register. As yet, this is not a Teaching Council requirement; therefore in the absence of a representative body for childcare tutors, providers must assure their tutors' ongoing ability to meet the demands of their role. Thus, the Teaching Council's well-intentioned emphasis on 'qualifications' has the potential to have some devastating effects on childcare tutoring.

Language

Throughout this study it was obvious that a lack of precision pervades the language used in relation to childcare tutors as well as, indeed, to childcare and adult education generally. This has also been commented on in the literature (Lycan, 1999; Connolly, 1999, Buiskool et al, 2009). Titles and terms are interchanged without explanation causing confusion among all stakeholders, but particularly where adult and secondary education meet. Sloppy language use suggests sloppy thinking. It is difficult to see how issues of identity and status can improve without clarity of language. It is equally tricky to envisage achieving clarity without an improvement in identity and status.

Some examples will illustrate the point. The term 'adult education' used in the White Paper encompasses 'further education', 'PLC courses', 'second-chance education', 'continuing education and training (professional or vocational development)' and 'community education' (Government of Ireland, 2000). Despite the aspirations of the White Paper it can be argued that subsequent policy documents fragment and undermine its core principles, by the failure to use the term 'adult education'. The Teaching Council favours 'further education'. The message conveyed by 'adult' education is clear; firstly, it is person centred and secondly, it indicates that it is aimed at people over 18 years of age. On the other hand the messages contained in 'further' and 'second-chance' education are somewhat pejorative, they imply a deficit (Grummell, 2007); 'further' seems to imply something unfinished such as an underdone cake that requires a 'further' ten minutes in the oven or a piece of furniture that requires a 'further' coat of varnish

for the requisite finish. 'Second-chance' sounds like an opportunity given to a bold child to earn the rewards of good behaviour. The name 'PLC' communicates clearly that the college caters for people who have recently completed the Leaving Certificate examination, and seems to exclude people who are out of education for some time as well as well as those who never did a Leaving Certificate. 'Vocational' education while not pejorative in tone is focused on meeting the needs of the workplace and not on the person. The issue of language is important insofar as names and titles suggest values and a philosophy underpinning the enterprise. Does the lack of clarity regarding naming the activity imply a parallel dilemma regarding its purpose? The failure to use the umbrella term – adult education – serves to remove the person, the 'adult' from the process. This is problematic for educators who embrace a philosophy of person-centred education.

Learners embark on adult education courses for various purposes, some vocational, others purely out of interest, more for personal development reasons, while some are motivated by a desire to serve their community or special interest group. Whatever the motivation, learners' reasons are valid. Clear statements of philosophy and purpose would assist learners choose an appropriate education provider. Similar issues affect ECCE as confusion and tensions exist between its childcare and child development aspects. Indeed, as evident throughout this study, dual and at times contradictory logic operates. At the policy level, the lack of reconciliation between the approaches taken by, for example, the Department of Health and Children, the Department of Education and Skills and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment adds to the confusion.

Similarly for adult education practitioners, the many titles associated with the sector - '*teachers, tutors, lecturer, adult or community education workers*' (Lipinski et al, 2007) - are confusing and give no indication that one adult education tutor working on part-time contracts with a number of providers could be assigned each of the titles depending on the place of learning. The confusion created by the plethora of titles emerges from the data, with some tutors asserting '*I am not a teacher*' while referring to their learners as 'students'. There is a sense that 'unqualified' adult education practitioners could be challenged by 'qualified' teachers should they describe themselves as 'teachers'. However, the advent of registration confers 'qualified' status on adult education practitioners. Lycan (1999) suggests that

unclear or mysterious language should be examined from the point of view of the receiver, in this case the adult learner. Lack of a clear title that describes the learning process accurately could give rise to confusion, possible loss of confidence and consequent difficulties in establishing a positive learning relationship in the classroom.

Exploration and clarification of the meaning of adult education and ECCE language and terminology would assist practitioners and learners and may be a prerequisite for the healthy development of the sector. Representative bodies, as suggested earlier, would be likely to address such issues of language and identity as a priority.

Chapter summary

Tutors of childcare, internationally and in this small study, tend to be from diverse backgrounds and recruitment processes and are predominantly female. This reality impacts on the three themes discussed in this chapter: identity, diversity and status. As a career, 'childcare tutor' is built on foundations that are vague and tentative. The childcare tutors interviewed in the study tended to stumble into their jobs, with no recruitment pattern obvious other than opportunistic responses by providers to word of mouth awareness of available individuals. A striking aspect of the tutor profiles is the diversity of qualifications and experience among the respondents. The absence of a defined identity for childcare tutors impacts negatively on existing and potential tutors, on providers of childcare training and, in turn, on the quality of ECCE itself. However, once recruited, tutors appear to build on their caring inclinations for children and extend this to their students, often in very pastoral ways. They tend to be much less confident about their specific knowledge of ECCE subject matter. The discussion also explored the ambiguous position of providers who believe themselves to be supportive of tutors but whose knowledge of ECCE is at best rudimentary. Childcare tutors' poor identity is one factor among many that combine to create a low status for this work. Low hourly pay, part-time contracts and lack of job security, compound feelings of poor self-esteem and lack of confidence. These all impact on the quality of the services provided. A vague and diverse identity combined with low status has resulted in the marginalisation of adult educators generally and childcare tutors in particular within emerging qualification

frameworks, most strikingly in the neglect of the sector, so far, by the Teaching Council.

While all occupations have particular CPD needs, isolation and fragmentation suggest that opportunities for childcare tutors to discuss their practices with each other need to be encouraged, structured and supported.

Finally, the chapter raises questions about the unevenness and at times contradictory nature of much of the language and terminology used by policy makers and practitioners in relation to ECCE and adult education. The lack of clarity contributes to further confusion.

Recommendations - the future

An agreed profile for childcare tutors outlining the knowledge, skills and experience required would benefit all stakeholders. A cooperative approach to its development by childcare training providers, representative childcare organisations and existing tutors would ensure widespread acceptance.

Meeting tutors' CPD needs would profit from a twofold response; firstly structured programmes to meet subject matter knowledge and pedagogical development needs. Secondly, facilitated, loosely structured learning communities would assist sharing of information, resources and insights; identification of issues of interest and concern as well as facilitating the development of reflective practice.

Local education centres[136] and VECs are well positioned to provide such a service. As many tutors already invest in their own professional development, such an initiative could be cost neutral.

Access to a support service would benefit providers and tutors by providing training and assistance with programme development and delivery.

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[136] Section 37 of the 1998 Education Act designates education support centres as places 'in which services are provided for schools, teachers, parents, boards and other relevant persons which support them in carrying out their functions in respect of the provision of education'.

New entrants to the adult education profession would benefit from initial tutor education to assist them develop their capacity to develop and deliver FETAC certified programmes thus meeting their learners' needs.

The development and support of a representative body such as the failed Adult Learning Council would provide a forum for dialogue and an information conduit between all the education sectors. Tutors could use such a forum to pool the learning from their practice. Such an initiative would benefit the entire sector but most importantly contribute to the development and improvement of learning programmes. It would also enable a deeper discussion of the policy and theoretical issues impacting on the sector, such as those outlined throughout this thesis.

Establishing and maintaining communication between classroom learning and workplace practice arenas would benefit both.

Following on this study, an investigation of FETAC Level 5 programme graduates' workplace performance would assist assessment of the programme's effectiveness.

Inclusion of adult education practitioners in Teaching Council deliberations and decision-making would improve its processes and contribute to a clearer identity, improved status and more confident practitioners. Similarly, appropriate representation of adult education and ECCE in future policy bodies is necessary for sustained development of the sector.

Some of the issues raised in this study (for example, reluctant learner/ reluctant childcare worker; programme graduate with inadequate work experience) have the potential to impact negatively on children in childcare settings and as such warrant further study.

A further study focusing on FETAC Level 5 Childcare programme graduates' knowledge, skills and aptitude for childcare would assist the evaluation of the award.

This study focused on a small, defined area of adult education. It could be replicated for other professional care areas such as social, elder, and disability care sectors.

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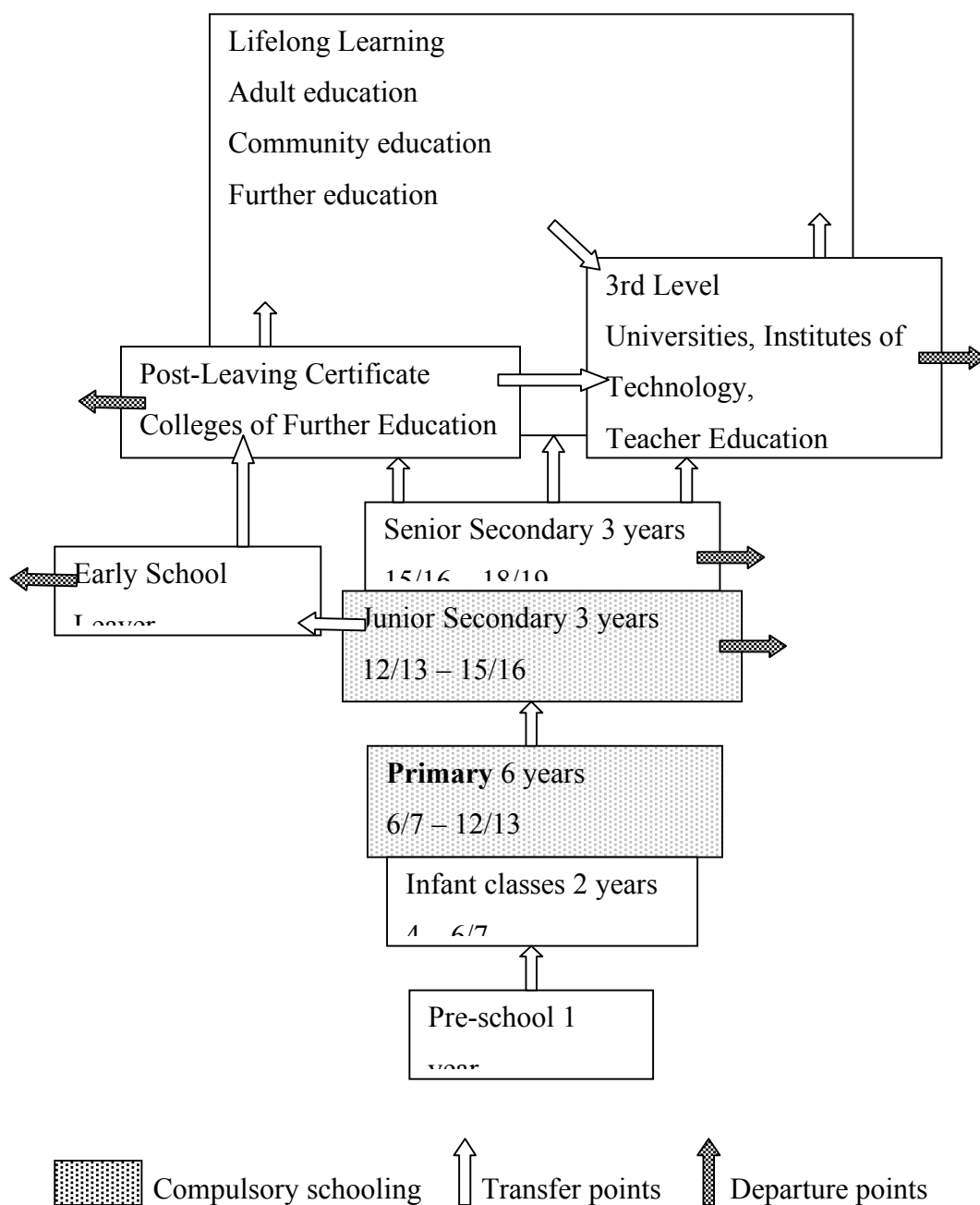
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Appendix 1   **The Structure of the Irish Education System**

Lifelong Learning

Adult education

Community education

Further education

3rd Level

Universities, Institutes of Technology,

Teacher Education

Post-Leaving Certificate

Colleges of Further Education

Senior Secondary 3 years

15/16   18/19

Early School

Leaver

Junior Secondary 3 years

12/13 – 15/16

Primary 6 years

6/7 – 12/13

Infant classes 2 years

4   6/7

Pre-school 1

year

Compulsory schooling   Transfer points   Departure points

The Department of Education and Science is responsible for providing a comprehensive, accessible education system that will enable individuals to develop to their full potential as persons and to participate fully as citizens in society, and contribute to social and economic development. The Education Act 1998 stipulates the functions and responsibilities of key players in the system. (DES, 2004).

Appendix 2   The FETAC DCHSC Level 5 Childcare Award

Code	Title	Level	Credit Value
The total credit value required for this certificate is 8. This will be achieved by completing:			
All of the following component(s)			
D20005	Child Development	5	1
D20153	Working in Childcare	5	1
D20007	Early Childhood Education	5	1
D20159	Caring for Children (0-6 years)	5	1
G20001	Communications	5	1
W20008	Work Experience	5	1
A minimum credit value of 1 from the following component(s)			
B20032	Word Processing	5	1
B20132	Legal Studies	5	1
C20140	Nutrition	5	1
D20003	Care Provision and Practice	5	1
D20032	Human Growth & Development	5	1
D20121	Art & Craft for Childcare	5	1
D20165	Safety and Health at Work	5	1
D20169	Intellectual Disability Studies	5	1
D20186	Special Needs Assisting	5	1
D20187	Understanding Special Needs	5	1
D20188	Occupational First Aid	5	1
E20121	Úsáid na Gaeilge le Páistí Óga	5	1
E20122	Irish for Pre-School Services	5	1
G20031	Social Studies	5	1
G20033	Personal Effectiveness in the Workplace	5	1
G20034	Teamworking	5	1

L21824	Integrating Children with Additional Needs	5	1
L20669	Approaches to Childcare Education	5	1
E20153	After School Support Skills	5	1
L32428	After School Childcare	6	1
N22795	Food Safety and HACCP	5	1
L22150	Workplace Food Safety and Hygiene	5	1
L22659	Additional Needs	5	1
L22559	Challenging Behaviour	5	1
N22832	Understanding Children's Play	5	1
L22582	Working with Children under Three	5	1
L22583	Pre-School Learning Skills	5	1
L22584	Lifestyle Planning	5	1
L20624	Learning Through Drama	5	1
L22209	Montessori Methodology	5	1
L22292	Montessori Theory	5	1
L21949	Childminding Practice	5	1
L21918	Caring for Children with Special Needs	5	1
L22402	Special Needs Childcare	5	1
N22682	School Age Childcare	5	1
L32480	Life Skills	6	1
L32344	Special Needs Assistance	6	1
E20169	Intercultural Studies	5	1
The remaining credit value of 1 can be obtained by using one or more components from level 4, 5 or 6.			

The following page details the components of the new FETAC Level 5 Early Childhood Care and Education Award

Certification Requirements:

The new award 5M2009 Early Childhood Care and Education, was developed through the Common Awards System. Providers who wish to offer this award must have their programme validated by FETAC before it can be delivered to learners. The provider should check the award specification for this award (see below) and its associated minor awards for validation requirements.

The total credit value required for this certificate is 120. This will be achieved by completing:

Code	Title	Level	Credit Value
All of the following component(s)			
5N1764	Child Development	5	15
5N1770	Early Care and Education Practice	5	15
5N1773	Early Childhood Education and Play	5	15
5N1765	Child Health and Well Being	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N1356	Work Experience	5	15
5N1433	Work Practice	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N0690	Communications	5	15
5N1367	Teamworking	5	15
5N1390	Personal Effectiveness	5	15
5N0972	Customer Service	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N1786	Special Needs Assisting	5	15
5N1769	Creative Arts for Early Childhood	5	15

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5N1279	Human Growth and Development	5	15
5N1370	Social Studies	5	15
5N1394	Legal Practice and Procedures	5	15
5N1763	Approaches to Early Childhood Education	5	15
5N1766	Childminding Practice	5	15
5N1779	Infant and Toddler Years	5	15
5N1781	School Age Childcare	5	15
5N1775	Equality and Diversity in Childcare	5	15
5N2006	Nutrition	5	15
5N2005	Irish for Preschool Services	5	15
5N1207	Occupational First Aid	5	5
5N2396	Children with Additional Needs	5	15

The remaining credit value of 15 can be obtained by using relevant component(s) from level 5. A maximum of 15 credits may be used from either level 4 or level 6.

Appendix 3   Information to potential tutor study participants

Research Project   The CPD Needs Of Childcare Tutors

My name is Winifred Jeffers; I am studying for an M.Litt in the Education Department in NUI Maynooth. The theme of my research project is the Continuing Professional Development Needs of Childcare Tutors. I am focusing on tutors who teach courses leading to Level 5 qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework.

The research aims to:

identify the range of childcare education and training providers

investigate the learning and support needs of childcare tutors engaged in providing training at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications

explore some of the challenges facing education providers of childcare training programmes.

As well as desk research, I will talk with tutors to explore and understand

the issues and challenges that you encounter in your teaching,

how you deal with these concerns and

your views regarding how the professional development needs of tutors might be met.

Initially, I will meet tutors individually, gather and analyse the contributions to identify main themes and then meet with a group of tutors to discuss the topics that have emerged. I expect that the individual interviews will take about ninety minutes each. The group interviews may take a little longer, but no more than two hours.

No interviewees will be identified in the research report. I will use digital voice recorders during the interviews, I will store the voice files on my password-protected laptop using coded file names (eg. Tutor 001). In addition, I will not identify any workplaces. I will use the terms 'private provider', 'community provider', 'PLC', 'Adult Education', 'BTEI' to identify the contexts.

This project would not be possible without your cooperation. I greatly appreciate your willingness to support and participate in this research. I will give you an opportunity to review all of your contributions such as quotes or references that I use in the final report. Similarly, you are free to stop participating at any stage.

Further information is available by contacting me or my research supervisor, Dr. Bernie Grummel. (Contact details removed)

Appendix 4   Tutor Interview Schedule

Interview guide   Tutors

Tell me about being a tutor on a childcare programme. (do u teach in more than one centre?

How did you become a childcare tutor? (background, experience, qualifications, length of service)

What do you most enjoy about teaching childcare?

Could you describe the ideal childcare tutor?

Tell me about the issues and challenges you face.

When you need support, where do you get it? (centre staff, CPD events, mentors, colleagues, family …)

Do you have sufficient resources to meet all your teaching needs? (equipment, subject knowledge, pedagogy, work experience placements, time)

In thinking about professional development needs of childcare tutors in general in what areas or topics do you think training is most needed and is most important? (childcare, teaching, FETAC)

When thinking about your own cpd needs, what training would help you most?

How would you describe your classroom practice, what do you actually do?

Do you have any contact with childcare providers?

In your opinion do the learners become proficient childcare workers through participating in this programme? (evidence …)

Within the FETAC structure, to what extent does the Module Descriptor guide your preparation and teaching?

The new FETAC childcare awards at Level 5 and Level 6 have just been published. What are your views?

What do you think are the main issues facing childcare tutors?

Appendix 5   Information for potential provider participants

Research Project   **The CPD Needs Of Childcare Tutors**

Information

I, Winifred Jeffers, am undertaking this research project in conjunction with the Education Department in NUI Maynooth as part of my M.Litt study programme. Dr. Bernie Grummel is supervising the research.

I work as an authenticator of NCVA/FETAC certified education and training programmes. I also work as an assessor, verifier and evaluator of provider quality assurance systems.

The advent of a free pre-school year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) coupled with the requirement that all pre-school leaders in the programme must, by September 2012, hold a nationally accredited major award at FETAC Level 5 (or equivalent) in childcare/ early childhood care and education will mean an increase in demand for childcare training.

The aims of the research project are to:

- identify the range of childcare education and training providers
- investigate the learning and support needs of childcare tutors engaged in providing training at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications
- explore some of the challenges facing education providers of childcare training programmes

In addition to desk research, I will conduct semi-structured interviews with childcare tutors and education providers to elicit their views on the issues and challenges of teaching childcare practitioners. I will analyse the resulting data and submit a research thesis to the Education Department NUI Maynooth. The data may also inform further exploration of the topic. I expect that interviews will take no longer than ninety minutes.

Tutors and education providers' contributing to the research will be afforded confidentiality. Identities and workplaces will not be disclosed. Interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder; the files will be stored on the researcher's password protected personal computer. Codes (eg, tutor 001) will be used for the titles of the voice files. Participants' contributions will be analysed to identify

emerging themes. These themes will be explored further in follow-up focus group sessions.

This project would not be possible without your cooperation. I greatly appreciate your willingness to support and participate in this research. I will give you an opportunity to review all of your contributions such as quotes or references that I use in the final report. In addition, you are free to cease participating at any stage. Further information is available by contacting me, or my research supervisor Dr. Bernie Grummel. (Contact details removed)

Appendix 6   Provider Interview Schedule

Interview guide   Providers

What informed your decision to offer childcare programmes?

How do you source or find childcare tutors/teachers/instructors? (check by which title they are known)

Do you have set recruitment criteria for tutors on childcare programmes?

Do you provide a job/task description to tutors?

Is the tutor's work monitored by management? – in what ways? (teaching style, progress, assignment briefs/marking schemes, pedagogy)

Do you provide support to childcare tutors? Examples?

Do you provide training for childcare tutors? Examples?

In what ways does your QA system inform and support your recruitment and development of childcare tutors?

Do you have any contact with any local childcare organisations or facilities? (County Childcare Committee, Barnardos)

What issues or challenges do you encounter as a provider of childcare education and training? (work experience placements, quality of tutors; tutors turnover; FETAC requirement compliance)

In your experience what professional development needs do you think childcare tutors have?

Baseline data:

Number of childcare courses per annum _____

Course duration _____

Delivery Mode (p/t, f/t, day, night, distance) _____

Number of students per annum _____

Number of tutors, part-time _____   full-time _____

Appendix 7　　　What teachers need to know and be able to do

American educationalist Linda Darling-Hammond offers a framework for teacher development that could usefully be adapted for responding to the needs of childcare tutors

- *Understand subject matter thoroughly enough to organise it so that students can create useful cognitive maps of the terrain they are studying*

- *Have a pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) that enables teachers so that they are accessible to others*

- *Framing productive experiences for students requires knowledge of development – how children and adolescents think and behave, what they are trying to accomplish, what they find interesting, what they already know, and what concepts they might have trouble with in particular domains at particular ages.*

- *Teaching in ways that connect with students also requires an understanding of differences that may arise from culture, language, family, community, gender, prior schooling and the other factors that shape people's experiences, as well as differences that may arise from the intelligences students rely on, their preferred approaches to learning, and any specific learning difficulties they may have.*

- *To know how to listen carefully*

- *To build pedagogical learner's knowledge (Grimmett and MacKinnon, 1992) which grows as teachers examine how particular students think and reason, how they learn best and what motivates them*

- *Have an understanding of motivation*

- *To understand what helps children learn in different ways*

- *To command teaching strategies that address a variety of ways to learn and a variety of purposefully selected goals for learning.*

- *To know about curriculum resources and technologies*

- *To analyse and reflect on their practice.*

From: Linda Darling-Hammond, The Right to Learn, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997, p. 294 sq

Appendix 8　　　　Some Policy Developments That Influence and Affect The Provision of Childcare in Ireland.

Government departments and associated organisations marked the final years of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century by an increased consideration of the place of children and their rights in Irish society. Research reports and consultation processes have resulted in new policies and regulations governing the provision of childcare. To a considerable extent the focus on children, their care and education was consequent on Ireland's 1992 ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The policy documents that informed this study are listed below with a brief synopsis of some relevant points.

Year of Publication	Author	Title	Relevant Points of Interest
1991	Government of Ireland	Childcare Act (1991)	Section VII describes the duties of childcare providers and empowers the Minister to develop regulations governing the operation of pre-school services.
1996	Dept. of Health and Children	Child Care (pre-school services) Regulations 1996 and Child Care (pre-school services) Regulations (Amendment) 1997	Identifies the responsibilities of childcare providers and requires them to notify the department of their intention to establish a childcare facility. It details the regulations governing the operation of such facilities and establishes procedures for their inspection.
1999	Government of Ireland (Dept. of Education & Science)	Ready to Learn (White Paper)	Set out the policy framework for ECCE and reiterated the Government's commitment to provide funding for pre-school education.
1999	Government of Ireland (Dept. of Justice, Equality & Law Reform)	National Childcare Strategy	The purpose of the strategy was to 'integrate the different strands of the current arrangements for the development and delivery of childcare and early educational services'. It describes a number of occupational roles in the childcare sector and details the associated key tasks and responsibilities.
2000	Government of Ireland (Dept. of Health &	National Children's Strategy	This strategy aimed to 'enhance the status and further improve the quality of life of Ireland's children'. It also sought to progress the implementation

	Children)		of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
2002	Dept. of Justice, Equality & Law Reform	National Childcare Census	Undertaken during 1999/2000, the aim of the census was 'to improve the information flow about childcare services in Ireland and to establish a central body of baseline information covering centre based childcare facilities'.
2002	Dept. of Justice, Equality & Law Reform	Model Framework for Education, Training and Professional Development for the Early Childhood Care and Education	This document addresses the education, training and professional development needs of the ECCE sector. It refines the occupational profiles described in the Childcare Strategy document. It describes the goal of training of childcare practitioners as the development of 'reflective practitioners.
2004	Dept. of Education and Science	OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in Ireland	The review analyses key policy issues in the early childhood field related to access, quality and co-ordination. It pays particular attention to the training of childcare practitioners as well as the hallmarks of quality.
2004	CECDE	Insights on Quality	The report reviews quality aspects of early childhood care and education provision in Ireland between 1990 and 2004. The review was carried out as part of the preparation for the development of the National Framework for Quality.
2005	NESF	Early Childhood Care and Education NESF Report 31	This document highlighted the lack of progress towards implementation of various reports on childcare provision and the 'insufficient financial investment' in the sector. It recommended an audit of training provision for childcare practitioners. This has not happen.
2005	Government of Ireland	Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	This office was established '*to improve the lives of children under the National Children's Strategy and bring greater coherence to policy-making for children' (Andrews, 2010)*
2006	Dept. of Health & Children	Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006	The regulations stipulate the standards relating to health, safety and welfare required of childcare providers.
2006	CECDE	Síolta	Síolta is the national quality framework for early childhood education. Síolta is comprised of three related elements of quality - twelve principles, sixteen standards and

			seventy-five components. The aim of Síolta is to support the improvement of the quality of all aspects of childcare practice.
2009		Developing the workforce in the early childhood care and education sector Background discussion paper	
2009		Aistear	
2010		Workforce Development Plan	
2012	DCYA	Statement of Strategy 2011 - 2014	The document explains the 'high level objectives' and the values of the Department as well as its programme for Government.

Appendix 9: Examples of mind maps developed