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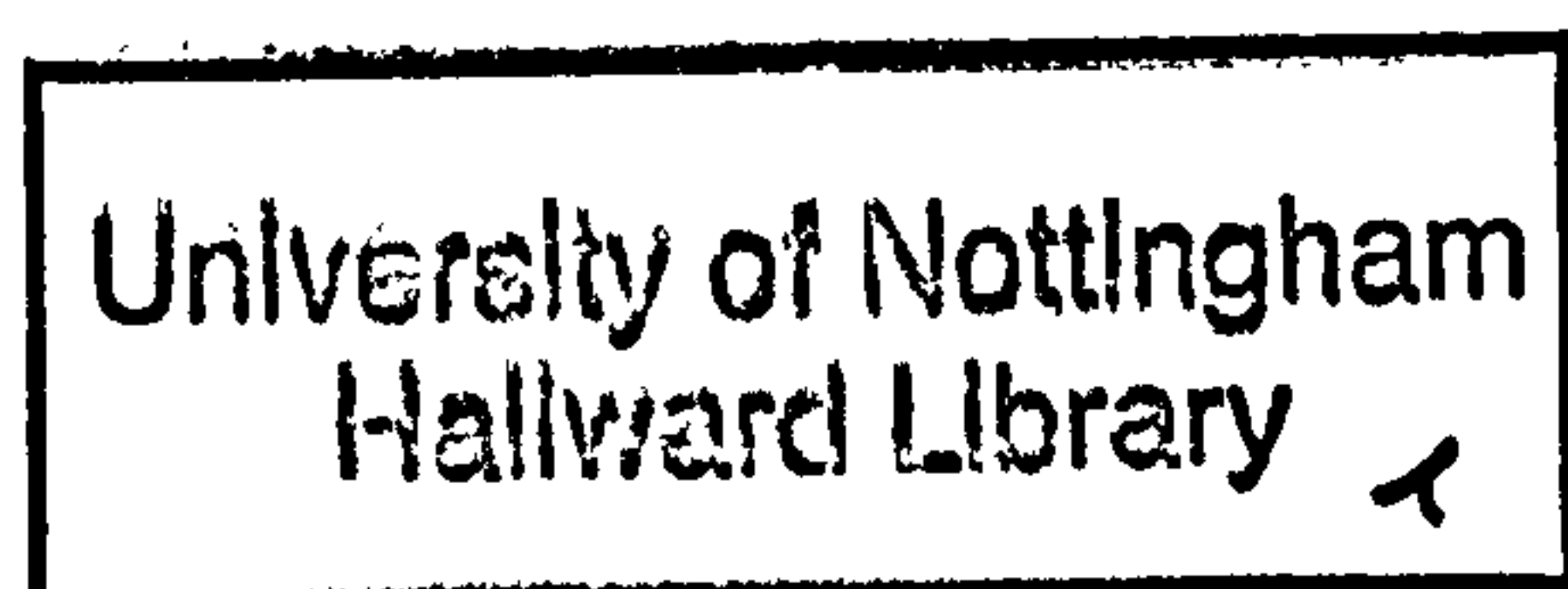
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**Lifelong Learning, Policy Development and Practice, a  
Case Study of the Republic of Ireland.**

**Anne Doona, B.A., M.A., Cert.Ed.**

**Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham**

**For the degree of Doctorate of Education (Lifelong Education)**



**April 2007**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to study lifelong learning policy development in the Republic of Ireland and its translation into practice in Third Level Institutions. The specific purpose of the study is to map the development of policy and investigate the influences on this development including the changing socio economic and political context within Ireland and its membership of the European Union. The focus of the research is also **Learning for Life**, the Irish government's major White Paper on adult education and lifelong learning, published in 2000. The research also begins to investigate how Third Level Institutions in Ireland have interpreted **Learning for Life** and other policy documents in their own policies and practice. I was also interested in investigating the barriers that were perceived to exist by people, in both government and educational institutions, to the successful implementation of lifelong learning policy in Ireland.

The thesis also explores the approach that has been taken to lifelong learning in Ireland analysing whether this approach has taken a predominantly human or social capital approach or a mixture of both.

Although a number of studies have investigated the impact of lifelong learning policies on national and institutional practice in other countries, very little research has been carried out on Ireland. This thesis makes a valuable contribution by providing a case study

based analysis of policy development within a changing economic and social context. It also provides an insight into the approach taken by one individual country and the influences on that approach. Although the study is clearly and deliberately a case study I have included reference to two other European nations who have high adult participation rates in education, Denmark and Sweden, as comparators with the experiences of Ireland.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Lifelong learning has occupied centre stage in many European nations since the 1970s. There have been many policies and strategies developed to raise the skills and qualifications levels of adults at local, national, and at trans national levels.

My initial literature review showed that there is a lack of analysis of lifelong learning policies and their development in Ireland, but that there is an increasing emphasis in institutional and governmental thinking on lifelong learning. Studies e.g. Field (2000) suggested that:

“In both Britain and Ireland as elsewhere in Western Europe lifelong learning has recently commanded considerable policy attention”

(Field 2000, p.215)

The OECD has also suggested with reference to Ireland that:

“There has been much reference to the ideal of lifelong learning and the importance of second chance education. But as in nearly all other countries there is no evidence of any concerted effort to make it a reality”

(OECD 1991, p. 33)

Much research has been carried out into lifelong learning policies and practice in the UK and other European countries. Some of these studies have been around the changes in policy and practice that are needed to transform Further and Higher Education institutions into lifelong learning institutions, others have focused on the structural changes needed. Some, for example the work of Dadzie (1993) on black learners or Leicester (1999) on learners with disabilities, have focused on



the changes needed to make Further and Higher Education institutions meet the needs of specific groups of learners. When I began my research very little work had been carried out in the Republic of Ireland. Field's work (2000) had looked at lifelong learning in the North of Ireland and briefly looked at policy development in the Republic. Keogh (2003) produced a piece of research that charted the history and development of adult education policies in the Republic. Clancy and Wall (2001) carried out research into participation in Higher Education in Ireland for groups of adult learners focusing particularly on social disadvantage and social class. Overall though there has been relatively little systematic research into lifelong learning policy development and the impact this has had on Third Level Institutions in Ireland.

The dearth of research was therefore one prompt for a study of the Republic of Ireland.

A major focus for me was an interest in how European policy development influences one country. Ireland sees itself as a major player in Europe, joining the European Union in 1973 and the European Monetary Fund in 1999. It has keenly embraced many European initiatives and projects, many of these have been around Education and Training. I was interested in exploring whether an emphasis on Europe and being a European state influenced the development of national policy. Interesting for me also was the question of how far

national policy sets the agenda for change and development in institutions. I also believe that countries can learn from each other's experience and hoped that my findings would be valuable in my own professional life in Further Education in the UK. A case study approach provides a valuable model for investigating the development of lifelong learning policies and their application in one particular nation.

Although countries such as England have had a strong focus on adult education and lifelong learning since the 1970s Ireland is a relative newcomer to policy in this area. As recently as 2002 Ireland had relatively low numbers of adults in Third Level education. In 2002 there were a total of around 130,000 full time and 34,000 part time students in the Third Level sector in Ireland, in Higher Education and in the Institutes of Technology. Within the University sector less than 4% of people accessing degree courses were adults. The Commission on the Points System had predicted that by 2005 15 % of those studying in Institutes of Technology would be adults. Less than 10% of those accessing education in the Institutes of Technology in 2002 were mature students. Provision for adults does also exist in community settings and local adult education centres, mainly around leisure activities and some basic skills training. The Irish government has however raised the low participation of adults in Higher Education as a national issue

of concern in its **Programme for Prosperity and Fairness** (2000).

A wake up call for Ireland did occur in 1997 with the publication of the **International Adult Literacy Survey** which showed that Ireland had the second lowest adult literacy rates in Europe, second only to Poland. In 1998 Ireland produced a **Green Paper on Adult Education**, which led in 2000 to the production of Ireland's major policy document on adult education, the **White Paper Learning for Life**. This set out the key drivers and strategies for the implementation of lifelong learning in Ireland and began the process of strategic planning in this area. **Learning for Life** gives a clear policy direction to Third Level and Further Education Institutions in Ireland to develop strategies to take lifelong learning forward.

Changes in demographics e.g. a falling birth rate and skills shortages particularly in hi-tech and knowledge based industries provided further imperatives for Irish policy makers to look more closely at the area of lifelong learning. A growing skills and qualifications gap between the young and old in Irish society also provided a further incentive to address adult skills.

The literature suggests that Ireland is divided between a focus on the development of general adult education to meet personal needs and the social inclusion agenda, and an emphasis on upskilling and vocational development to meet the needs of the economy.

The policy documents emanating from Ireland have espoused radical aims of inclusion and participation and the development of the social and cultural life of the country. Despite this rhetoric I was interested in investigating whether the Irish government's emphasis has been primarily on vocational training and development and the upskilling of the workforce to deal with a skills gap. The demographic changes and skills shortage referred to above would have provided a rationale for this approach along with concerns about low completion rates for Second Level Education. Ireland has made major strides forward in this area. In 1966 55% of the population had finished their education at under the age of fifteen; by 2000 this was 20%. There are still concerns around the twenty or so percent that do not continue. Concerns have also been raised re the widening gap in educational achievement between younger and older age groups. This, coupled with the findings of the **International Adult Literacy Review (1997)**, highlighted the need for a major focus on lifelong learning and the development of policies to support it. The interplay between a human and a social capital approach to lifelong learning to address these issues was of interest to me.

My personal interest in the chosen field of study, lifelong learning, stems from three main sources. The first relates to over twenty five years experience as a lecturer and a Senior Manager in Further and Higher Education in the UK. I began

my teaching career in the late 1970's as a teacher of "A" Levels and Access programmes for adults. Subsequently I have been involved in lifelong learning in many ways, including a role as Deputy Principal of a large English Further Education College with over 20,000 full and part time learners of whom 13,000 were adults, i.e. over 25. I have also been an active lifelong learning throughout my life, studying everything from a Masters Degree to tap dancing. My experience over the years has provided me with a strong interest in, and understanding of, the issues facing adult returners and the institutions that wish to attract them. I worked in an environment where, since 1979 and the publication of the Kennedy report on lifelong learning, lifelong learning has occupied centre stage in terms of policy development. I saw first hand many changes in policy and therefore recommendations for practice in Further Education in the UK in relation to this area.

There have been many initiatives, including Learn Direct, UFI (the University for Industry), and Access Programmes and Basic Skills initiatives to engage adults in learning after their compulsory schooling period. Some of these initiatives have been successful, others less so.

My third reason for choosing Ireland to study is a rather more personal one. I come from an Anglo-Irish background and although born in England the family moved back to Ireland when I was a toddler. I spent my childhood up to the age of

eleven in the North of Ireland. I had many relatives in the Republic and spent a lot of summers and holidays there. Although we returned to live in England I have been a frequent visitor to Ireland since and have family members, friends and a house there. Recently I have returned to live and work in Ireland in a Third Level Institution just outside Dublin.

Knowledge and interest in the Irish education context, coupled with links into Third Level Institutions in Ireland all provided useful research tools.

What interested me in relation to lifelong learning in Ireland are the following questions,

- How was policy on lifelong learning developed in Ireland, what were the principles behind this development?
- How has Ireland's place in Europe, and their view of themselves as European, influenced the development of policy on lifelong learning?
- Are there human capital principles at work, social capital, or a mixture of both?
- What effect has the development of national policy in **Learning for Life** had on policy and strategy development at institutional level?
- What effect has this had on adult participation rates?
- How will lifelong learning policies and practices be monitored and evaluated?

In order to answer these questions I chose a Case Study approach to Ireland focusing on the development and implementation of policy at governmental and institutional level in Third Level Institutions. The research focused specifically on the Third Level Institutions, i.e. Universities and Institutes of Technology, in the Republic of Ireland. An interview also carried out with a key representative of the Department of Education and Science in Ireland. I also had a number of discussions with key individuals; these were the Principal of a Further Education College, the Principal Officer for Further Education in the DoES in Ireland and the Education Officer for Dublin Vocational Education Committee. The research was carried out using documentary analysis, questionnaires and face-to-face semi structured interviews. The scale of the questionnaire and interview research is small; there are only twenty-one publicly funded Third Level Institutions in Ireland, fourteen Institutes of Technology and seven Universities. Of these twenty-one I had initial responses from twelve institutions, from which I was able to carry out further research using a more detailed questionnaire. Subsequently face-to-face interviews were carried out with representatives from two institutions and one from the Department of Education and Science. The scale of the research allowed me to focus on issues and study them in some depth. Much research remains, many institutions are still at very earlier

stages in their implementation of policy in lifelong learning, others are making great strides forward. Hopefully my research has added to the knowledge of the area. Possibilities for further research, of which there are many, are highlighted in the conclusion.

Throughout this thesis in the interests of brevity I will use the term Ireland to refer to the Republic of Ireland, the term “the Island of Ireland” will be used to refer to both the North and the South of Ireland together.

The term Lifelong Learning itself can however be interpreted in a number of ways, indeed one of the problems with lifelong learning is definitional. The literature review briefly discusses some of the definitional issues. For my purposes the definition in **Learning for Life** proved the simplest and most useful. This states that lifelong learning is:

“Systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learn having concluded initial education and training “  
( DFES 2000,p.12)

The literature review highlights and analyses the research that has been carried out into lifelong learning and associated areas in Ireland.



## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

This chapter will review the literature that exists in the area of lifelong learning development policy and practice with particular reference to Ireland. The review is related to my core research questions.

In preparing this literature review I have tried to answer the following key questions:

- What does the literature say about how lifelong learning policy has developed in Ireland?
- Has there been any systematic research into how and why **Learning for Life** was produced?
- What does the literature suggest are the drivers for developing a lifelong learning policy?

In this context I was particularly interested in the human and social capital aspects of policy, and reviewed the literature to explore my initial contention that lifelong learning in Ireland has focused both on a human capital, (education for retraining and reskilling), and a social capital (education for citizenship personal development and social inclusion), approach to education. The emphasis at any one time appeared to be explained by demography, globalisation, the changing needs of the economy and geographical location.

I was also interested in what the literature says about the progress that has been made in implementing **Learning for Life** published in 2000.

Has there been any research carried out on the needs of adult learners since the publication of **Learning for Life** and how they are being met?

How has Ireland's sense of being a key player in Europe influenced its policy and practice on lifelong learning?

I was also interested in researching what the existing literature says about how Third Level Institutions have responded to the needs of adult learners.

The main focus is on literature since the 1990s as this was when the Irish government produced the first major policy document on lifelong learning. This was the Green Paper, **Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning (1998)** the forerunner to **Learning for Life (2000)**. Reference is made in the review to earlier published works particularly in the discussion on the concepts of lifelong learning and human and social capital, but the main focus is on research in Ireland since the 1990s.

My initial focus has been on literature within Ireland but reference has been made to UK and other European research in order to broaden the discussion and contextualise the Irish case. A range of disciplines has been searched for the relevant literature in particular sociology, social policy, and economics.

The following databases have been used;

DoES publications both in England and Ireland

OECD publications

Index of Theses in Higher Education Institutions in Ireland and the UK

The Vocational Education Committees Research Database

A number of key journals exist which publish relevant material

The following journals were searched;

Adults Learning

Journal of Adult and Continuing Education

Studies in the Education of Adults

Journal of Access Policy and Practice

I also conducted a search of articles from national and provincial Irish newspapers.

A search of Third Level Institution websites and literature was undertaken to gain an understanding of individual institutions policies and strategies on lifelong learning. Government publications were searched via an index produced by the Irish government. I also visited the official government publications bookshop in Dublin on two occasions to view their published literature.

This review is a summary of the issues raised in academic texts and research reports and in government publications. My information seeking was comprehensive but was limited by the amount published on this topic already. The literature review

cannot be considered to be all encompassing and there will undoubtedly be omissions, and research is ongoing in this area. However the main themes to have emerged from recent research are covered.

A major part of the work centres around the development of policy on lifelong learning in Europe and in Ireland. Chapter 4 outlines the development of policy with reference to key documents in Europe and in Ireland. Several key documents have been used in my research, of particular importance are the following,

**Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong learning (1998)**

**European Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000)**

**Learning for Life (2000)**

**Social Class and Access to Higher Education 4th Survey (2001)**

**Report of the Steering Group to the PLC review (2003)**  
(The McIver report)

I have grouped the findings of my literature review thematically rather than chronologically as this relates better to the research questions I am interested in exploring.

Those themes are;

- Lifelong learning as a concept.
- The debate around human and social capital and its relationship to lifelong learning in Ireland.

- Policy development and implementation of lifelong learning in Ireland.
- The impact of European policy on lifelong learning discourse
- Research into the impact of policies on adult education participation rates

I also searched briefly other areas that seemed to be key themes in current thinking around education in Ireland to see if any of the research was relevant to my topic. These included rural development, and the education of disadvantaged communities. The main research findings from each theme are now discussed.

### **2.1: Lifelong learning as a concept**

The area of lifelong learning has attracted much attention in recent years. A glance at any contemporary textbook or at any UK or Irish government policy document will reveal a reference to lifelong learning; not only lifelong learning but a bewildering array of associated terms, adult education, continuing education, Education Permanente and continuing professional development. There seems to be a general consensus that some form of post compulsory education is a good thing and people are exhorted to join in and are offered incentives, including financial, to do so. Long ( 1974) suggested that the idea of lifelong education reflects a belief in the mystique of education, if education is a good thing then lifelong education must be even better. Atkin suggests that

there is a perception that lifelong learning is an inherently good thing and as such requires little or no justification, (Atkin 2000).

However, people learn all the time via social contacts, friends, family, printed word, electronic means and a variety of images. This is not however what lifelong learning as used by educationalists and politicians refers to. The use of the term lifelong learning implies a form of structured and deliberate education and usually refers to the education of adults rather than school age children.

The European Union's Employment and Labour Market definition of lifelong learning suggested that it is:

“All purposeful learning activity, whether formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence”

(European Union 2000, p.170)

It went further and added that lifelong learning was considered to be essential for personal fulfilment outside the labour market as well.

The term lifelong education and learning may denote an overall scheme aimed at both restructuring the existing education system and at developing the entire educational potential outside the education system.

“In such a scheme men and women are the agents of their own education through continual interaction between thoughts and actions”.

(UNESCO 1976, p. 45)

**Learning for Life** defined lifelong learning as,

“Systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learn having concluded initial education or training”

(Department of Education and Science 2000, p. 12)

The use of the term is not however unproblematic. There appear to be a number of assumptions: that learning is a “good thing” and is generally valued, that there is clarity of purpose of lifelong learning and that people generally understand what this is. However critical scepticism does exist in this area, and Ruegg (1974) even doubted the existence of lifelong learning when he referred to lifelong learning as a Utopian idea whose main function is to stimulate people into thinking critically about learning rather than an entity with a clearly defined syllabus and purpose.

Lifelong education is criticised as a term by Puchen (1974) for being an elastic concept, which can mean whatever the person using the term wants it to mean. Lack of clarity of the term

itself therefore appears to be endemic. A reason for this lack of clarity may be that as Taylor et al (2001) point out, policy formulation and implementation in higher education do not take place within a vacuum but reflect the wider socio political environment and prevailing economic conditions. The term lifelong learning also appears to change and be redefined as these conditions change.

The above comments are derived from a number of general key texts defining and analysing lifelong learning in general.

## **2.2: Lifelong learning research in the UK**

Having studied those general texts my research then focused on the research in to lifelong learning in the UK that could relate to my work on Ireland. An important series of works on lifelong learning by Coffield published in two volumes in 2000 proved useful for my research.

In the second volume of this work edited by Coffield (2000), Field and Schuller carried out a study into patterns of lifelong learning in Scotland and Northern Ireland. This was a detailed empirical study of school attainment and adult learning in Northern Ireland and Scotland. The methods of the study were to explore the nature, extent and pattern of any statistical divergence between performance in initial education and continuing Education in Scotland and Northern Ireland and to identify possible reasons for this divergence.



The methodology was based around an analysis of official statistics and other questionnaire data. Field and Schuller (2000) also undertook fieldwork using a series of focus groups, and individual interviews with lifelong learners.

This primary data was checked against other documentary material including published reports from providers of education and training as well as major publications from public agencies and government departments.

The key results of the research were that in Northern Ireland there was very high achievement in initial education compared to the rest of the UK with low participation in adult education and training.

In Scotland the picture is one of convergence over time between Scotland and England and of less difference in adult education between the two countries.

Historically Scotland and Northern Ireland have had more polarised patterns of achievement than England. Field and Schuller (2000) suggested that adult literacy and numeracy levels in Northern Ireland are lower than in Britain particularly amongst Catholic families.

In Scotland many people left compulsory education with the qualifications necessary to progress to Higher Education but many also left with almost no qualifications at all. This polarisation was reduced by the mid 90s but has left a legacy in terms of adult attainment which, according to the researchers,

may persist for another twenty years or so. The study also discovered significant gender differences with girls outperforming boys in both countries.

The study found that Scotland and Northern Ireland led England on numbers moving into Higher Education and were particularly effective in widening participation from manual occupations. This is in marked contrast to England where expansion had not benefited the working class any more than any other social group.

Adult education participation rates were lower in Northern Ireland and Scotland but this was seen to be difficult to compare as there existed different interpretations of what constitutes adult education. Did adult education include leisure and pleasure classes or was it focused mainly on adult basic skills and vocational skills retraining?

The study concludes that the following are important factors.

The Industrial structure of the country being considered is important: also relevant are possible skills shortages in new technology based industries that may require the reskilling of adults coming from older, now declining, industries.

The composition of the Labour force was also a relevant factor e.g. rural communities did not have the necessary skills or opportunities to participate in the changing labour market. My research showed this was a factor that was pertinent in Ireland.

As Chapter 3 outlined Ireland has seen major changes in the

make up of its industries over the past twenty years with a move into new technology based industries. This has meant recognition in policy documentation of the need to reskill and train adults in the specific skills needed for these industries.

The rural nature of Ireland and the migration of industries, particularly new technology based industries, to the cities and in particular the capital, is an important factor. This raised the question of whether my research would show that lifelong learning initiatives in rural communities had a different focus than those in Institutes of Technology in the cities; by the same token would the Institutes of Technology in Irish cities be more focused on lifelong learning initiatives for upskilling into new technologies? In fact one of my case study institutions had, at first, grown almost all of its adult provision in relation to new technology based industries. Many of its adult programmes were indeed in direct cooperation with a number of well known IT based industries who had moved into the area e.g. IBM, EBay, and Google. This rural / city divide has also been a factor in my findings. My research showed that although the institution did have an emphasis in their policy and practice on upskilling and retraining there was also a clear emphasis on social inclusion and community education. Many of the adults in the area, particularly the older adults; had left school with few formal qualifications. Many of the initiatives in the area were about increasing the qualifications levels of those adults

but were also about creating more cohesive and employable communities. The age divide in relation to qualifications and skills is discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

Field and Schuller (2000) asked if gender was a factor in access to lifelong learning. My research did not specifically cover the gender aspect of adult education although this is an interesting topic for further research. There has been some limited research into gender and adult education and access to Higher Education e.g. from the university of Ulster namely the work of McAleavy, Collins and Adamson (2003). This did show that gender is a factor both in terms of attitudes towards continuing education and access to Higher Education. Structural factors such as time and access to childcare appeared to be major factors in women's access to adult education. My research did suggest that structural factors such as childcare and access to funding were major barriers to accessing lifelong learning in Ireland. They were mentioned by all the interview respondents as issues that still had not been addressed centrally.

McAleavy et al (2003) suggest that social capital may be a helpful concept in exploring patterns of participation and achievement in lifelong learning it may also provide a focus for careful policy intervention. My research confirmed that there is a need for regular monitoring of **Learning for Life** and its implementation. Although there had been a lengthy and comprehensive consultation process leading up to the

publication of **Learning for Life** I could find little evidence of any structured evaluation since its publication. Annual figures of participation by age group in education are produced but there has been no attempt to evaluate the effect of policies on any scale. It seemed to me that the focus of government concern in post compulsory education had shifted to the structure of 16 + education and the relationship between Further and Higher Education. The institutions themselves were able in some cases to give me some indication of the impact of policy development in their institutions e.g. on participation rates, but in other instances they could not. Where there was any evaluation success tended to be measured in increasing participation rates on a local level. One or two Institutes did mention student satisfaction as another indicator of success but again few had quantified this.

These differing factors associated with lifelong learning and the various ways they influence policy is reflected in Coffield's work (1999) work on comparative education and lifelong learning. One of the main findings from Coffield's work was that there are many definitions of lifelong learning from country to country.

Coffield suggested that the basic concepts which make up lifelong learning e.g. key qualifications, skills and competencies can change in meaning from one country to another and also change within countries over time. This was

an important point for me. Part of my research aimed to come to an understanding of what is meant by lifelong learning. However I found that in line with Coffield's thinking there are differences in what is understood by the term both in academic texts and in understanding of government department and individual institutions. Coffield also points out that definitions of lifelong learning also can be interpreted differently in different parts of a country at one and the same time (Coffield 1999a, p.8.) In my research, different institutions appeared to use the term in a variety of ways, some including community education, some learning for leisure and pleasure and some anything that was delivered to students over a particular chronological age. Coffield however does point out that there is much merit in comparison across countries even if there is a lack of a clear shared definition. Cross national comparisons can enable patterns to be defined and can often refute opinion that is taken for granted. Although my research is a case study and not a comparative study I have included references to lifelong learning policies and initiatives in other countries. This seems to me to be an important area for future development in the lifelong learning debate. In Chapter 3 I looked briefly at lifelong learning in Denmark and Sweden to see whether there were similarities or differences in approaches to both policy and practice. Again the economic needs of nations at any

particular point in time may help determine how wide or how narrow the contemporary definition of lifelong learning is.

One comparative study that was relevant to my work was that carried out by Rees, Gerard, Fevre and Furlong (2000). They carried out an empirical study of participation in lifelong learning in industrial South Wales. Their work was the result of large scale surveys, in depth semi structure interviews, and extensive archival analysis. They focused on areas that were chosen to reflect the diversity of social and economic conditions in South Wales.

Their initial sample of 800 stratified sample respondents was divided equally between male and females across the age range 35 to 64.

Their study also included a booster sample of 220 respondents drawn from children of those in the initial sample to allow more detailed exploration of family background. The questionnaire asked for social and demographic information including a history of the respondent's previous education and training, responsibilities, employment careers and a history of the education of their children.

Rees et al (1999) suggested that in relation to lifelong learning the removal of structural barriers such as costs, lack of childcare and time remain central planks in government thinking. They concluded that in South Wales the removal of structural barriers is a necessary but not sufficient condition.

Non participation is largely a product of the fact that individuals do not see education and training as appropriate for them, and these views are in turn structured by factors which occur relatively early in life e.g. .time place family, gender, schooling. The research by Rees et al (1999) concludes that policies which concentrate on access and participation are likely to have limited effects unless they are integrated with wider strategies to combat poverty and social exclusion.

Certainly in Ireland there are many groups who do not have easy access to Third Level education, whether that is because of prior educational qualifications, rural isolation or structural barriers. I also concluded that structural factors are of significant importance in opening up access to Higher Education for adults. It did seem that unless major issues such as poverty and rural isolation were tackled then there would always be groups for who access to post compulsory education would be problematic.

My research showed that characteristics such as family and previous educational background are factors in participation rates. The research in Ireland and my own findings did suggest that in the past the main body of the population to access and benefit from lifelong learning were those who already had a good education. They were also more likely to come from families of higher social classes. Research into participation rates in Irish education by parental social class backgrounds



seems to confirm this (Clancy 2001). In practice Institutes of Technology were in some cases trying to enact policies to actively overcome this. For example at one of my case study institutions courses were being offered to community volunteers living in areas of high unemployment. These courses were aimed at getting people into paid jobs in those communities to set up provision to encourage others in the area into education. Many of the people on the programmes had very poor educational backgrounds, and included settled travellers and recent immigrants to Ireland. The intention of many of the participants was to use the course to access Higher Education programmes or to gain more qualifications. Their intention then was to work in the area of community / social work to support economic and social regeneration in their original communities.

### **2.3: Lifelong Learning in Ireland**

Two pieces of research were published that did relate specifically to lifelong learning in Ireland. The first of these was by Field (2000). Field's study looked at the evolving policies for lifelong learning in the Republic of Ireland and in the UK

The second was a paper produced at the end of a study visit focusing on lifelong learning by the UK Further Education Funding Council into lifelong learning in Ireland in 1999.

Field analysed the development of lifelong learning policy in Ireland and in the UK and claimed that the two countries offered broad similarities of discourse and approach but had very different contexts. They shared a common language and other characteristics but differences between them meant that the challenges faced by each society were rather different.

Field talks about relative size as a factor; Ireland has a population of just over 4 million compared to around 60 million in the UK. Ireland is still largely rural with an overrepresentation of industries and the population in the capital city. Field also suggests that Ireland embraced “European-ness” and the Euro with much more enthusiasm than the UK did. Much of the European money Ireland received was invested in infrastructures such as roads and other transport but large amounts were also invested in educational and community initiatives. Field talks about the diversity of approaches to education and training. For largely historical reasons which he deliberately doesn’t go into in this work, the adult education system was considerably more embedded in Britain before 1970s than in either the Republic or Northern Ireland. However lifelong learning now has central place in both countries in their policy discourse.

Field suggests that Ireland lacked a coherent system for training and educating adults, not seeing this as priority. He suggested that economics and a short supply of labour may

have been a significant factor in the policy change of heart. His work also touched on the history of policy development in both countries. The initial focus of the UK was workforce development and upskilling. Field suggests that Ireland has taken a slightly different approach. He doesn't disagree that they have attended to workforce development but he sees the initial main thrust of reform as being around general adult education and also community based education. Education for disadvantaged groups e.g. women's groups, is also a key feature.

Both countries, according to Field, have the desire to change policy aspirations into concrete measures but may struggle to achieve this.

Rapid economic growth in Ireland which rapidly outstripped labour supply has led Ireland to increasingly look at new types of labour market entrants such as women returners , and to focus also on continuous upskilling for existing workers

Field suggests says that both countries are largely silent on school reform focusing instead on post 16 education and training.

Field says that when governments first act on lifelong learning they tend, as Ireland and the UK have done, to restrict themselves to vocational training. This is perceived as a relatively easy field for non regulatory types of intervention, as

much responsibility for implementation lies in local education and training agencies and Further Education institutions.

Field says that finance ministries usually favour this type of spending rather than focusing on intangible areas such as social capital, or citizenship, where results are harder to quantify.

Field suggests that **Learning for Life** has been used to promote an expansion of Third Level mature entrants at a time when the cohort of school leavers is in decline, citing economic need as a major factor.

Field concludes that promoting lifelong learning does not simply require new government measures but a new approach to government that is rooted in recognition of interdependence and the inter - relationship between state, market, and civil society.

My research supports the view that Ireland was slow in developing its policies around lifelong learning. Chapter 4 outlines that , prior to the 1997 survey on international adult literacy, little if any consideration had been given to this area. The real impetus for the development of adult education came with the publication of the Green Paper in 1998. The main thrust then was around adult literacy education, and education for communities, women's education and traveller education . This changed in the 1980s and into the 90s as the Irish economy developed in leaps and bounds and the Celtic Tiger was born. Rapid industrial expansion and growth in the

population of cities coupled with a demographic decrease in young people led to a rethink of policies on adult education and lifelong learning.

An FEFC inspection report in 1999 focused on aspects of post compulsory education and training in Ireland via a visit from a team of Inspectors at the UK Further Education Funding Council ( FEFC ) plus staff from the FE support unit at the Department of Education and Employment ( later Department for Education and Skills) The purpose of the visit was to study aspects of post compulsory education and training and to consider arrangements for ensuring parity of qualifications in the curriculum. There was also an intention for both countries to learn from each other.

The themes the team was interested in were the organization of post compulsory education, qualifications and standards, and investing in young people. Widening participation was also a key theme.

The group explored how Ireland was addressing education and training provision in a growing economy.

Three Institutes of Technology, three Vocational Education Committees and one Community College were visited. The team also briefly visited a traveller's education centre. They held meetings with key personnel in the Department for Education and Science and the National Council for Adult Education. 50% of their time was spent in Dublin; the rest in

Galway and in Tralee in the rural West of Ireland. Both Tralee and Galway had experienced rapid growth in population of 12 % plus between 1991 and 1996.

The report says that Ireland had large number of adults who left education after primary schooling. The Government was concerned about their low levels of achievement and high unemployment rates, particularly in respect of the development needs of new technology based industries. The government recognised the importance of their training and educational needs and upskilling in the context of their contribution to the economy.

The FEFC group looked at the incentives available to groups and individual to return to education or training, such as the Back to Education Allowance aimed at engaging unemployed adults in education or training.

They concluded that there was some area based provision by state and voluntary agencies providing training programmes in areas of high disadvantage. Vocational Education Committees were also providing some adult literacy schemes to address the low adult literacy rates in the country as a whole.

In their visits to Institutes of Technology the FEFC group were keen to see how these were addressing the lifelong learning issue. They found that many Institutes of Technology had growing departments of adult and continuing education. Many were expanding e.g. Galway/ Mayo Institute of Technology

grew its adult learning population from 433 in 1972 to 2283 in 1998. One third of courses undertaken by this student body led to national qualifications. However other Institutes of Technology were only just beginning to consider adult education and lifelong learning. Some had very few adult learners in 1999; many did not have any policies in place to address widening access. The emphasis for lifelong learning in Tralee appeared to be on local community and regional regeneration and anti poverty strategies. Adult Education in some areas appeared to be for personal development, mainly attracting the middle classes, many of whom already had high levels of qualifications.

The team commented on the lack of national funding streams to support lifelong learning. Major use was made of Europe funding focusing on social inclusion, but little government funding to support adult education seemed to be in place.

Their overall conclusion was that Ireland in 1999 was beginning to develop policies and practice on lifelong learning but still had a considerable way to go. The Green Paper with an emphasis on national qualifications was seen as an important step in helping to accelerate the growth of adult education. My research on the development of policy appears to confirm their contention that very little attention had been placed on adult education until economic necessity intervened in the 1990s.

The Irish government were aware of a number of key factors,

e.g. that adult literacy rates were low, that there were large numbers of adults with few qualifications and that many youngsters left school early without the minimum qualifications. I could find no hard evidence of any action to address these issues or any funding to support initiatives prior to 1998 and the Green Paper.

#### **2.4: Human and social capital**

Field and Schuller (2000) stressed the importance of looking at the impact of social and human capital concepts on the lifelong learning debate. Such an analysis was in my research and I discovered that there were clear indications in **Learning for Life** that both human and social capital assumptions regarding lifelong learning were in evidence.

**Learning for Life** talks about the need for retraining and reskilling and focuses in those sections on the changing needs of a growing Irish economy. **Learning for Life** also focuses heavily on the need for education to increase social capital, promote inclusion and social cohesion, and to engage the disaffected and disadvantaged. Reference is made to the specific needs of certain social groups e.g. women, travellers and new immigrants to Ireland. The need to increase the skills levels and employability of isolated rural communities is also a feature. In my interviews all the respondents saw the need to upskill the workforce to meet economic need but also referred



to the need to increase individuals self esteem, improve social cohesion and meet wider community needs.

The debate around human and social capital is central to any discussion on lifelong learning. One of my research questions was to ascertain whether the development of policy on lifelong learning in Ireland had been influenced by a human capital focus, a concern with social capital or both. In short what appears to have been the drivers for the change in government emphasis after 1998?

Human capital is considered to be an attribute of individuals and comprises a stock of skills, qualifications, and knowledge, and is generally held to be measurable. Cultural capital has been considered an aspect of human capital, something that an individual can accumulate over time through talent, skills training and exposure to cultural activity. Social capital is harder to define. Various terms have been used to refer to social capital; these include community spirit, civic virtue, enhanced citizenship, and social glue. Woolcock suggests that the concept of social capital:

“Risks trying to explain too much with too little and is being adopted indiscriminately, uncritically and applied imprecisely”

(In Lynch et al 2000, p.404)

The OECD defines social capital as networks, which together with shared norms, values and understandings facilitate co operation within or among groups.

Putnam (2000) notes that human capital refers to individuals whereas for him social capital refers to connections amongst individuals and the social networks that arise from them.

There is a consensus that increased social capital is a good thing. Research in this area correlates high social capital with desirable policy outcomes. Putnam argues that social capital has:

“Forceful even quantifiable effects on many different aspects of our lives”

( Putnam 2000, p. 23)

These quantifiable effects include lower crime rates, better health, improved longevity, better educational achievement (Coleman 1988) and even less corrupt and more effective government (Putnam 1995).

Davies (2001) considers that there are two theoretical models underpinning the concept of social capital. These are broadly defined as the neo - Marxist and the neo - Liberal approach. A neo Marxist approach places greater emphasis on access to resources and issues of power in society emphasising the role

played by different forms of capital in the reproduction of unequal power relations.

Coleman however takes rational action as his starting point and he suggests that:

“Social capital is defined by its function, it is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having characteristics in common: they all consists of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure”  
(Coleman 1990, p.302)

Various measures have been used by Coleman (1990) and Putnam (2000) to measure social capital. Measures include such factors as social engagement: how well informed people are about local affairs, health, sense of neighbourhood belonging, involvement in civic affairs, and social cohesion.

Often research studies have focused around the areas of health, the economy or education or crime rates. For example it is claimed that high social capital is often associated with lower crime rates. (See Coates and Healey 2001).

There has been little specific research in Ireland into social and human capital in relation to lifelong learning. **Learning for Life** does talk about both concepts and discusses both the need to upskill and the need to increase social cohesion and social

inclusiveness. A fuller discussion is needed on the relationship between social and human capital and lifelong learning in Ireland. My research into policy development in chapter 4 and my findings from the research in chapters 5 and 6 analyse this issue further.

## **2.5: Related research on Ireland**

A major focus of my research was the development of policy on lifelong learning in Ireland. When I started my research no work appeared to have been completed in this area. This was one of the incentives for me carrying out the research. Towards the end of my research a piece of documentary analysis was published by Helen Keogh, (2003) National Coordinator for the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme, into the development of policy on lifelong learning in Ireland.

Although her work was largely descriptive rather than analytical her work provides a useful piece of documentary analysis of key Irish policy government documents since 1997.

Keogh outlines the significance of the government Green Paper **Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning**. (1998) and concludes that this laid the foundations for the production of **Learning for Life** in 2000. She outlines the proposals in the White Paper focusing particularly on the development of new structures in the education system and the ensuing recommendations.

Keogh discusses for example the setting up of the NALC, the National Adult Learning Council and the Education Disadvantage Committee in 2002. She concludes clearly that much has been done to advance the development of adult education provision in Ireland since **Learning for Life** but much remains to be done, particularly in individual institutions. She claimed that changes are also needed in government funding; her view is that government funding had not provided for the needs of further and adult education. She is optimistic in conclusion saying that the adult education sector will never return to its former role as the Cinderella of the overall education sector. She sees adult education as the major strand of the Irish government's education initiative in the twenty first century.

An important piece of research that proved very useful in my understanding of the structural issues underlying translating lifelong learning policy into practice was the **Report of the Steering group to the PLC Review (The McIver report 2003)**

This report was based on research into the post leaving certificate sector in Ireland with particular reference to the role of Further Education colleges in relation to Third Level Institutions. The research was carried out on behalf of the further education steering group of the DFES in Ireland.

**Learning for Life** reaffirmed the Department for Education's earlier agreement to review the post leaving certificate sector as

part of its programme of developing lifelong learning. The purpose of the review was to make recommendations in relation to the physical infrastructure which should underpin post leaving certificate provision in Ireland.

The steering group consisted of representatives from the Department of Education and Science, adult education organisations, and trade unions.

A questionnaire was sent to all Further Education colleges in Ireland with over 150 students. This was followed by detailed site visits to 15 colleges, a representative sample in terms of size, geographical spread and urban / rural locations.

McIver also carried out study visits to other institutions e.g. Institutes of Technology and visited similar provision in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Denmark and the Netherlands.

The review examined and made recommendations regarding organisational structure and support, development of technical and administrative structures and resources required in schools and colleges across the system and in other countries. It also recommended further work to undertake comprehensive consultation on the implementation of the report's recommendations focussing particularly on institutions which had less than 150 students.

One of McIver's main recommendations was that Further Education should be a distinct sector within the Irish education system. It should be separated from Second Level Education

and from the Institutes of Technology, and have its own identity and purpose. The report suggested that Further Education Colleges needed to modify their provision and support to reflect the needs of adults. He recommended a greater variety in developing approaches to lifelong learning e.g. flexibility in delivery for employers and adults.

There are a number of detailed recommendations made regarding the organisational structure proposed for Further Education colleges and their staffing and management.

McIver talks about the need to prioritise childcare for students under the National Development Plan

His concerns are not only with the nature of the provision for adults but also the issue of access to Higher Education. The issues of duplication between the Higher Education sector and Third Level Institutions and the Further Education sector are also discussed. My research showed that this latter area was of growing concern to the Department for Education and Science.

One of the issues that arose in my research therefore was the debate around the relationship between Higher and Further education in Ireland and around the role of Institutes of Technology and Universities within that.

Research by Murphy and Taylor (2000) analysed the experience of mature students returning to university. The research explores the boundaries between student's experiences of adult education and higher education and concluded that it is

not only access that is important but accessibility i.e. what happened to the student when they arrive at university. The study concludes that there is a need to clarify the role of adult education and higher education and to link the two more clearly. The study suggests that the pedagogy of the Institutes of Technology and the universities and their view of what constitutes knowledge may have to change to meet the needs of mature students. These changes will be needed before any real increase in numbers accessing Third Level Education can be significantly increased.

A study by Clancy (2001) examined participation patterns in Higher Education in Ireland. This is an annual national survey of all new entrants to full time education; this was the 4th national survey. Clancy and his team analysed the entry requirements of 43 colleges, 8 Universities 13 Institutes of Technology and 12 other colleges including 7 private colleges. Data collection was by personal demographic and educational data from individual student record forms. Clancy concluded that there is still a correlation in Ireland between social class, parental background and entry to University and Third Level education. He argues that institutions are going to have to develop social inclusion and outreach strategies to overcome this. This was borne out by my research. I could find little evidence that Institutes of Technology had modified their curriculum or their delivery methods to meet the needs of



adults and in order to support access from all social classes.

There was some evidence that this was a changing area, prompted by two factors. The first was the needs of industry, the second a recognition that demographic changes were leading towards a decreasing number of school leavers to fill the Third Level places.

There were a number of other themes and issues relating to pedagogy within Ireland that emerged out of my literature search. I looked briefly at these other areas of interest. Traveller education, immigration and education and rural learning including Irish language development appeared to be themes under research. Education for citizenship was another area of pedagogic interest arising from the general literature.

Research published in 2004 by Helen Keogh looked at issues of citizenship and lifelong learning. Keogh was interested in what the relationship was between learning for citizenship and adult education. Her paper explored the extent to which adult education policies and practice can contribute to the development of citizenship in Ireland. She outlined her intentions to examine the context within which citizenship is developed. The study outlined the contributions adult education made to the development of citizenship in Ireland and explored the challenges to effectiveness of adult education in supporting the development of citizenship.

Keogh placed the development in an economic context, pointing out that changing economic needs e.g. to upskill the population lay behind many of the developments and policies on adult education in Ireland. She outlined how civic education or citizenship has been developed in Ireland from the 1970s when civic education as a topic was introduced into lower secondary education in Ireland through to the 1990s when civics was replaced by CPSE (Civil Political and Social Education). CPSE aimed to prepare students for active participation and citizenship through development of their knowledge of this area and development of appropriate skills and attitudes.

Keogh posed the question regarding the purpose of such citizenship interventions. Her view was that education for citizenship still seems to take an economic approach to lifelong learning and active participation, rather than citizenship which promote the social cultural and personal development of participants.

Keogh suggested that there is no real clear definition of what citizenship is and stated that citizenship as a term has lost some of its clarity. Keogh also discussed whether better citizenship promotes a better society; she explored the question of whether there is a correlation between more citizenship education, or a focus on citizenship education, and less social unrest and more social cohesion.

Keogh questioned whether education for citizenship can actually take place, and whether citizenship can be “taught” and discussed the role of informal learning as well as formal learning in passing on knowledge and ideas. Her conclusion was that there is no agreement amongst commentators as to the methods that best support development of knowledge and skills of citizenship. She posed a challenge for adult education policy makers to really decide what citizenship is and how it can best be encouraged through education. Her view was that the White Paper makes little reference to citizenship apart from a reference in the introduction. She concluded that this may be because citizenship and promotion of active citizenship is a difficult and probably controversial area.

Keogh concluded that adult education policy makers and developers have paid more attention to the role of adult education in developing human capital than social capital. She summarised by saying that the fundamental challenge for adult educators is to create a culture of lifelong learning amongst all sections of society. The danger is that citizenship is turned into a commodity on the shopping list of skills and knowledge to be ticked off when completed.

The area of immigration to Ireland is also occupying centre stage in current thinking around lifelong learning. As Chapter 3 outlines Ireland has faced an influx of new immigrants both from new European Union nations, particularly Poland and

other countries in Eastern Europe, but also non Europeans e.g. Nigerians. The integration of the new immigrants both into wider society and into the education system has prompted discussion and research. A study by Ward (2002) addressed this issue.

Ward's work was a research project funded by the Further Education section of the Department of Education and Science.

The report was written from the point of view of those most fully involved in language development, adult learners, staff, and education managers. This report stated that language is only one of the adult education issues that needs to be developed and planned for following the publication of

### **Learning for Life.**

The research methodology was devised after an initial review of language provision for asylum seekers and a series of informal meetings with statutory and non statutory providers of English for Speakers of Other Languages in the Dublin area.

These informal meetings familiarised the researcher with the key issues for asylum seekers and the operational structure of the education sector.

The sample was representative of the asylum seeking population in the designated research area at a given point in time

The population was accessed via statutory service provider's non- governmental organisations or by personally approaching asylum seekers in emergency accommodation.

The self selection meant that the most educated and self motivated individuals were likely to participate. It was also therefore decided to approach the Health Board to access asylum seekers who would not normally avail themselves of the services of statutory agencies

Ward's questionnaire had three main sections, the first related to personal information and was designed to establish a profile of participants. The second part asked for information on the educational background of those who took part. The third asked for language learning information and preferences of the participants for future language development

Ward's questionnaire had twenty one questions and was available in a range of languages including Arabic, French, Polish and Romanian.

The population under study was 2943 claimants living in Dublin in February 2001 and was restricted to certain geographical areas within the service provision.

The second part of research concerned the evaluation of current language provision through the administration of semi structured interviews with community groups, Vocational Education Committees, Adult Literacy Schemes and other statutory and non statutory bodies.

Focus groups were organised involving individuals accessing ESOL provision in adult and community education.

Participants were asked to discuss their previous educational experience and their future aspirations.

Ward's research produced a series of twenty five recommendations encompassing all aspects of the ESOL provision from the structure of the provision to practical needs e.g. childcare, the need to recruit more support workers from inside the minority ethnic communities. Her main final recommendation was that City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee should devise a three years plan to implement the recommendations and be monitored by DFES.

During my research the issue of new immigrants to Ireland and their educational needs was touched on briefly by the respondents. It was a feature of my discussions with one of my case study institutions who had devised an adult programme which had attracted a number of immigrants. They saw this as an area of growth for them and for other Institutes of Technology. I found no evidence of the issue being discussed systematically apart from Ward's research and its recommendations. This seemed to me to be the beginning of the discussion but also seemed to be an issue that was going to be important for the government to address. This is certainly an area for future research.

## 2.6: Ireland's place in Europe

My research in Chapter 4 outlined the main policy developments in Europe alongside those in Ireland, mapping the main themes that emerged. There appeared to me to be synergy between the approach of Ireland and the policy documents emanating from Europe. Ireland has been an active player in Europe and has embraced many of the European initiatives around education and access. One of my case study institutions had used European funding to set up a number of programmes for adult students particularly focusing around access to Higher Education and to aid community regeneration. I could find little other research on the influences of Europe on lifelong learning policy in Ireland other than the references in the government White Paper. Certainly my research highlighted that a number of key European documents had been very influential both in supporting the Irish government's thinking behind **Learning for Life** but also in the development of policy at institutional level. Several key documents e.g. **The European Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000)** were mentioned as key influences by the majority of respondents to the questionnaires. In my interviews both institutional respondents and the representative from the Department for Education and Science did refer to key European documents as having influenced their policy and practice. Ireland's sense of being a key player in Europe seemed very strong.

## **2.7: Life long learning policy and institutional practice**

I was interested in clarifying what the effect has been of development of policy at national level on the development of policy and on practice in Third Level Institutions. I looked for research in this area. My research appears to be the only systematic research in this area so far. The results of my questionnaires to the Institutes of Technology and the main findings of my research are outlined in Chapter 6. Some individual institutions were beginning to analyse this but I could find no national evaluation of the effect of **Learning for Life**.

**Which questions have been addressed and which have been left unanswered?**

From the Literature Review it seems that there are a number of key areas that have begun to be addressed but many that are still outstanding. The tracking of the development of policy has begun to be addressed both in my work and in the work on Irish policy development by Helen Keogh.

There remains much to be done in the area of human and social capital issue and its relationship to policy development in Ireland. **Learning for Life** does foreground both of these areas; but there is a need to balance the two elements in terms of informing policy through time. It may be that evaluation is needed as to the effectiveness of recent practice. This may be possible to quantify in terms of human capital, e.g. the number



of adults retrained and entering new jobs, any increase in earnings and economic standing and the overall effect of this on the Irish economy. Much harder to quantify would be the impact on social capital. As was suggested earlier in this chapter this is hard to define, let alone measure.

A gap in research certainly exists in evaluating the long term effects of **Learning for Life (2000)** particularly at national and governmental level. My research began this process but was limited in scope and in length. Field and Schuller (2000) talked in their research on Northern Ireland and Scotland about the need for regular monitoring of national policies on adult education, this is certainly the case in Ireland.

This research is not a comparative piece, it is a case study and therefore an in depth analysis of one particular country, however there are lessons that could be learned that could be applied to other countries. Reference is made briefly to two other European countries, Denmark and Sweden, in this research .The model of analysing the influences on policy and then focusing down on institutions and their responses to that policy development informs the comparative analysis.

The areas for further research are discussed more fully in the conclusion to this thesis in Chapter 7. Hopefully this has made a valuable contribution to understanding how one country has approached the issue of lifelong learning and how that has been operationalised by the institutions it affects.

### **Chapter 3: Ireland in context**

Ireland as a nation has undergone major economic, social and cultural changes over the past twenty years all of which have had an influence on educational pedagogy and policy. This chapter will outline the context in which current policy development on lifelong learning is based. Ireland's current economic situation will be briefly discussed along with the major changes that have had an impact on education policy and practice with particular reference to lifelong learning. Although this is not a comparative study reference is made in this chapter to lifelong learning policy development and practice in two other European nations, Denmark and Sweden. I wanted to investigate whether other European nations, who share some characteristics with Ireland, and who were facing the same challenges in Third Level Education had come up with similar policies and practices to face these challenges. My research also suggested that Denmark and Sweden had travelled a considerable distance along the lifelong learning road and I was interested in analysing their strategies for achieving this in comparison with the route Ireland was taking.

I have taken most of the data in this section from the 2002 census in Ireland. The initial summary of the 2006 census has just been published, reference is made to it where data is fully available.

Ireland is a relatively small country with an area of 70,000sq kilometres and a population of just over 4 million people. In the April 2002 census the population stood at 3.91 million, the population in 2006 was 4.2 million.

There has been a shift towards the cities from the rural areas particularly amongst young educated people. Dublin, the capital city, has a population of over half a million and the Greater Dublin area constitutes nearly one third of the total population of Ireland with a population of nearly 1.2 million in 2002 and 1.7 million in 2006.

In the last 30 years or so Ireland has transformed itself from a society based largely on agriculture to a technologically based economy in which manufactured goods now account for around 70% of exports. In terms of civilian employment the percentage of the working age population engaged in Agriculture Forestry and Fishery accounted for 13.8 % in 1991, but by 2002 was only 7%. The number of people engaged in the service industries grew from 57.4 % in 1991 to 63.9% in 2002. There has also been a major growth in knowledge based and hi tech industries in Ireland, many from overseas based companies. Major world players e.g. Google,

IBM and EBay have located in Ireland, mainly in the Dublin area, aided by tax and other incentives.

The traditional view of Ireland as an agriculturally based, largely rural low-tech society is therefore changing; also changing are the demographics. Ireland still has a relatively young population, although in line with many other European nations the age structure of the population is changing. One fifth of the population are aged between 15 and 24 and in common with many Western nations Ireland has a growing number of people aged 65 and over. There has been a steady decrease in the percentage of the population aged less than 15 with a corresponding growth in the 15 to 64 and over 65 age brackets.

Figures from the Central Statistics Office suggest that there will continue to be a major decline in the age group 16 to 19. For every 100 of this age group in 2001 it is estimated that there will be 81 by 2010.

There are 98.7 males per 100 females. The size of private households fell from 3.14 in 1996 to 2.94 in 2002. The traditional, and often stereotyped, view of the large Irish family with many children appears to be changing.

In the year 2002 there were 24,000 Irish travellers who constituted around 0.6 % of the total population.

Another aspect of Irish society, immigration, is also experiencing rapid change. Ireland has become a net immigration society rather than one with net emigration. This represented a major change for a country that saw vast numbers of the population emigrating from the pre 1900s up until the 1990s. In the period 1870 to 1900 Ireland's average annual emigration rate of 9.61 emigrants per year per 1000 average population was the highest in the world. Up to the end of the 1950s Ireland was losing up to one third of its young people to emigration, usually to the UK or the United States. In the decade of the 1950s 409,000 people emigrated from Ireland. The predominant reason given for leaving was to look for better employment opportunities

Table 1: Net Emigration from Ireland 1850 to 2002

1850s	80000
1860s	697000
1870s	502000
1880s	597000
1890s	396000
1900s	262000
1920s*	136000
1930s	101000
1940s	250000
1950s	409000

1960s	135000
1970s	(104000)
1980s	208000
1990s	(37400)
2002	(129000)

\*Figures are for all the island of Ireland until 1924 after which they are for the Republic of Ireland

Figures in brackets indicate a net inflow

(Source CSO 2002)

In the decade of the 1980s 208,000 people emigrated. Prior to that there had been a net inflow in the 1970s. In the late 1990s net immigration began again. Unprecedented economic growth during the 1990s transformed Ireland from a country of net emigration to a country of net immigration. The composition of immigration flows has also undergone two notable changes since the late 1980s. Prior to the 1980s the share of Irish return migrants in the total immigrant population was 64.5 %. By 2002 this had dropped to 37.9 %. During the same period the share of migrants from countries outside the US and the EU increased from 8.7 % to 34.5%. The main categories of non-EU immigrants include workers. i.e. holders of work permits, visas, asylum seekers and dependents.

A total of 42,000 immigrants arrived between April 1999 and April 2000. The share of all non-nationals in Ireland's population increased from 3% in 1998 to 4.8 % in 2002. During the same period the share of non-EU nationals increased from 0.7% to 2.1% of the resident population.

Ireland therefore began to be a country which attracted refugees, asylum seekers and those looking for better employment opportunities. In 1999 Ireland had the second largest number of applications from individuals seeking refugee status as a percentage of its population in Europe

The changing pattern of immigration has raised some issues for the Irish government both in terms of how to integrate non-Irish residents into the population but also how to plan resources to meet their needs. The primary education system faced having to provide resources for people whose first language is not English or Irish, which has not been a challenge they have encountered until relatively recently. Secondary and post-compulsory education providers also faced issues of providing for a range of needs within existing funding regimes; for example the majority of asylum seekers are prevented from accessing Third Level Education by prohibitive costs since they are barred from access to state financial support. **Learning for Life** refers to the fact that uniform nationally organised education systems find it difficult to respond

to the needs of particular sub groups (Department of Education and Science 2000, p. 49). The report refers in particular to travellers but also focuses on the needs of the new immigrants to Ireland from a range of nations. The challenges of inter culturalism, as the paper sees it, is to create a shared identity with respect for diversity. The Irish government has tried to deal with the issue of integration into Irish society through a number of social programmes for asylum seekers and via legislative means. **The Employment Equality Act of 1998** outlawed discrimination on the grounds of gender, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion, race, and membership of travelling communities. **The Equal Status Act of 2000** outlawed discrimination in the entitlement to provision of goods or services. These measures were also an attempt to rectify inequalities within the indigenous population as well as deal with issues of integration and discrimination.

Research by Ward (2002) referred to in the Literature Review, outlined some of the difficulties faced by the new immigrants in terms of accessing language training and the education system in Ireland. Ward's study made recommendations for ways to improve the teaching of ESOL in Irish education to meet the needs of the changing population.



Many of the changes in immigration patterns have been linked to the unprecedented economic boom which began in the 1980s, known as the Celtic Tiger. During this time Ireland began to be perceived as, and indeed was, a nation with a booming economy, low unemployment rates and increasing personal wealth. The birth of the Celtic tiger therefore appeared to have an impact on the composition of the population in Ireland into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **3.1: The Celtic tiger**

Much has been written about the Celtic tiger. Since 1987 there certainly has been an economic boom with Irish growth rates ranking amongst the highest in the European Union for several years in the 1990s. Ireland did experience strong economic growth in this period. Ireland's economy grew by around 70% per year from 1988 to 1998 and by more than 60% since 1990. The European average is 11 % per year.

GDP grew at around 10.5 % per annum between 1995 and 2000. This slowed in 2001 to 5.7% and to 5.6% in 2002. Inflation in the 1970's was around 14% per annum in 1997 1.4 % and in 2004 had dropped to just less than 3%.

Ireland has been one of the nations to readily embrace being part of Europe. Ireland joined the European Monetary Union in 1999 and introduced the Euro as its currency in 2002. It has seen many benefits of being in Europe. Some of these have been financial;

others have been social and infrastructural. Ireland made good use of European money to develop road and rail links as well as accessing money to support social inclusion projects. Some of these were based around education, e.g. projects to integrate the travelling community into mainstream education.

The Irish government has invested heavily in education particularly in recent years. Educational expenditure in Ireland increased from the 1980s to the present; in 2001 the total annual education spend was Euro 4.66bn; by 2005 this had risen to Euro 6.98 bn. It is around 4.5% of GDP which is below the OECD average in all areas of expenditure per student.

In 2005 a major monetary investment was made in Higher Education by the Irish government with an additional 1.2 billion Euro over five years being allocated to the Higher Education sector. This money was intended to address major capital infrastructure needs because:

“The government recognises the central importance of Higher Education in delivering knowledge and providing the skills that will be essential to our competitive future”

(Dept for Education and Science press release, December 2005)

The Minister for Education and Science rationalised the need for additional investment in Higher Education in the following way:

“Today’s announcement of E1.2 billion over the next 5 years to support change and innovation and to address major capital infrastructure needs in Higher Education represent a major milestone on the development of the sector in Ireland. The Government recognises the central importance of higher education in delivering the knowledge and providing the skills that will be essential to our competitive future”

(Department of Education and Science press release, December 2005)

The Irish economy is now operating at near to full employment with an unemployment rate in 2006 of around 4.2 % out of a total labour force of 1.8 million. Female participation rates rose from 36.5 % in 1995 to 46.2 % in 2002 and 57 % in 2003. This is still low however compared to many other European nations. Youth unemployment stood at 7.7% in 2002. Unemployment in both sexes as a percentage of the civilian labour force was 14.8 % in 1992; by 2002 this had dropped to 3.75 %.

Long term unemployed, i.e. those out of work 12 months or more was 58.8 % in 1992 compared to 29.3% in 2002. Youth unemployment i.e. those under 25, for both sexes as a percentage of the youth labour force was 23.2 % in 1992, in 2002 was 7.7%.

The picture therefore appears to be a prospering nation with a changing population.

However there are still some major unresolved issues. Nearly 40% of Ireland's long term unemployed have no formal qualifications and the relationship between education and the ability to obtain employment has been shown to be particularly marked amongst the younger age groups. Sweeney (1998) stated that Ireland has a unique problem with its unemployment levels. When new jobs are created it are often those from the Irish Diaspora or even other European Union or foreign nationals who have benefited rather than the indigenous Irish. Rates of unemployment may have fallen, but Sweeney says that there is still the problem of the long-term Irish unemployed with low levels of educational attainment particularly in the older age groups.

The pace of economic expansion began to slow down in 2001 as a result of "international and national developments" (National Development Plan 2001, p.80) but is still comparatively strong.

The upgrading of education skills levels amongst the population remains paramount in terms of economic growth. The success of

the current industrial strategy repositioning towards knowledge intensive industries will depend critically on a good supply of highly skilled workers and researchers. Demographic trends indicate a substantial decline in the number of secondary school leavers making increasing enrolment and retention rates and a more flexible approach to education very important. The National Development Plan (2001) points out that;

“Emphasis has been placed on improving human capital at work, by encouraging lifelong learning and business investment in training, for example, through the Skillnet initiative. This was an initiative targeting unemployed people for retraining and upskilling. Flexible arrangements are being made to allow employed early school leavers to obtain certificates on a part time basis. The increase in the numbers of mature students seeking learning opportunities could be accommodated more effectively by introducing flexibility into the traditionally rigid selection and administration in higher education institutions”

(Government of Ireland 1999, p. 16)

As mentioned above public expenditure on education and health are slightly lower than the European average. In Ireland the system

for establishing and setting resources is via the National Development Plan and the National Social Partnership Agreement. The next section briefly describes the Irish education system, a system currently under major review partly according to **Learning for Life** because of it's:

“...predominant emphasis on full time provision: time specific entry and exit opportunities, and its linear sequential organisation.”

(Department of Education and Science 2000, p. 84)

### **3.2: The structure of education in Ireland; an overview**

The structure of the Irish education system is currently undergoing a review particularly at Third Level. The changing needs of the economy, demographic changes and concerns about social inclusion and adult education referred to above have led to the Irish government reviewing its educational structure to meet changing needs; for example a major review of the structure of Further Education and its relationship to Higher Education was commissioned and the report produced in 2003. This report (commonly known as the McIver Report) made a series of recommendations regarding the funding and structures of Further Education. The intention was to clarify the often confusing array

of provision available at a range of institutions at post school leaving age level. The recommendations are still under review at the DFES. I discussed the McIver report in one of my interviews with the Further Education Officer at the DFES (December 2005); there appeared to be the view that although the recommendations on restructuring the sector were generally accepted they may be too expensive to implement fully. This was reinforced in April 2006 when Mary Hanafin, Minister for Education, told the Irish Times that some of the McIver proposals “are not going to happen” citing cost as the main reason.

One area where the Irish government has made significant changes is in the qualifications framework of its education system. The **Qualifications (Education and Training) Act of 1999** simplified and unified the previously confusing range of qualifications available at Third Level in Ireland. Since then the DFES has published its rainbow of qualifications aimed at outlining the qualifications and progression routes available in Third Level Education.

Currently formal education and training in Ireland operates at a number of levels and strands including primary, secondary and higher education, vocational education and training including apprenticeships. Adult education and a wide range of programmes aimed at school leavers the unemployed and those in employment

complete the picture. Education is generally free at all stages although there are a number of private schools and colleges offering education at most levels.

Funding for schools and post compulsory education and training comes from the Department for Education and Science and lines of accountability to the Department for Education and Science are clearly defined and centralised.

Since 2001 many Institutes of Technology have applied for and being successful at achieving “delegated authority status”, thus means that they have moved away from the control of the DFES to the control of the Higher Education Authority. In theory they have now more autonomy over their curriculum offer, their expenditure and their strategic direction.

### **Primary education**

Primary education in Ireland is founded on the belief that high quality education enables children to reach their potential as individuals and to live their lives to the fullest capacity .The primary sector comprises primary schools, special schools and non state aided primary schools. The primary sector serves around 500,000 children (2005). More than 50 % of the schools are small with four or fewer teachers. Primary education starts at age 5 to 6 and lasts 8 years. In recent years the Irish government has had more of a focus on nursery and primary education and published



the White Paper on Early Childhood Education **Ready to Learn** in 1999 that looked at the need for expansion in this area. The paper stressed the importance of fostering an early culture of lifelong learning. Referring to **Learning for Life and Ready to Learn** the DFES state that:

“Together the two White Papers draw attention to the official recognition by the State that its educational commitment now extends to include not only those in school, college or training, but also that part of the population which has yet to go to school and that which has left the initial education system”

(Department of Education and Science 2000, p. 24)

### **Secondary education**

This is usually referred to within Ireland as Second Level Education and comprises secondary schools, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. There are just under 370,000 students in this sector (2005) attending a total of 768 publicly funded schools. In addition there are some other aided and non aided schools in this sector. Secondary education is divided into a junior and a senior cycle .The junior cycle lasts from ages 13

to 16. At the end of this period students take a Junior Certificate examination.

The senior cycle goes up to 16 to the end of compulsory schooling. Students may spend up to 3 years in the senior cycle. Students at this age are offered the opportunity to explore vocational options as well as taking a more traditional academic pathway.

#### **Leaving certificate programme.**

This is held at the end of the senior cycle and is the final examination of the compulsory senior cycle. The School Leaving Certificate is still seen as the gold standard by Universities and employers. Entry to Higher Education is based on points achieved in the Leaving Certificate examinations. Around 50% of any age group do not achieve sufficient points to progress to Higher Education. Many stay on at school in Post Leaving Certificate courses often at colleges of Further Education. Children from unskilled backgrounds and skilled manual backgrounds are less likely to reach leaving certificate level and having reached leaving certificate level are less likely to achieve two C's at Honours level, which is the national benchmark for progression. The work of Clancy and Hall in 2001 drew attention to this problem of social class inequalities in access to Higher Education in Ireland.

### **Leaving Certificate Applied Programme**

This programme is a self contained two year programme and is described as a person centered approach involving a cross curricular structure rather than a subject based structure. The object of it is to prepare participants for adult and working life through relevant learning experiences.

### **Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme**

This is based on the leaving certificate programme but with an emphasis on technical and vocational subjects. There are three link modules on European language and education, Preparation for Work and Work experience. Students' take five leaving certificate subjects including two from a vocational range, a modern European language and three link modules.

### **Vocational education and training**

Ireland does not at present have a single system for training young people. There is a Post Leaving Certificate Programme that is provided in secondary schools and certified by the National Council for Vocational Awards. The Vocational Educational Committees, which are locally based, oversee the provision of training opportunities for adults.

The second option is an apprenticeship, the traditional path to skilled work. There is some sectoral training in areas such as tourism, farming, fishing and nursing.

There are a number of specialist programme for early school leavers e.g. the Youth Reach programmes which train young people in a range of vocational areas. In 2004 there were around 5000 young people participating in this programme. There are training workshops for itinerant young people e.g. travellers. There are also vocational education and training opportunities in Higher Education, mostly offered through the Institutes of Technology.

### **Higher Education**

This is normally referred to within Ireland as Third Level Education. This is provided primarily through four kinds of institutions. The first of these are Universities, there are four of these in Ireland, including the National University of Ireland, which is a federal university with constituent colleges. This makes a total of seven institutions in the university sector. The second form of Higher Education is the Institutes of Technology.

### **Institutes of Technology**

These were introduced in the 1970s and were formally called Regional Technical Colleges. There are currently fourteen of these in Ireland; four of these are in the Dublin area. Institutes of Technology train for trade and industry in a broad spectrum of occupations including business, engineering, science, art and design, hotel catering, and technology. They offer courses at

Certificate, Diploma and Degree level, with some Institutes offering postgraduate degrees. The current debate in Ireland is around the relationship and duplication of provision between the Universities and the Institutes of Technology. A number of the Institutes of Technology as stated above have successfully applied for delegated authority status which allows them to be independent bodies conferring their own degrees under the auspices of the Higher Education Authority.

#### **Further Education Colleges**

Generally the terms second chance education and further education are used together in Ireland. Further Education refers to post school leaving age education including adult literacy classes, vocational programmes, evening classes in a range of subjects and community education. The sector is broad and includes provision for people who have not completed Second Level education, and back to work initiatives for the long-term adult unemployed. One of the issues facing the Irish government at present and which is addressed in the McIver report is the fact that there are numerous Colleges of Further Education in the Dublin area alone, many of which have small numbers of students. There appears to be some crossover between the role of Further Education and the Institutes of Technology which the government is addressing. The DFES feel that there is a need for rationalisation of this provision and a

reduction in overall costs. (Interview with Breda Naughton DFES December 2005)

### **Colleges of Education and other Higher Education Institutes**

There are five teacher-training colleges, two for primary teachers, two for teachers of home economics, and the National College of Art and Design in Dublin.

### **The private sector**

There are a number of private colleges offering a range of courses e.g. accountancy, business, medicine, theology and a variety of management qualifications.

### **3.3: Educational attainment in Ireland**

Although Ireland now places a huge emphasis on education and training in its official policy documents, it had a relatively late introduction of free secondary schooling. This has resulted in a higher proportion of the population having only a basic level of education than is the average in the European Union or the OECD. Completion of Second Level is behind a range of other OECD countries. A major issue for Ireland is the low completion rate of secondary education. It is estimated that around 22 % drop out of education prior to completing Second Level; in Dublin some twenty two schools reported a drop out rate of 50% in 2002.

A number of initiatives are in place to address this e.g. the Early School Leavers Initiative and Stay at School retention initiative.

**The Education Welfare Act of 2000** provided the statutory framework to deal with problems of non-attendance early school leaving and poor educational attainment of primary and secondary students.

The educational attainment of the Irish population also shows an age differential. There are a markedly higher proportion of young people with post Second Level qualifications than adults. Despite the low completion rates for Second Level education referred to above the situation has improved since the 1980s and 1990s, in 1996 55% of the population had finished education by the age of 15; in 2000 nearly 80% completed their Leaving Certificate. Ireland's population is becoming better educated and staying on at school longer. Table 2 shows the educational attainment of the population in 2001.

**Table 2: Educational attainment of the population with at least upper secondary qualifications 2001**

<b>Age</b>	<b>55 to 64</b>	<b>35 to 54</b>	<b>25 to 34</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>73</b>

**(Source Census 2002)**

### **3.4; Third Level Education in Ireland**

Ireland has a young and well-educated workforce with high-level skills. However it has low levels of participation and investment in adult and second chance education compared with most OECD countries. These low levels were one major prompt for the development of **Learning for Life** according to the DoES.

Thirty years ago Third Level Education in Ireland was largely the preserve of the more affluent sections of society. Clancy and Wall in their 2001 study suggest that social class differences are still a major determinant of Third Level entry particularly in the University sector. In the mid 1960s the number of Third Level students was less than 20,000. In 1998 /99 it reached 112,000. In 2002 the numbers of Third Level students was 132,000 and by 2003 /4 had reached 143,271. Table 3 shows the number of students in Institutes of technology in 2002

**Table 3: Number of persons receiving full time education in Institutes of Technology by gender 2002**

<b>Male</b>	<b>25875</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>23508</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>49385</b>

**(Source: Census 2002)**



Ireland overall has a relatively low ranking amongst OECD countries in respect of mature age participation in Higher Education.

Ireland has tried to introduce a number of measures to alleviate this problem. The budget to improve adult education increased from 1 million Euro in 1997 to 25 million Euro in 2002, an indication of the seriousness with which the government viewed the issue. The government also introduced a Back to Education Allowance. This is available to adults who are over 21 and who have been unemployed for six months to enable them to join existing courses at Second or Third Level whilst retaining an allowance in lieu of benefits. The public education system heavily subsidises post secondary education in Ireland, Third Level fees were abolished in 1995 to improve access to education for disadvantaged groups. While in many OECD countries there has been a trend of improving the proportion of costs borne by participants Ireland is exceptional in having eliminated fees for undergraduate students. The key question for the Irish policy makers is whether this abolition of fees has had an effect on lifelong learning participation rates. Table 4 shows the small number of mature students participating in Higher Education in Ireland.

**Table 4: Numbers of students participating in Higher Education in Ireland by age 2001**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>1788</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>11109</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>9666</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>7182</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>4203</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>1959</b>
<b>23/24</b>	<b>1064</b>
<b>25+</b>	<b>4069</b>

**(Source Census 2002)**

Another issue for Ireland policy makers is that the distribution of the population with Third Level qualifications at degree level or above is concentrated in Dublin, while the proportion of the population with Third Level qualifications below degree level is more spread across the state. The target set by the **Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000)** was that 15% of all full time enrolments in Higher Education should be mature students by 2005. In 2002 over 90.5 % of the 36500 students who entered

Higher Education through the central application system were aged 19 or less.

Since the 1960s Ireland along with other Western nations experienced a rapid increase in enrolments in Higher education. According to Clancy (2000) during the period 1970 to 1990 Ireland had one of the fastest rates of expansion in employment and enrolments to Higher Education across Europe. Despite these factors currently mature students account for less than 10 % of full time students in Higher Education, below the average for Western countries. Participation rates of mature students in Higher Education in Ireland are also amongst the lowest in the OECD. The EU commission publishes an annual report on European education and training systems which showed that in 2006 Sweden (34.7%) the UK (29.1%) and Denmark (27.6%) had the highest participation rates in lifelong learning in the European Union, defined by them as participation in education for those aged 25 to 64. Ireland showed fewer than 8 % of its adults currently involved in education. The average in the EU member states is 10.8 %. Ireland also has a problem comparatively in relation to the percentage of the population who complete upper secondary education as Table 5 shows.

**Table 5: Percentage of the population that had attained at least upper secondary education in 2003 by age group and selected countries**

Age	25 to 64	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55to 64
Sweden	82	91	88	80	69
Ireland	62	78	67	52	38
UK	65	71	65	64	57

**(Source: OECD economic survey 2003)**

One factor for me to consider in my research was whether Ireland had responded to the issues identified with Third Level adult participation and participation in lifelong learning in a similar way to other European nations. Although this is clearly and deliberately a case study I felt it was important to briefly refer to other European nations. I was interested in discovering whether other European nations with relatively high levels of adult participation and who faced similar issues to Ireland had responded to the policy challenge in a similar way.

I chose to look more closely at Denmark and Sweden for this section of my research. These countries have some of the highest rates of adult participation in Europe.

Denmark has a similar population size to Ireland and has a long documented history of adult education from the folk schools of the 19<sup>th</sup> century up until the present. It was also the subject of a Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) study visit by a group of inspectors from the UK in 1994; they identified some ways in which Denmark was making good progress in adult education and to see what the UK could glean from the Danish experience. The FEFC report suggested that:

“features of the Danish vocational education and training system which provides Denmark with a well educated and trained workforce include ... the high proportion of young people and adults in post secondary and higher education and in vocational education and training “

( FEFC study 2004, p.1)

Sweden had also been studied by Aontas, the Irish adult education association. They instigated an investigation that culminated in a report in 2005 into the lifelong learning system in Sweden; the aim

of the investigation was to glean what Ireland could learn from the Swedish experience.

I was interested to see how the policy decisions taken by Denmark and Sweden had led to better adult participation in the equivalent of Third Level Education in those countries. I was also interested to see whether the policies on lifelong education appear to have based on human capital or social capital principles or indeed a mixture of both. Had Denmark and Sweden made good inroads into adult education as a result of economic need or a desire to increase social inclusion and participation in education or a mixture of both?

In order to make a meaningful comparison between the countries I have compared them using the following criteria;

- Facts and figures on the country
- How the education system for adults is structured
- Definitions of lifelong learning and key policies underpinning it
- Funding for lifelong learning

### **3.5: Lifelong learning in Denmark**

Denmark has a population of around 5.4 million (2006). It has an economy based on the service sector which accounted for 76 % of employment in 2003, with industry at 22 % and agriculture at 2 %; the unemployment rate in 2005 was 3.9 %.

According to the Ministry for Education some 500,000 people participated in some form of adult education in 2002 whether in Higher Education or in another form of adult education.

Denmark has a considerable success in the number of its population who move on to non compulsory education in general.

The percentage of a year group moving on from compulsory education to another form of education was 94.8 % in 2004 and the percentage of any year group continuing into Higher Education was 80 %. 58 % of those completing a Higher Education programme were women.

Adult education compared to the other areas of education grew considerably between 1984 and 1994, with spending on adult education nearly doubling in that period. Total public expenditure on education as a percentage of gross GDP in 2002 was 8.2 % compared to Irelands 4.14 % (Eurostat 2002)

Immigration in Denmark is not a new phenomenon, in 2006 immigrants and their descendants accounted for around 8.5% of the population. 6.0% of the Danish population are immigrants from

“non- western “nations. In recent years emigration had also grown, the Danish government interpret this as evidence that Denmark is becoming a globalised nation responding to world markets.

The adult general education and vocational education and training system is basically parallel to the compulsory system and ranges from the level of lower secondary to higher education. The syllabi and examination systems are adapted to the experiences and interests of adults and in some case there is recognition of prior formal and non formal learning

Adult education courses lead to formal qualifications including labour market training courses, adult vocational education and training programmes, diploma programmes and masters.

A wide range of different schools operate within the framework of liberal and non formal education. The most well known are the folk high schools which are residential schools providing liberal and general education. They run courses that last up to thirty six weeks and are attended by adults of all ages.

They are non qualifying courses and are meant to broaden general social and democratic competencies. Other adult education is offered by night classes, day folk schools and university extension courses.

The Danish adult education system aims to upskill its workforce with education mainly aimed at unskilled or poorly skilled adults



in employment. Vocational Education and training programmes exist for adults in the workplace which provide an opportunity for adults to have prior non formal and formal education recognised as part of formal vocational programme.

Support for students is provided by grants and loans. The credit award system has been extended and the occupational experiences of the adult learner are taken into account.

### **Basic adult education**

Education courses provide instruction in the same skills as in compulsory initial education and training programmes for young people; they are comparable to those of mainstream education but are different from them in organisation and content.

An important element of the Danish education system for adults is its intent to strengthen basic skills such as reading writing and maths. About 1 million Danes in the labour market have reading skills at a level which is considered to be insufficient compared to the literacy skills required in a knowledge based economy.

Adult Vocational Education (AMU) plays a key role in general policy of lifelong learning and contributes to a more flexible labour market by giving individuals opportunities to acquire skills and competencies required by the labour market. Within the AMU system National Training Council and Training Committees have been set up, and at local level boards and training committees are

operating at the schools and centres. The social partners play a key role in all of these boards and committees, contributing to organising developing, setting priorities and quality assurance of the training programme. This ensures that training meets the needs of the labour market.

### **Further Education system for adults**

The overall responsibility for this type of adult education lies with the Ministry of Education. Provisions relating to basic education courses for adults are laid down upon advice from the Council for Vocational Education, the Council for Adult Vocational Training, the Council for Social and Health Education and the Council for Agricultural Education.

### **Higher Education in Denmark**

The Higher Education system in Denmark follows a binary system; the Higher Education institutes can be grouped into two different sectors, the University Sector and the College Sector which offers professionally oriented programmes.

The University Sector has twelve Universities, some of which are multi faculty Universities, while others are specialists in fields such as engineering, veterinary science, agriculture or pharmacy.

In addition there are thirteen specialist university level institutions specialising in architecture, art, music etc.

The college sector comprises around 100 specialised institutions of Higher Education offering professionally oriented programmes

There are also colleges offering mainly professional Bachelor degrees and vocational colleges offering short programmes, mainly two year academy professional degrees.

Most colleges offering professional Bachelors degrees have been merged into Centres for Higher Education following an Act passed by the Danish Parliament in 2000. These were developed with the aim of strengthening professionally oriented Higher Education and being innovative bodies in the field of knowledge development.

This is in line with the Danish government's increasing emphasis on education to meet the needs of the global jobs markets.

Students applying go through a central admissions system. The admissions places are divided into two quota systems. Places in the first quota are given to applicants with Danish and with good grades in their upper secondary school leaving examinations; the second quota is given to applicants on the basis of individual assessment by the institution.

The use of ECTS (the European Credit Framework) is mandatory in all Higher Education institutions. It is intended that this is also used for lifelong learning in Higher Education offering programmes in a more flexible manner.

### **Policy and philosophy on lifelong learning**

In the Danish context lifelong learning is first and foremost connected with general adult education, and with on the job training. It adopts a broad perspective that includes objectives concerned with economic policy and that of the job market, educational objectives that are democratic and favour participation, and objectives concerned with individual development and quality of life.

The main principles of adult education system are good and relevant opportunities for continuing and advanced training for all, the recognition of adult education programmes and good possibilities for building bridges between education programmes and progression between levels.

The reasons in Denmark for encouraging lifelong learning are a blend of history and recent economic political and social developments. There is a long-standing and deeply rooted history of popular education that is rooted in the evolution of folk schools over the last century. More recent developments, including Denmark's membership of the EU, technological innovation and economic restructuring in Danish industry, have reinforced the view that knowledge and learning provide means for change at an individual and national level.

The increase in unemployment particularly long term unemployment in the 1980s only reinforced the view that qualifications requirements were changing and that lifelong learning was an important tool for adapting to those changes.

There is still a high value placed in Denmark on education to serve multiple objectives ranging from self-fulfilment to citizenship to innovation. However recent developments have placed the relatively heavy emphasis on education to serve vocational purposes responding to global job markets and requirements.

Denmark's long tradition of lifelong learning builds on the idea that the prerequisite for active participation in a democratic society is the provision of learning opportunities for all citizens throughout life.

From the perspective of the Danish Ministry for Education the main strategy for achieving lifelong learning objectives has been to steadily shore up and improve the institutional arrangements for adult learning and to strengthen progressively the financing arrangements in order to better enable adult individuals to participate.

The objectives are to prepare pupils and students for the challenges of a globalised world by including intercultural competencies in the entire education system.

The Copenhagen and Bologna processes have played an important part in development of Danish education and training with Denmark keen to globalise its education system and qualifications.

There is great importance attached to internationalism of education and training in Denmark and recognition of the global jobs market and interlinked economies.

In May 2000 the Danish Parliament adopted a number of Acts which tied continuing training and further education together into a single coherent and transparent adult education system. The Acts came into force in January 2001; the main objectives of the reforms are to provide relevant adult education and continuing education training to all adults at all levels from the low skilled to university graduates. The offers of continuing education and training constitutes a system of competences which give adults formal recognition of the knowledge and qualifications they acquire whether this takes place on the job or by participation in formal education and training programmes. The Danish government was keen to offer improved opportunities for those with the lowest levels of education.

Courses for adults in general subjects such as reading spelling mathematics and continuing vocational training play an important part in efforts to enhance education and training opportunities for low skilled groups. The same applies to accrediting work

experience and participation in education credited as part of an education programme which will give participants formal recognised vocational training competences.

### **Funding**

The overall percentage of GDP spent on education was 8.2% (2003); the OECD mean was 5.3 %. Ireland spent 4.14 % and Sweden 6.35%.

Funding methods and responsibility change according to different types of adult education but basically the education system is financed by the state, the counties, or the municipalities. Some institutions are self governing, others owned by the state. Tuition at public and most private educational institutions is free.

### **Basic adult education**

This is funded by the Ministry of Education but it is the individual counties (there are fourteen in Denmark) who manage the establishment and closure of adult education centres, approve the courses offered, set the budget framework, and supervise teaching.

Each adult education centre has a council which takes key decisions re the provision. The council involves county council members, municipal council members, trade unions employers in the area, and teachers.

### **Labour market training**

The management for labour market training is based upon a close co-operation between the Ministry of Labour and the social partners. It is financed by the labour market taxation imposed on all those who are active in the labour market, employers as well as employee.

For each paying participant the educational institution receives a fixed state grant. Tuition fees which are fixed by the educational institution are estimated to make up 25 to 30 per cent on average of the institutions expenditure related to the course.

Public finance for adult education is focused on those with low educational attainment. Those with higher education qualifications are more likely to have to finance their own education and have to study in their own time.

### **3.6: Lifelong learning in Sweden**

Sweden is a prosperous Northern European nation with a population of around 9 million (2006). It has an economy based on fewer than 2% employed in agriculture, 28 % in industry and 70 % in the service sector. Unemployment in 2005 was 5.8 %.

From the late 1970s to late 1980s the Swedish Higher Education system had an annual number of entrants of around 4,000 per year. There has been an expansion of the number of places and by 1997 there were 6,000 university entrants and about 300,000 students in undergraduate Higher Education.



In the early 1990's around 30 % of young people went into Higher Education within three years of completing upper secondary education. By 2005 it was aimed to have 50 % of school leavers going into Higher Education, this target has been reached. Apart from students coming from school the post secondary population includes a relatively large amount of mature students.

In 2003 there were approx 319,000 full and part time Higher Education undergraduate students. 58 % of these were women, 50% of the students were under 25 nearly 20 % of the students were 35 or over.

In autumn 2000 there were 238,000 students in municipal adult education, the majority of those were in upper secondary studies. 32,000 were enrolled in basic adult education and 6,000 in supplementary education.

Sweden has no special restrictions on worker mobility from other new EU member states; net immigration from Poland for example grew considerably in 2005. Net immigration adds around half a percent to the Swedish population each year, and includes immigrants from a range of countries in South and Eastern Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia. The employment rate for immigrants is below the high employment rate for national Swedes. Youth unemployment for example for immigrants is 30 % compared to 10% of young people in general.

## **Adult education**

Sweden has an extensive adult education system with long established traditions. It includes many forms of adult education with a large variety of organisations. The state adult education system includes adult secondary education, adult education for pupils with learning disabilities and Swedish tuition for adult immigrants. Other forms of adult education are in existence, e.g. advanced Vocational Education and National Schools for Adults. The Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning provides distance education courses for adults, primarily at upper secondary level. The Liberal Adult Education sector also provides adult education. Liberal adult education is run independently of the state. It is organised by adult education associations and folk high schools. Liberal education is regarded as providing an important function in society particularly to safeguard democracy and encourage active citizenship.

The public school system for adults is regulated under the Education Act.

The right to basic adult education for adults who have not achieved the compulsory basic school leaving cert is stipulated by law

Labour market training courses are organised primarily for the unemployed in need of retraining or further training and education.

The Labour Market Board is responsible for this area and is

accountable to the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications. There is no legislation governing entitlement to on- the- job training. Decisions regarding competency development are made by the employer with influence from the trade unions. Since 1975 all employees have an entitlement in law to educational leave. The choice of study rested with the individual and there is no restriction on the duration of leave. Education is supported in Sweden in the form of labour market training. Support is provided for the development of skills in working life. Through the European Social Fund funds have been provided for the development of skills in working life and education as a way out of unemployment. In addition a large part of learning takes place in the form of staff training which is often co- financed by employers and employees.

Popular adult education aims at reaching groups who remain outside the system, those who have only elementary education, the disabled, immigrants and the unemployed.

The goal is to reduce the education gap among people and to reinforce democracy by stimulating the individual citizen's participation in society.

Within different areas of policy a common responsibility says that the government together with the social partners can enable individuals to make lifelong learning a reality in their lives.

Reform of the Swedish upper secondary school system in the early 90s meant an increased element of general studies in vocational programmes and thereby an increased breadth in courses aimed at facilitating transition to the labour market. The intention was to broaden educational paths so that educational dead ends could be avoided and also to help reduce gender and social recruitment.

The largest investment ever in adult education in Sweden was the Adult Education Initiative, a five year initiative begun in 1997, which enabled many people to increase their skills and strengthen their belief in their own ability. The government's aim for the initiative was that all adults should have the opportunity to increase their knowledge and skills with a view to promoting personal development and expanding basic knowledge. The project was aimed at unemployed adults who wholly or partially lacked three year upper secondary qualifications; the initiative offered them compulsory and upper secondary school studies.

A decentralised system of Higher Education has to a great extent succeeded in attracting students from different age groups.

Distance learning has greatly expanded so that in 1999 a special agency was set up to assist this process. University and Institutes of Higher Education also have a duty to collaborate with their surrounding communities.

Lifelong learning courses in university are offered at half and even quarter speed and at weekends and in evenings to enable adults to participate and to succeed

By law it is also stipulated that equality between men and women should be observed in all aspects of Higher Education and that Universities and University Colleges should promote an understanding of other countries and international relations. There are 13 state Universities and 23 University Colleges including the college of PE and various Arts colleges.

State run Universities and University colleges are central government agencies and their employers are civil servants.

### **Higher Education in Sweden**

The number of students studying in Higher Education in Sweden doubled between 1991 and 2001, about 50% of young people in Sweden go onto Higher Education within five years of completing their secondary compulsory schooling. First time enrolments every year total around 85000. In 1993 the Higher Education system was reformed and a new Higher Education act came into effect. The tasks of the universities and university colleges as set out in the Higher Education Act are to provide education, to carry out research, to promote the development of the arts and to collaborate with the surrounding community.

Distance learning, mainly in the form of correspondence courses has a long tradition in Sweden. Today most universities offer this form of study. The courses are designed to meet the needs of individuals and the country at large. The aim is to enable people to study unencumbered by where they live, their work or their family circumstances; this provision has particularly been aimed at adults and at those in employment.

To be eligible to study at a Swedish university there are standard entry requirements. However those who are at least 25 years old have been working for at least four years and have qualifications in Swedish and English are also regarded as having the basic qualifications

Degrees are awarded at Diploma or Certificate level, at Bachelor level at masters; there are also postgraduate degrees to doctoral level with specific entry requirements

Central government expenditure for the Higher Education sector in 2003 was 55.3 billion SEK.

The National Agency for Higher Education is a central government agency responsible for matters relating to Higher Education.

In 1977 practically all post secondary education was incorporated into one system. This system, the hogskola, included an element of national planning and regulation; and the aims and length as well as the location and financing of most study programmes were laid

down by parliament. Until 1989 the state also established the curricula for each programme

### **Policy**

The goal for Sweden is to become a knowledge based economy characterised by high quality education and lifelong learning for growth and social justice. Education is free and there is a well-developed study allowance system. Lifelong learning opportunities from Pre - School to Higher Education and adult education are seen as powerful tools for equality. The background for the undertaking on adult education commenced with the EU publication memorandum on lifelong learning.

The aim of the Swedish government was to:

“Ensure all adults the possibility of expanding their knowledge and enhancing their competitiveness for the purpose of promoting personal development, democracy, equality, economic growth occupation and a just distribution”

(Gov Bill 2000/01, p.72)

In the Bill **Adult Learning and the Future Development of Adult Education (2000)** the Swedish government recommended that Parliament adopted a series of goals for adult education. The

goals included the need to broaden and deepen knowledge and skills in order to promote personal development, democracy, equality of opportunity economic growth and employment and an equitable distribution of wealth.

In Sweden lifelong learning covers both the formal education system from pedagogical measures in the early years of Pre-School up to studies at university level, and popular adult education for both young people and adults. This term also covers opportunities for learning at work, the creation of learning, organisations and new tasks to be carried out and at the same time develop individuals who make up the work team. The basis for the attitude to lifelong learning must be built during the child's early years at pre school and later permeate the formal education system as well as attitudes to competence development in working life and opportunities to participate in study circles during leisure time. The individual's needs at any given time are the key issues for lifelong learning. Learning should not only be lifelong but life wide. Learning is not limited to formal schooling or other structured courses but is also realised during spare time in informal settings.

How the goals above are to be achieved is set out in Sweden's Strategy for Structuring Adult Learning in a Society Characterised by Lifelong Learning. The strategy contains the following points,



- Teaching and working methods are to be developed corresponding to the individual's constantly changing and increasing need to learn in knowledge based society.
- The individual's learning and knowledge acquisition are to be assisted through counselling and guidance based on recognition of actual, previously acquired knowledge and skills
- Appropriate learning environments teaching, counselling and distance education are to be available on a scale corresponding as far as possible to the varying learning needs and requirements of all adults
- Financial support is to be offered to adults in order to stimulate their participation in education and skills development
- Society, employers and the individual have a shared responsibility for ensuring that the need of different people and groups for both general education and specific training are met.
- All informal and formal learning which receives state funding shall be permeated by a democratic perspective and respect for the equal worth of everyone
- Fundamental agreement across political boundaries and cooperation between authority's social partners and non governmental organisations should be aimed at in order to facilitate the individuals learning and skills development.

## **Funding**

One of the basic fundamental principles is that no one should be disbarred for accessing education due to financial reasons. State and municipal education in Sweden is free of charge. The municipalities finance and are responsible for implementing municipal adult education, post secondary education, education for adults with learning disabilities and Swedish tuition for adult immigrants. The state also finances and is responsible for the Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning.

Liberal adult education is largely financed by means of support from the state, county councils and municipalities. It is open to everyone and is free of charge. The National Council of Adult Education is responsible for the distribution of state funding to folk high schools and adult educational associations.

When the Adult Education Initiative ended municipalities were offered a new state grant to expand adult education. As of 2006 this grant is included in regular state grant awarded to municipalities and liberal adult education providers.

Beginning in 2003 a new system of adult study support, the Adult Recruitment Grant, was introduced to replace the Special Education Allowance. This targets support at people over 25 who have relatively little previous education who are unemployed or at risk of becoming unemployed or who have disabilities. The

estimated cost is SEK 2 billion per year (2006) which equals the provision of approximately 30000 full time study places.

The Swedish system caters for those aged 18 years and older with priority given to applicants with little formal schooling. Folk high schools are free to shape their courses according to the special interest and needs of each individual school thereby allowing students to influence their directional and course content. Swedish adult education is largely financed by the state. This funding is spent in accordance with a 1991 decree which resulted in the Government supported liberal adult education becoming defined by objectives instead of by rules according to AONTAS.

### **3.7: Implications for lifelong learning policy and practice in Ireland**

Denmark and Sweden do appear to have made great inroads into the development and sustainability of lifelong learning leading to increased participation. Currently Ireland has less than 10% of its adult population who participate in lifelong learning. Denmark at 28% and Sweden at 35% have clearly made better progress in this area.

In terms of policy objectives there are similarities between the three nations. All three have produced policy documents and strategies, often enshrined in law, which champion the benefits of

lifelong learning both for the individual and the country. Reference is made in all three countries to a number of key themes:

- Globalisation and the need for a flexible, adaptable, and competitive workforce
- The changing demographics of each country e.g. in terms of immigration patterns and in terms of changes in the “indigenous” population
- Lifelong learning as a tool for social cohesion and for developing better citizenship
- Lifelong learning as benefiting both the individual and the country economically
- Lifelong learning as a way of engaging the socially disadvantaged

Although the policy objectives are very similar my research showed that there are differences in the way the policy is implemented.

The high levels of adult education participation in Denmark and Sweden is in contrast to relatively low levels in Ireland despite **Learning for Life**. Bernie Brady, Director of AONTAS, suggests that the Swedish government had established structures for the adult education sector on a statutory basis which was in stark contrast to Ireland. Ireland does not have a national statutory body with responsibility for adult education, as recommended in the governments **Learning for Life** in 2000.

Both Sweden and Denmark have clear lines of responsibility for implementing lifelong learning policies whether they be central or administered through the regions. There is also a greater emphasis on the role of employers. In Sweden for example employees are entitled to training by law, in Denmark individuals are given the opportunity to upskill via the AMU programme.

In Ireland there has been less statutory emphasis on the role of employers, the Irish government has relied more on employers “volunteering” to implement lifelong learning policies rather than any statutory requirements. In my discussions with my case study institutions reference was made by them to the difficulties individuals in employment were having accessing time for training from their employer.

Those involved in adult education in Ireland feel that education for adults in Sweden has more recognition as a social and economic investment. Martina Quinn of Aontas believes that adult education in Ireland is more directed towards those in the better skilled jobs and those who already have jobs than the unemployed and those wanting adult education for learning’s sake. This was certainly the approach that seemed to be taken in a number of the Third Level Institutions I visited as part of my research. Many of the education initiatives were aimed at upskilling those in employment, reaching the low skilled or unemployed seemed to be perceived as difficult

and outside the remit of the Third Level Institutions. Where training for the unemployed or for non - completers at secondary level was raised those in Third Level Institutions felt that this was clearly in the remit of Further Education Institutions.

Less than 15 % of the Irish labour force takes part in any formal job related continuing education. In countries such as Sweden, Denmark, Finland and the US this figure is nearer 40 % .Those who do participate in adult education in Ireland are more likely to be in large firms and be full time established workers.

It does seem that some other European nations have been better able to involve employers and employees in continuing education. Some of this is tradition; both Denmark and Sweden have a much longer tradition of adult education and of those in work being able to access education freely or at low cost . It is only relatively recently that Ireland had begun to look at the educational needs of adults and of those in employment. Some of the impetus has certainly come from economic need, a fact also recognised by Denmark and Sweden in their recent approaches to adult education.

From my preliminary readings it also both nations have taken a human and a social capital approach to lifelong learning. As outlined above Denmark and Sweden, in common with Ireland, have espoused the twin goals of both economic involvement of

individuals and upskilling and of generating social cohesion and citizenship. Ireland has clearly espoused these aims in **Learning for Life**.

Sweden and other countries have had the financial backing of government and a turning of policy into practice, an important lesson for Irish government. Criticism of the Irish government has been that although they have extensive written policies there has been little attempt to really put these into practice and to monitor their effects. The McIver report discussed in the Literature Review made some comprehensive suggestions for restructuring the post compulsory education system, particularly in relation to the role of Further Education. Criticism from the Irish trade union movement is that there has been little progress since the report was produced; their view is that the government will not commit the funding to implement the proposal. This was an issue I raised with a representative from the DFES in one of my discussions. Her view was that although the Irish government did have the political will to implement McIver they did not indeed have the financial will. Education policy in Ireland and lifelong learning in particular, has therefore been influenced by the changing economic and social environment in Ireland. Changes in the size and nature of the population coupled with strong economic growth an influx of knowledge based industries have predicated the need for the

government to look at the needs of the labour market being met in other than traditional ways. Concerns about social cohesion and disadvantage have also played a part in the development of lifelong policy and initiatives in Ireland.

In relation to the curriculum and to issues of pedagogy and andragogy both Sweden and Denmark appeared to have made inroads into recognising the needs of adults compared to school leavers. In Sweden for example programmes in Higher Education were offered over a longer period than the offer to school leavers, recognition appeared to be made of the conflicting demands on adults time, and of the return to learn issues. Some of the Irish institutions I studied did recognise that the needs of adults may be different but had not made any concrete steps to address this, other than in offering, in some cases, access to childcare. I did not come across any curriculum change or adaptation for adults.

Having outlined the context in which lifelong learning was developed, the next chapter outlines the development of policies on lifelong learning in Ireland and in Europe, policies which were in part designed to alleviate some of the problems of low non completion rates in education, poor adult skills and labour market shortages.



## **Chapter 4: Policy development in Europe and Ireland**

Chapter Two explored the concept of lifelong learning and outlined the research that has been carried out in the area of lifelong learning in Ireland. The chapter also discussed the development of the term lifelong learning in relation to the economic and social contexts of nations involved in lifelong learning developments. Chapter Three provided the context for the development of educational policy in Ireland. What became clear from the research is that the concept of lifelong learning has been at the forefront of strategic thinking and policy development in education in Europe since the 1970s. Individual European nations have responded to the challenge of lifelong learning by developing their own strategies and policies with the stated aim of meeting the social and economic needs of their nation. What was also evident was that lifelong learning has been approached from two differing theoretical perspectives, with both a human and a social capital approach evident in writings and in policy development. A key report in 1972, the Faure report, **Learning to Be** focussed on the needs of European nations to adopt lifelong learning as a key strategy in order to:

“...produce the king of complete man, (sic) the need for whom is increasing with the continually more stringent constraints tearing the individual asunder”

(Faure 1972, p. 5).

The main premises of much research was that the focus of education should be on the lifelong development of the individual who would build up a continually evolving body of knowledge, both for citizenship and for life, as well as the needs of the economy and social progress.

A paper by UNICE (2000), the business arm of the European Union, stated that lifelong learning is necessary to promote economic competitiveness and employability but that education should also be aimed at developing individuals, encouraging active citizenship, and fostering the social cohesion of a nation. Education has therefore been seen as a generator of social capital as well as human capital. From a social capital perspective Putnam (2000) suggests that individuals who are more educated are more likely to join voluntary organisations, take part in more political activities and generally show more interest in politics. Some social theorists' e.g. Green and Preston (2002) however have suggested that:

“It does not automatically follow that because education raises levels of community participation among individuals it will increase social cohesion. Nor does it follow that the mechanisms through which learning generates community participation and social capital are the same as those by which it may help to promote social cohesion”

(Green and Preston 2002, p. 3)

The debate therefore around the role of lifelong learning centres around education for personal self fulfilment or for economic growth and stability.

Ireland, by its own admission, did not enter the debate about adult education and lifelong learning until the 1980s. Since the 198's the concept of lifelong learning has been wholeheartedly embraced by policymakers in Ireland culminating in the publication of **Learning for Life**, which laid the ground for the development of lifelong learning into practice. There have been discussions since the 1960s about adult education in Ireland e.g. a survey carried out with the help of the OECD between 1962 and 1965 stated that:

“At its present stage of development Ireland is faced with the necessity to carry out a thorough reform of its education system”

(OECD 1965, p. 56)

No real on paper policy commitment was however made until the late 1990s. **Learning for Life** (2000) indicated a radical new departure for Ireland and indicated a shift from a solely front loaded model of educational provision to one in which lifelong learning became an overriding principle.

In this Chapter I will outline and analyse the major policy documents to come out of Europe in relation to lifelong learning. I will also analyse the development of policy around lifelong

learning within Ireland. Key themes that emerge in both Europe and Ireland will be picked out. The aim is to produce a chronology of policy development in Ireland tracing the influence of the development of that policy within a European context.

#### **4.1: Lifelong learning policy development and the economy**

Since the 1980s Irish policy makers have expressed concerns about the need for the up skilling of adults and for continued workforce development to meet the needs of a growing economy. Over the past ten years Ireland has had a stronger than average economy by Europe standards. Employment expanded by almost 77,000 in the year 2000 and a further 49,000 in 2001 and the working population of Ireland rose by almost 50% in the 1990s alone. This sustained growth in employment saw a further improvement in the unemployment rate. The pace of economic expansion did slow in 2001 as a result of “international and national development” (National Development Plan 2001; 2) but is still comparatively strong.

Since the 1960s Ireland along with other Western societies experienced a rapid increase in enrolments in Higher Education. According to Clancy (1994) during the period 1970 to 1990 Ireland had one of the fastest rates of expansion in enrolment across Europe although currently mature students still account for less than 10% of full time students in Higher Education. This is well

below the average for Western countries particularly compared to Britain and the USA. The challenge of increasing mature student participation rates in Higher Education in Ireland is a recurring theme in a number of policy documents including the **Report of the Higher Education Authority Steering Committee (1995)**, **Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning (1998)** and **Higher Education – The Challenge of Lifelong Learning (1999)**. Ireland embraced the 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning and the following year a Minister of State for Education in Ireland was given the responsibility for adult education for the first time. There followed a series of policy documents and government papers, which further outlined the need for action to bring lifelong learning to the forefront in Ireland.

Prior to the 1980s Ireland lacked any systematic approach to the education of adults and indeed a paper produced in 1962 devoted one small page to the education of adults saying that this area would be looked at when resources allowed.

A report of a Committee appointed by the Minister for Education in 1973 entitled **Adult Education in Ireland** looked at the needs and possible structure of adult education in Ireland. The report was far reaching and made a number of recommendations including how adult education should be structured, and how it could be funded. There was very little progress made however on any of the

points raised in the paper for the next twenty or so years. At local level adult education was provided by the Vocational Education Committees (VEC's). In 1997 adult education provision in the VEC's consisted mainly of programmes for unemployed adults, for adults with literacy challenges, programmes for early school leavers, for travellers and programmes for adults wishing to return to learning in post leaving certificate centres. Keogh (2003) suggests that the total number of adults on these programmes was less than 25,000 with very little funding available. There was little research or interest in adults wishing to access traditional Higher Education either from the government or from Higher Education Institutions themselves.

The International Adult Literacy Survey of 1997 showed high figures of adult illiteracy in Ireland compared to most other European nations, which generated alarm amongst policy makers and educationalists alike. Lifelong learning was seen as an essential focus for post sixteen reforms to meet the needs of the economy and to help create social cohesion. The focus on social cohesion arose out of a belief that illiterate adults were more likely to become dysfunctional citizens.

The Minister of State for Education, at the launch of the White Paper, described adult education as the last area of mass education to be developed in Ireland.

A revised national antipoverty strategy was published in February 2002 setting new targets for the reduction and possible elimination of consistent poverty. Eliminating long-term unemployment emerged as a key theme along with proposals to halve the proportion of pupils with serious literacy problems by 2006.

A White Paper on a framework for supporting voluntary activity and for delivering the relationship between the state, the community and the voluntary sector was published in September 2000 which outlined the need for a multi agency approach to the problems facing Ireland in terms of skills shortages and adult education needs.

A Speech by Minister of State for Education and Science, Noel Dempsey, at the North / South Higher Education Conference in October 2002 had as its theme Ireland as a major centre of excellence in Third Level Education.

Dempsey suggested that:

“The success of the Irish economy over the past decade has been based on, amongst other things, the availability of a young well-educated workforce, which is the product of our education system. We now need to focus in the next phase of economic development in Ireland which is based on the premise that as we have become wealthier our cost advantages could erode in relation to direct competition from foreign investment in Eastern Europe and South East Asia. This challenges the Irish economy and indeed that of the island of Ireland to achieve higher value investment, based on sourcing an increased proportion of the intellectual and knowledge content of goods and services”

(Dempsey speech 2002)

The political context within which Ireland operates is also changing. Since the introduction of the Good Friday Agreement the ground has been laid for closer co-operation between the Republic and the North of Ireland. Considerable emphasis has been placed on developing lifelong learning provision on the island of Ireland; both in Third Level i.e. Institutes of Technology and University, Education, for young and mature students, but also in adult learning in a variety of settings. **Learning for Life** refers to the need for much greater cross border communication and co-operation to address, amongst other things, lifelong learning, adult literacy and educational underachievement.

The internationalisation of Higher Education was a central theme in Dempsey's speech when he suggested that:

“Recreating the Irish universities means that in broadening horizons to see themselves as global players they should enhance their power and capacity, there are other benefits to countries where universities play prominent international roles, diplomatic and economic benefits for networking and students educated abroad returning to positions of influence in their own country, research collaboration enriched staff and student experience”

(Dempsey speech 2002)

The European Commission launched a proposal, Erasmus world, the objective of which was the promotion of Europe as a centre of excellence in learning and the need to ensure that European Higher Education is to remain at the leading edge of developments. The



intention was to achieve this through for example the establishment of cooperating with Third Level Institutions in other countries at what the agreement calls comparable levels of development. Ireland has looked both to Europe and now increasingly to the island of Ireland for this cooperation.

The Irish government outlined their thinking on the development of education to meet its economic and social needs through the publication of the **Department of Education and Science Strategy Statement 2001 to 2004**.

According to this document the mission of the Department of Education and Science is to provide for high quality education, which will enable individuals to achieve their full potential and to participate fully as members of society and contribute to Ireland's social cultural and economic development.

The high level goals espoused by the Department in this document are outlined as,

- To promote equity and inclusion.
- To promote quality outcomes.
- To promote lifelong learning.
- To plan for education that is relevant to personal and social cultural and economic needs.
- To enhance the capacity of the DES for service delivery policy formulation research and evaluation.

This concurs with the main theme of the major policy document on lifelong learning, **Learning for Life (2000)**, which suggested that:

“Education is the key to social inclusion. We must develop a system of lifelong learning for all from ensuring a high quality of educational components for the care of pre school children to a second chance for all scheme of adult education”

(Department of Education and Science 2000, p. 15)

A partnership approach is apparent in all the documentation. In **Learning for Life** the government suggest that it is important to support and develop the role of community education as an integral part of the system, and wants to promote increased partnerships between the statutory and community and voluntary sectors and support the development of networks to share good practice.

Another issue facing Ireland has been the net flow of immigrants over the past ten years, and including over the past five years an influx of asylum seekers from other nations including Nigeria and Romania. In a country where emigration was the norm until the 1960's and where the population has been predominantly white western this has presented a new challenge.

The Department for Education and Science has acknowledged this as an area of concern for the development of lifelong learning and has discussed the:

“Increased flows of immigrants, including returning nationals providing opportunities for greater diversity and enrichment of educational provision as well as pressure for places and measures to respond to specific need”

(DES strategy paper 2002, p.10)

The Department for Education and Science suggest that there is a need for,

“Greater awareness of cultural diversity, the roles of Irish and other cultures and languages in promoting identity in a European and international context and greater emphasis on diversity of values, social norms and expectations”

(DES strategy paper 2002, p. 11)

A key question facing Ireland is how can the recent policies around lifelong learning and economic regeneration be translated into practice? An emphasis on lifelong learning requires many citizens to change their attitude to education and learning. Many of the policy documents suggest that the major responsibility for learning lies with the individual. Lifelong learning requires a balance of responsibility between individuals, employers and the state according to Field (2000) who suggests that it is not governments that will produce more learning in people, but citizens, he suggests this is an issue which requires citizens themselves to act.

As stated earlier Ireland sees itself as a key player in Europe and aims to become a centre of excellence for Third Level Education (National Strategic Plan 2001). Is there likely to be a tension between the policy rhetoric and the policy achievement, particularly in a changing economic context? How can Ireland ensure that policy is translated into practice, which effects real and sustained change in lifelong learning practices?

Questions to be asked are, how did Ireland develop its policy within the European context, what were the generators?

The key generators as outlined can be summarised as follows;

- Need to eliminate poverty.
- Need to create a better balance between cities and rural areas.
- Need to upskill the workforce to respond to changing demands of the economy and to remain competitive.
- Need to improve basic skills for all including new basic skills of digital literacy.
- Need to create a flexible, responsive and mobile workforce.
- Need to respond to globalisation.
- Need to foster better social awareness, citizenship and social cohesion.
- Need to respond to challenges of diversity and changing nature of the population.

- Need to foster a willingness to learn and foster the skill of “learning to learn”.

Are these themes echoed in the key European and Irish policy documents on lifelong learning? In the next section I will analyse the major European and Irish policy documents around lifelong learning. The selection of documents to be analysed was based on the following criteria;

- Key government Green or White papers which proposed policy or policy changes around lifelong learning.
- Key European policy and discussion documents
- Documents that measured the effects of policies on participation in learning.
- Documents that discussed the meaning of lifelong learning or proposed changes in terminology and definition.

#### **4.2: European policy development**

There have been many discussion documents and policy papers to come out of the European Union since the 1970s on the theme of lifelong learning. Earlier, in 1946 UNESCO held a conference in Paris, which became known as the Ellsinore conference. This was the first major European conference on adult education and attracted seventy-nine delegates and observers mainly from the West.

The conference began the debate about the need for coherent policies and strategies to bring adults, particularly those who have few qualifications, into learning, and focused on the need for educated adults to support the needs of the economies of developing nations.

In 1957 when the Treaty of Rome was signed adult education or lifelong learning was not mentioned, education was referred to only in the context of secondary schooling and of vocational education and training.

It was the Faure report, **Learning to Be** (1972), the report of the International Commission on the Development of Education, that really introduced the concept of lifelong learning into the heart of European thinking and policy development. The report stressed not only the need for education to meet the needs of the economy but stressed education's role in developing the whole individual who could become a more socially aware citizen as well as developing as an individual. This more liberal approach in the tradition of Friere (1970) and others moved the debate out of the solely vocational education arena into the area of social cohesion and developing citizenship:

“The Faure report saw that education in its normative sense of providing worthwhile knowledge could enable persons to become beings in the process of becoming. In many of the writings one obtains the sense that the concept has rather individualistic connotations incorporating the notion of self directed learning”

(Borg and Mayo 2002, p. 10)

In 1985 a meeting of UNESCO in Paris produced a paper on the development of adult education aspects and trend that analysed the make up of the increasing numbers of adults entering adult education programmes across Europe. It argued that the majority of provision still appeared to be reaching the more already educated sections of society, and stated the need to introduce adult education provision that met the needs of individual nation economies and the needs of Europe as a whole. The conclusion was that those who were already better educated were those who were more likely to be involved in adult education and lifelong learning and that strategies would be needed to reach those who did not access any post school education. This theme of education benefiting the already educated is echoed in surveys across Europe. In 2002 NIACE in England produced the results of a survey of 4,896 people interviewed on their learning experiences. 42% of those surveyed said that they had been engaged in some form of learning over the last four years. Most of that learning took place at work; it remains a major site of learning for many people. The highest participation rates in learning were amongst social classes AB and least amongst social classes D and E and the retired. 85% of those who had not participated in learning over the last four

years said that it was unlikely that they would do so in the near future. Aldridge and Tuckett (2000) suggest that:

“We are a society where nine in ten believes that learning makes a positive difference to their work chances, to quality of life and to their children’s education. Yet one in four of us still believe that learning is not for the likes of us”.

(Aldridge and Tuckett 2000, p 12)

In 1979 UNESCO produced a report on the terminology of adult education. It discussed the plethora of terms that related to adult education and argued for some systematic usage of a term that encompassed all the venues and ways in which adult education could occur. This report was important in that it continued the debate started with Freire and Faure about what constitutes learning. It discussed informal learning, learning in a variety of places e.g. community venues as well being legitimate sites of adults learning. The debate about formal and informal learning still continues.

In February 2001 the European Commission on measuring lifelong learning was set up to propose ways of measuring lifelong learning to meet the policy requirements of the European Commission. The report divided education into formal education, i.e. that undertaken in formal institutions e.g. schools, colleges universities, non formal education e.g. that which takes place in adult education centres, community venues and informal learning which that paper argues



can take place anywhere, at home, with friend in a discussion, and via a variety of media e.g. the Internet or television.

In 1992 the Maastricht treaty gave the European Union some responsibility formally for education as opposed to the concern solely with vocational education and training mentioned in the Treaty of Rome. Vocational training was the first to be considered a legitimate matter of European concern; it featured in the original Treaty of Rome in 1957 where it was closely tied to the basic aims of creating a common market for goods, services, capital and labour.

In 1996 a meeting in Paris of the OECD education committee at ministerial level focused on the role of educational progress throughout life. The report, produced as a result of the meeting, recognised the importance of non-formal institutions but stated clearly that formal post school institutions needed to play a bigger role in bringing in and supporting adults throughout their leaning careers.

In the same year 1996 was designated the European Year of Lifelong Learning, The European Commission produced its major strategy for lifelong learning, a key document in which the Commission advanced the case for lifelong learning on a number of grounds. It focused on the following as areas for development.

- Institutional and policy challenges posed by a lifelong learning commitment.
- Transition between place of work and place of education.
- Progression.
- Accreditation.
- Teacher training.

In the executive summary of its document **Making the European Year of Lifelong Learning a Reality** the Commission states that:

“The current uncertain economic climate places renewed emphasis and importance on lifelong learning. Traditional policies and institutions are increasingly ill equipped to empower citizens for actively dealing with the consequences of globalisation, demographic change digital technology and environmental damage

(European Commission 2001, p. 3).

In 1997 the OECD **International Adult Literacy Survey** was published which compared adult literacy rates in Europe. It identified high levels of adult literacy need in many European nations including Ireland, which had a low literacy rate in comparison with all other European countries except Poland. On a scale of 1 – 5, the survey found that about 25% of the Irish population scored at the lowest level (Level 1) in the document scale with a further 32% at Level 2. The report highlighted the need to address basic skills as an urgent need amongst Europeans not only for the economic benefit of nations but also for the

creation of better social cohesion within individual nations. In terms of the lifelong learning debate in Ireland the report was useful in that it highlighted lower levels of literacy amongst older age groups and also highlighted the association between low level of literacy and low levels of participation in second chance education.

In March 2000 a meeting of the European Council in Lisbon set the European Union the goal of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based society in the world a goal that was reaffirmed at the Stockholm European council in 2001.

Alongside the development of policy papers on lifelong learning the European Union was also focusing on the need to develop the youth of Europe. A number of key documents were produced including in 2000 the **White Paper on Youth Policy in Europe**, a new impetus for European youth and the White Paper from the European Commission in 2002. All of these documents refer to lifelong learning and stress the importance of fostering a love of learning to learn amongst the nations of Europe's youth as a way of generating future lifelong learners.

**The Report of the Eurostat Task Force on Measuring Lifelong Learning (2001)** produced by the European Commission talked about the importance of non formal and informal learning as well as more traditional formal learning as a way of increasing the skills

and knowledge of the population of Europe. It links lifelong learning to the needs of the global economy suggesting that:

“Globalisation matters because it poses an explosive challenge to those widely held beliefs about why our education and training systems exist. Education and training arose as part of the nation state and are largely regulated planned and financed by the nation state”

(European Commission 2001, P. 8).

The Eurostat task force on measuring lifelong learning was set up to propose ways of measuring to meet policy requirements of the European Commission.

The task force on measuring lifelong learning outlined the need to,

- Modify existing European surveys to include questions on formal and informal learning.
- Develop a classification of learning activities covering all types of formal and non-formal education and informal learning.
- In medium to longer term design a new European adult education survey with a view to developing a comprehensive European lifelong learning survey.

The ultimate goal for Eurostat was to create an Integrated Statistical Information System (ESIS) on education and training, which can provide comparative information on how lifelong learning is being translated into practice in European nations

It suggested that:

“Lifelong learning is not just a simple summing up of traditional education programmes and modern learning

opportunities. There are also fundamental differences in education context and perspective. While traditional educational institutions have been (and still are) primarily concerned with transmission of knowledge and modern learning opportunities the lifelong learning approach put the emphasis on the development of individual capabilities and the capacity of the person to learn. At the heart of the lifelong learning concept lies the idea of enabling and encouraging people to learn how to learn”

(Eurostat 2001, p. 7)

This approach of developing the capacity of individuals to learn shifted the responsibility for learning from the public (state) to non-governmental organisations as well as to the individual themselves. The document used the term “Lifewide”, which they said, takes into account that learning takes place in a multitude of settings and situations in real life.

A paper by UNICE (the voice of business in Europe) in 2001 on the Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning says that it is essential to promote economic competitiveness employability and active citizenship. However they believe that the envisaged strategy should take full account of the fact that the main responsibility for developing lifelong learning is national and should be based on following principles.

- Develop a learning culture that reduces barriers to learning and promotes new basic skills.
- Develop national systems to take up the challenges of lifelong learning.

- Give a comprehensive review of resources used in lifelong learning in education and training and in the workplace.
- Underline the necessity for the individual to take up responsibility for lifelong learning.

They suggest that the terminology of lifelong learning is confusing for example the reference to life wide learning is confusing. The delineation between “non formal” and “informal” learning is difficult to understand. UNICE believes it would be better to stick to “formal” and “non formal” learning.

UNICE believes that access to lifelong learning should be promoted but does not believe that individual legal right to lifelong learning should be considered for three reasons.

- It is highly probable that people who would make most use of the legal right would be those not most in need of training.
- The type of training often has little relevance to the need so the workplace.
- It is difficult to see how it would be possible to give effect for such a right, e.g. if individuals believed that their right to lifelong learning had been violated who would they take a case against?

Viviane Reding, Commissioner Education and Culture in the European Union, suggested in May 2001 that the issues of lifelong education and training represented a central concern in the follow up to the Lisbon European Council, a summit which highlighted

the importance of both in ensuring a successful transition to knowledge based economy and society.

A survey by Eurydice, the information network on training in Europe 2001 outlined the key developments necessary to take lifelong learning forward as,

- New basic skills for all including digital literacy.
- More investment in human resources.
- Innovation in teaching and learning.
- Valuing learning.
- Rethinking guidelines and counselling.
- Bringing learning closer to home.

A key document in the development of lifelong learning policy in Europe was the **European Memorandum on Lifelong Learning** (2000). This key document outlined four basic objectives, which according to Field (2002) was the place the OECD translated lifelong learning into a “policy goal”.

These objectives were,

- Active citizenship.
- Social inclusion.
- Employability.
- Personal fulfilment.

These were intended to strike a balance between the demands of a changing economy and social environment, all in the context of a

changing global economic and demographic scenario involving in the latter case the constant mobility of labour power across borders and not necessarily just European Union borders. The **Memorandum on Lifelong Learning** adopted in October 2000 went on to emphasise how education and training are not merely necessary to sustain the employability of wage earners and their ability to adapt to market requirements. Both should also have in their sights the broader objectives of promoting active citizenship and strengthening social cohesion.

Concerns were voiced during the consultation process that too much emphasis was being placed on the employment and labour market aspects of lifelong learning and the social dimensions of lifelong learning were then brought into the equation. Borg and Mayo (2002) talk about the “consensual politics that underlies the whole document” (Borg and Mayo 2002, p. 9) and talk about a “laissez faire pedagogy, which as always favours those who have greatest access to resources.” (Borg and Mayo 2002, p. 20)

Does the lifelong learning memorandum merely reinforce the idea that market lead demands are the most important? As Borg and Mayo (2002) suggest:

“One ought to be aware of the danger especially when private agencies are involved, that the entire exercise can develop into simply a market driven approach that continues to convert education from a public to consumption good”



(Borg and Mayo 2002, p. 23).

Viviane Reding however stresses the need for lifelong learning policies to be directly related to economic need when she says:

“If we wish educational standards in Europe to be among the best in the world, it is vital to adjust our educational systems to the requirements of the economy and the knowledge society”

(Cedefop, Eurydice 2001, p. 5).

The European Commissions **New Strategy on Building New European Labour Markets** by 2005 set up a high level skills and mobility taskforce in April 2001 to identify the main drivers and characteristics of the European Labour market, with a particular focus on skills, lifelong learning and mobility.

What is striking in many of these documents is the reference to the possibility that skills required for success in the market economy are the same skills necessary for active citizenship. A productive life within the economy seems to be perceived as an integral feature of what constitutes active citizenship. The educated citizen appears to be one who can easily transfer a set of skills from the economic to the social zone. Is lifelong learning being viewed in this model as a panacea to all social ills?

Does the EU Memorandum on Lifelong Learning then move away from the more humanistic approach to education outlined in earlier documents, and over concentrate on economic need? A focus on

economics is certainly there in the policy documents from the European Union but there are also other reasons in there which underline why lifelong learning is viewed as so important.

These can be summarised as follows,

- Europe has moved up to a knowledge-based economy and society, with a greater emphasis on competitiveness, improving employability and adaptability of the workforce.
- Today's Europeans live in a complex and ever changing social and political world. Individuals want to plan their own lives contribute actively to society and learn to live positively with cultural ethnic and linguistic diversity.
- Education in its broadest sense is the key to learning and understanding how to meet these challenges.
- Education can be a useful tool in developing and maintain social cohesion and citizenship.

As the European Council presidency concluded:

“Lifelong learning is an essential policy for the development of citizenship, social cohesion and employment”.

(European Council Presidency Conclusions Santa Maria de Fara June 2000, p. 6).

These facets remain the central pivots of European policy documentation.

The next section looks at the development of policy documents on lifelong learning in Ireland and traces their development within this European context. How far have the developments in lifelong learning policy in Europe affected the development of policy in Ireland? Do similar themes exist?

### **4.3: Irish policy development**

As stated earlier Ireland came late to the table of policy development on lifelong learning. **Learning for Life (2000)** suggested that a series of policy documents and interventions over the previous ten years had resulted in a growing conviction at all levels of society, of the desirability of large scale investment in adult education and lifelong learning. Lifelong Learning first emerged fully as a central theme in **The Report of the Commission on Adult Education (1984)** but as **Learning for Life (2000)** points out it was to have little impact on an education system already straining to cope with a greatly expanded provision for a rapidly increasing youth population and the financial crises of the mid 1980s. (Department of Education and Science 2000; 54)

**The National Employment Action Plan for Ireland (1999)** contextualised the elements of a lifelong learning strategy within the Employment and Labour market Committee definitions, which described lifelong learning as all purpose learning activity whether

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### **4.3: Irish policy development**

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**The National Employment Action Plan for Ireland (1999)** contextualised the elements of a lifelong learning strategy within the Employment and Labour market Committee definitions, which described lifelong learning as all purpose learning activity whether

formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge skills and competence.

It was not until the 1990s that any real consideration was given in policy terms to lifelong learning development. The 1930 **Vocational Education Act** discussed the need for Ireland to consider more vocational education options for its young people at school and after but did not consider the vast numbers of adults who might need or benefit from education and learning. In 1969 AONTAS the national body for adult education was formed. In its National Formation Statement it set up for the first time in Ireland a cohesive and united body that looked at the needs of adults in education and the economy. Adult education was however still perceived of very much in terms of community based and evening class education, little consideration was given to workplace, post compulsory or higher education for adults.

In 1973 the Committee on Adult Education met in Dublin and produced its survey, **Adult Education in Ireland** that tried to map for the first time the provision for adults. The survey discovered that for many rural residents and for many women access to and participation in adult education was minimal. Those accessing adult education were more likely to live in the cities, particularly Dublin, or be the already educated. Some training for agricultural workers did exist but this was vocationally specific.

A discussion document on a new structure of awards for recurrent education did follow a few years later that recognised the need for adults to be able to access post school qualifications both to aid employment and to aid personal development.

In 1980 the Department for Education and Science produced its White Paper on educational development in Ireland, which stated that adult education would be developed “as resources allow”, and concentrated mainly on secondary education and young people. This is probably not surprising as up until then Ireland was experiencing high drop out and non-completion rates in second level education amongst its young people

In 1984 The Commission on Adult Education produced the Kenney report, an important document that talked about informal education and training as well as formal learning, and discussed education as taking place in a variety of institutions. It recognised self-directed learning, learning for the development of individuals and learning to be members of society and of the community.

The document had a strong emphasis on decentralisation, which supported the idea of maintaining the organisational personnel and procedures of need assessment programme planning and delivery of courses closer to the clients. During the 1990s lifelong learning was prioritised as an important item on the political agenda, at a national and European level. The emphases on lifelong learning

and social inclusion across Europe began to have an effect on the development of policy and on investment in adult education in Ireland.

The publication of the European Commission **White Paper on Teaching and Learning** (1995) marked the emergence of demands for a more flexible approach to learning through the development of a lifelong learning system. The European Union White Paper identified the Irish education and training system as a facility often open only to the young, rather than a facility which encourages learning at all stages of life .

In 1995 the government produced a White Paper on education **Charting our Education Future** that referred to the need to promote lifelong learning and provide continuous retraining and updating of skills. It was however mostly concerned with education as a front-loading process or as a preparation for working life, and concentrated on school age learners rather than the needs of adult learners.

In 1997 an Irish Government White Paper on Human Resource Development emphasised the comparatively low levels of education of adults within an OECD context and again following the European Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996 emphasised the need for coherent policy development and planned implementation of lifelong learning strategies.

In 1998 a government Green Paper was published which was the forerunner to the key White Paper of 2000. The Green Paper **Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning** emphasised the role of lifelong learning in meeting the needs of Ireland's changing economy and dealing with skills shortages. It also emphasised meeting the challenges of citizenship and social cohesion. The document also refers to the need to embrace European policies in order to be competitive within a global jobs market

In 1999 a report by the Information Society Commission **Building a Capacity for Change, Lifelong Learning in the Information Society** focused on the need to prevent early school leaving optimising the use of Information and Communication Technologies. It proposed better and more widespread usage of ICT in teaching and learning and increased involvement in adult literacy. It proposed the development of a national ICT literacy initiative. It emphasised the need for the development of policies on future skills needs, and the development of mechanisms for accreditation of prior learning and work-based learning. It also proposed improved responsiveness and flexibility amongst education training providers to meet client's needs. The document also focused on capacity building amongst communities, and proposed increased involvement in training by Irish business. It discussed the role of the government in offering incentives to



individuals who improved their skills through education and training.

In 1999 the Irish Department of Education and Science approached education from a truly cradle to grave perspective with the publication of its White Paper on early childhood education **Ready to Learn** which focused on the following:

- High quality childhood education for all.
- Education for those who are disadvantaged or have special needs.
- The development of lifelong learning, denoting a shift in emphasis from schools and Third Level institutions to a “continuum of lifelong learning”.

In line with the growing emphasis on lifelong learning the government of Ireland turned its attention to qualifications. In 1999 the Government Office published the **Qualifications (Education and Training) Act**, which outlined the plethora of qualifications in existence in Ireland and the proposed rationalisation of these and the expansion of progression pathways. It established the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland whose role was to develop a national qualification framework for non-university education and training awards at further and higher levels. The intention was to provide and facilitate access transfer and progression between different levels of education and between different institutions. To facilitate this two councils were established, the Further Education

and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC).

One key aim of the Act was to provide a transparent and progressive ladder of qualifications for any learner whether school leaver or adult learner.

The Act noted that even in the 1990s the focus in Ireland was still very much on the post secondary school market with an emphasis on the Leaving Certificate, the traditional gold standard qualification at the end of secondary schooling. The Act talked about increasing the ways for adults to access the learning certificate e.g. through returning to school or to access other qualifications, to enable access to further and higher education.

The enactment of the **Qualifications (Education and Training) Act** together with the publication of two Government White Papers, one on early childhood (1999) and one on adult education (2000) marked an important turning point for Irish education in shifting from a mainly front loaded model of education provision to one with lifelong learning as the governing principal of education policy.

**Learning for Life**, (2000) emphasised the shift from this front loaded model to a lifelong learning emphasis and has been the model for education development in Ireland in recent years. The White Paper developed proposals in relation to the learner in a

number of key areas namely Further Education, community, workplace and Higher Education.

It identified six priority areas for adult education in Ireland, the six "c's.

- Consciousness raising.
- Citizenship.
- Cohesion.
- Competitiveness.
- Cultural development.
- Community building.

This was to be underpinned by three core principles promoting

- A systematic approach to education across the life cycle.
- Equality of access.
- Interculturalism serving a diverse population with an active promotion of Irish language and culture.

The White Paper talked about the negative economic and labour market implications of an economic situation in which few adults were accessing post compulsory education. It refers also to the population decline, lower and decreasing numbers of young people completing second level education and the implications this had for needing to turn to adults to enter the workforce and to up skill those adults already in the workforce. The White Paper focuses on

developing a number of key strategic areas in order to develop lifelong learning in Ireland

- The development of a comprehensive framework for second chance education for those with less than upper secondary education
- The development of a better funded more cohesive Community education system
- The development of the workplace as a major learning site
- The raising of participation rates of mature students in Higher education

**Learning for Life** had a major effect on the development of lifelong learning in other fora. The Irish Governments **National Development Plan 2000 to 2006** set out an integrated programme of education training and infrastructural measures to promote social inclusion, employment, competitiveness and growth, environmental sustainability and regional balance. The plan emphasised the role of lifelong learning in supporting these goals. Specific measures included in the plan are the development of early education, a focus on school completion early literacy attainment and traveller education.

Further education support measures established for the first time in Ireland an adult education guidance service for the Further Education sector, which promoted back to education initiatives and

the expansion of part time education opportunities. Around the same time a number of Third Level access measures were introduced which focussed on,

- Support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Second chance education for mature students.
- Support for students with disabilities.
- Additional financial support for students at lower income levels.

Also included were the continued development of a National Qualifications Framework and a number of Equality initiatives. A dedicated equality unit was set up to co ordinate and monitor gender equality at all levels of the education system. There was an expansion of the Women's Education Initiative, an initiative that had been working to promote women's access to education at all levels but with a particular focus on returners and rural education. A new strand was developed focusing on the skills needed to access employment.

In 2000 the Government Office produced its **Programme for Prosperity and Fairness**, which was a national agreement on anti poverty strategies and equality of opportunity in which lifelong learning emerged as a central theme. In this paper the Government is committed to putting in place a framework for developing and recognising lifelong learning in a wide range of settings as part of a co-ordinated strategy for the implementation of lifelong learning. It

proposed to increase participation in education and training in keeping with the objective that:

“Ireland is well within the top quarter of OECD countries in terms of the participation of the population in post second level education and training, and in the quality of that education and training”.

(Irish Government 2000, p. 3)

The framework was negotiated with a range of educational providers amongst others from basic skills and foundation level through to degree with the intention of opening the debate on the cradle to grave strategy already proposed.

The **National Employment Action Plan (2000)** proposed a comprehensive framework for effective labour market reform to support economic and employment growth and a reduction in social exclusion.

Key points of the plan were to address labour and skills shortages through assisting the unemployed to return to work and to increase labour market participation particularly amongst females and older workers. The paper also talked about the need for a balance immigration policy to meet Irelands changing economic needs.

The **Government Education Welfare Act of 2000** raised the school leaving age to 16 or completion of Second Level whichever

is the later and established a school welfare board to monitor attendance and support children at risk to stay on at school.

Its aims were to promote retention rates at school and provide better teaching and guidance for school leavers. This fitted in with the government's approach that stressed that any consideration of lifelong learning must look at schools and even pre schools as well as adult education. The theory is that an emphasis on lifelong learning and learning to learn in early years will reap benefits later in life. This again does seem to be backed up by evidence cited earlier that it is people who already have a certain level of education who are more likely to continue as lifelong learners.

The Irish government continued its emphasis on lifelong learning into its **Strategy Statement 2001 to 2004**. It did however preface the paper with a reference to resources:

“This strategy statement is drawn up within the framework of available resources and in the context of government policy and the department's mission statement and high-level goals”

(Irish Government 2001, p. 11)

The mission of the Department of Education and Science into the 2000s according to the paper was to provide for high quality education, which would enable individuals to achieve their full potential and to participate fully as members of society and contribute to Ireland's social cultural and economic development.

In pursuit of this mission the department identified the following high-level goals,

- To promote equality and social inclusion.
- To promote quality outcomes.
- To promote lifelong learning.
- To plan for education that is relevant to personal, social, cultural and economic needs.
- To enhance the capacity of the Department of Education and Science for service delivery, policy formulation research and evaluation.

The Irish government's **National Development Plan 2000 to 2006** outlined the following objectives,

- Continuing sustainable national economic and employment growth.
- Consolidating and improving Ireland's national competitiveness.
- Fostering balanced regional development.
- Promoting social inclusion.

Key elements of the above strategy included the promotion of education and employment training policies attuned to the needs of the labour market and a special focus on those most at risk of unemployment.

The document proposed a multi faceted approach to the promotion of social inclusion. This approach included targeted interventions



aimed at areas and groups affected by poverty and social exclusion throughout the community.

Lifelong learning featured very highly in the development plan.

According to the Irish government:

“Learning should be lifelong and our educational system must respond accordingly”

(Irish Government 2000, p. 7).

Education as the key to social inclusion and economic competitiveness was emphasised. The plan suggested that investment should aim to put Ireland back in the top quarter of OECD countries in terms of the participation of the population in post Second Level education and training as well as in the quality of that education and training with a particular focus on those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The plan is to enhance opportunities for second chance education by targeting disadvantaged groups through the back to education initiative and provide for an expansion of part time and flexible options across Post Leaving Certificate, vocational training opportunities schemes and Youth Reach programmes.

All of these measures aim to promote wider access to Third Level Education both for school leavers and for adults with the intention of increasing the number of mature students in Third Level Education to 15 % of all full time entrants by 2005.

Other strategies outlined by the plan included,

- Expanding and improving adult literacy provision in line with best international practice, promoting family learning, workplace learning and other initiatives and using television and radio to reach a mass audience.
- Supporting and developing the role of community education as an integral part of the system, promoting increased partnership between the statutory community and voluntary sectors and supporting the development of networks to share good practice.
- Promoting flexible entry transfer and progression delivery and accreditation arrangements at Further and Higher Education levels under the **Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999** and providing mechanisms for the accreditation of prior learning and work based learning.
- Promoting entrepreneurial values across the curriculum and supporting stronger school – business links and co-operation in career guidance, curriculum formulation and implementation.
- Supporting school exchange programmes and joint curriculum and other activities between partners, North and South and between the islands of Ireland and Britain.
- Counteracting the digital divide in the population between those with computer access and ability and those without, through

support for programmes to improve computer literacy in the adult population.

- Liaison with the US government, the European Union and the other countries to maximise the positive contribution they can make to education co-operation on the island of Ireland.

The document concluded that the development of quality and inclusiveness in education is central to future economic and social success.

#### **4.4: Conclusions**

The conclusion in European and Irish policy development seems to be that investing in education and training delivers economic social and personal benefits, national governments are therefore on paper committed to developing a learning society in which everyone regardless of their circumstances can undertake learning and upgrade their skills throughout life. Support for lifelong learning complements policies to raise standards and achievement in schools to ensure that young people get the best start in adult life and to help unemployed people find work. There are clear similarities in these themes namely that responsibility for lifelong learning should be shared between the state, individuals and employers as education supports economic competitiveness, social cohesion and citizenship.

There is some debate however about the role of European policy in helping to shape national policies. UNICE, the business arm of the European Union even suggests itself that it is the way policies are interpreted by national governments that is important:

“National governments, in Europe at least, continue to play a considerably more important role in education and training policy than any other governmental body”

(UNICE 2000, p. 37)

The Irish government has committed itself clearly via the White Paper, the **Programme for Property and Fairness** and other key policy documents to implementing lifelong learning as its key to economic and social prosperity, even if it does say that it will progress the recommendations in **Learning for Life** on a phased basis as resources allow.

The key themes evident in European documents are in evidence. European and Irish documents both talk about lifelong learning for economic prosperity, to become global players, to deal with skills shortages and to remove the skills gaps across ages. They both refer to better and more informed citizens, equality and inclusiveness as key aims. There appears to be a belief that the creation of more lifelong learners and therefore almost by default more active citizens, can be a panacea for social ills, exclusion and disadvantage.

Appendix 1 contains an annotated chronology of the development of European and Irish policy documents on lifelong learning. To my knowledge this has not been done before. It provides a useful reference point to chart the development of policy through time in both Europe and Ireland. The notes allow the themes apparent in the documents to be cross-referenced to explore links and further similarities between them.

Having outlined the key policy documents on which **Learning for Life** was predicated the next chapter outlines the research methodology that was used to explore how effective has been the translation of that policy framework into practice in Irish Third Level institutions.

## **Chapter 5: Methodology**

This chapter will concentrate on the methods used and their justification within this study. The rationale for these will be identified within the subsections listed below

The research problem

The theoretical framework

Positivist and phenomenological approaches to research

Case studies

Documentary analysis

Questionnaires

Semi structured interviews

Next stage of the research

The research was based on a case study approach, in this instance a case study of lifelong learning policy development in the Republic of Ireland. The chapter includes an outline of the research problem, and discussion of the rationale for the selection of the research methodologies. The chapter also includes the rationale for the selection of the particular case study.

The research is largely qualitative, although there is some quantitative data collection in the form of initial questionnaires sent to organisations in the population and the analysis of official government statistical data. The relative merits of qualitative and quantitative approaches are discussed in this chapter along with the advantages and disadvantages of the

case study as a research methodology. The specific methods of data collection are also outlined and discussed.

I wanted to investigate how and why policy on lifelong learning developed in Ireland and whether that was having an effect on policy development and adult participation rates in Irish Third Level institutions. The first core purpose of the study is therefore to investigate the drivers behind the development of policy on adult education and lifelong learning culminating in the publication of the Irish Governments White Paper **Learning for Life** in 2000. I also wanted to investigate the effect of Ireland's membership of the European Union on that lifelong learning policy development and practice in Ireland, to understand the role European policy played, if any, on the development of policy in Ireland.

The final component of the thesis was to investigate the effect of national policy on the development of policy and practice in Third Level Institutions in Ireland.

It is clear from government publications and the publication of the White Paper in particular in 2000, that lifelong learning has begun to occupy centre stage in discussions re Irish education and training. As the Literature Review showed there has been little attempt to research or analyse the development of policy. There has not been an understanding of why Ireland developed its policy on lifelong learning at the time it did, what were the drivers for this? The influence of European policy on Ireland

was also an area where little if any research existed. There has also been little systematic attempt since the publication of the White Paper to analyse its effectiveness on individual educational institutions. My research aimed to provide those analyses. The research could provide a model for analysing the development of policy in other European nations. In fact reference is made briefly to two other European nations in this thesis to assess whether other European nations have followed the same policy pathway as Ireland. My research could also provide a starting point for further in depth analyses of the effect of policy on practice in individual institutions and on adult participation rates in particular.

The core research questions I was interested in were

**How was policy on lifelong learning developed in Ireland?**

**What were the principles behind this development?**

**What has been the impact of this policy development on Third Level Institutions?**

My investigation began by exploring whether the primary imperative for the development of lifelong learning policy was an economic one, and whether there is evidence that Ireland has a need to upskill or increase its adult workforce to meet changing economic need. Specific possible explanations were explored, for example,



Demographic changes or workforce development needs may dictate shortage of key skills, with an accompanying increased momentum towards workplace learning.

It may be that traditional skills were becoming obsolete as the pace of technological change increases. The owners of these traditional skills were faced with redundancy or with retraining or upskilling in order to stay part of the labour market. My research into the drivers behind the development of policy assessed whether these were important factors.

**Are there human or social capital principles at work in the development of policy or a mixture of both?**

Chapter 2 outlined the principles of human and social capital theory and discussed how they relate to education and to my thesis in particular. I wanted to assess whether there was any evidence that human or social capital principles were in play in the development of lifelong learning policy in Ireland. The work sought evidence of the extent to which Ireland had concerns re social cohesion or social exclusion that required it to involve or include more of its adult population in education and the workforce? Additionally the work explores the degree to which the need for a more skilled workforce to meet Ireland's changing economic needs has informed policy.

Chapter 3 outlined the fact that Ireland, despite major economic growth, is still a largely rural economy with evidence of isolation and social exclusion in some areas.

There are still major differences in the rates of education of adults and of unemployment rates in rural as opposed to urban areas, and significant differences in the educational attainment of adults and young people in the population.

I wanted to investigate whether recognition of social exclusion and the desire to develop active citizenship formed one of the bases for development of policy. Some of these socially excluded groups have played a long term role in Ireland history e.g. travellers. Others are more recent e.g. Ireland has also become a society of net immigration with many immigrants to Ireland coming from Eastern Europe and Africa. The study took into consideration the extent to which the production of policy reflects a concern that changing immigration patterns may provide more citizens who were not automatically connected to Ireland's economy?

The extent to which lifelong learning drew on social capital assumptions of a correlation between educational activity and social cohesion was explored. However as noted in Chapter 2, the evidence for a connection between better social cohesion and education is not always clear or straightforward.

**How has Irelands place in Europe and their sense of being a European nation influenced this development?**

Ireland has been an active member of the European Union. I wanted to investigate what effect the development of European

policy on learning for life had on policy and strategy development at national level in Ireland.

The study sought to discover whether there were any key European documents or policies that influenced **Learning for Life**. Other European nations with some similar demographics to Ireland were considered in respect of lifelong learning development. My research is concerned with Ireland and is not a comparative study but I felt it was important to refer to other European nations with similar demographics to Ireland. My study therefore also looked briefly at two other European nations, Denmark and Sweden. This section of the research outlined in Chapter 3 would show whether the principles that seemed to lay behind Ireland's development of lifelong learning policy and practice were similar to those in other European nations.

### **What effect has policy development had on participation rates in Irish Institutes of Technology?**

I wanted to discover whether the rhetoric and policy production in 2000 has had an effect on the development of policy and on participation rates in Third Level Institutions.

The study explored the degree to which the institutions have developed their own policies or translated the policies in **Learning for Life** into action in their own institutions.

The study sought to illuminate the degree to which institutions have taken the issues of increasing participation and success by adults seriously and how such initiatives are monitored.

As far as I am aware my study is the first to analyse how institutions have responded to **Learning for Life. Learning for Life** was an important milestone in official thinking in Ireland on education. It is important that an analysis of how individual institutions have responded to it is carried out to understand its effectiveness.

**How will the effect of lifelong learning policies be monitored and evaluated?**

Ireland has clearly placed major emphasis on lifelong learning policy development. I wanted to assess what the role of the government would be in assessing the effectiveness of the policy. How would the Department of Education and Science know whether its policy has produced any changes both in the demography of Third Level Institutions and in the level of skills obtained by the adult population?

The study explores the extent to which “hard” outcomes such as rates of participation, skills and qualifications are raised and the extent to which less readily accessible indicators of social cohesion and inclusion are adopted.

As stated in the Literature Review there has been some work around adult learning in Ireland particularly focusing on social class or on participation rates in Higher Education. The

Literature Review outlined the findings of this research in more detail and identified the gaps in current research which my work aims to fill.

I was also interested in investigating the barriers that were perceived to exist by both governmental and educational institutions in implementing lifelong learning policy in Ireland.

This latter part was always going to be exploratory given the limitations on the size of this thesis and this is discussed more thoroughly in the section on further research in the conclusion.

### **5.1: Positivist and phenomenological approaches to research**

The field of sociology is most closely associated with case study research. My own background lies in sociology and social policy. I am drawing on these areas alongside economics as a framework for my research. Classical distinctions within research often focus on qualitative versus quantitative research methodologies. The debate between appropriate methods of research has been going on for many years. No real proof exists to determine the supremacy of one over the other; the researcher chooses the one that fits the needs of the research topic. Silverman (1977) notes that:

“There are no principled grounds to be either qualitative or quantitative approach. It all depends on what you are trying to do”

(Silverman 1997, p14)

Research in the field of education has often been rooted in phenomenological perspectives which favour qualitative research methodologies. There are many examples of case study research in education, particularly in comparative education. The classic debate has associated positivists with quantitative data, and phenomenological with qualitative; in reality the distinction may not be that simple. Although my research is a case study which is perceived to be a phenomenological approach rather than a positivist one, I needed to employ positivist research techniques as part of my research. I used quantitative research methods to analyse the statistical data coming out of official sources on participation rates. My research included questionnaires which required some quantitative responses as well as qualitative. I wanted to carry out a detailed documentary analysis of official government publications on lifelong learning from within Europe and from within Ireland. I employed semi structured interviews with two selected case study institutions. Using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methods added depth to my study and allowed me to triangulate my results. The range of databases, journals and publications used were outlined in the Literature review. Appendix 1 offers a detailed

outline of the European and Irish policy documents that were analysed in the research.

A case study offers the opportunity to study phenomena in depth. My research was not seeking to create universal laws but to describe a particular phenomenon. Describing a particular phenomenon, in this case, the development of lifelong learning in Ireland can offer a model for understanding the factors behind policy development in general or can offer a model for analysing development of policy in other European nations. Phenomenological approaches, and in particular case studies, do however have their limitations which have been well documented. The limitations of positivist and phenomenological approaches are discussed briefly in this section along with an analysis of the limitations of the case study as an approach. Issues of reliability and validity in particular are looked at in relation to the case study approach.

## **5.2: Case studies**

Case studies serve several purposes; they can be described in the real life context of their occurrence, they can explain causal links in complex real life interventions, and they can be used to identify patterns in complex events and to help in the construction of social phenomena or as a means to track events through time (Yin 1994)

My case study is based in the Republic of Ireland. There were a number of pragmatic reasons for choosing Ireland as the case

study, all of which are important for the researcher. The first of these was ease of access to material and to contacts. I come from an Anglo Irish family and visited Ireland four or five times a year during the course of my research.

I have a number of personal contacts in the public sector and in the Irish education system that proved invaluable in making contacts. I have a good working knowledge of the Irish education system and how it operates.

The practical difficulties of accessing a different country were few as transport links between Ireland and the UK are frequent and relatively cheap.

The specific case study is around the development of policy and the translation of that policy into practice in Third Level Institutions. The population is therefore Third Level Institutions in Ireland. The place of Third Level Institutions in Ireland's education system was discussed in the chapter on Ireland in Context. Two specific Third Level Institutions are studied in more depth in the section of research on how policy has influenced practice.

A good case study needs to satisfy the three tenets of qualitative method, describing, understanding, and explaining.

I am describing the development of policy in Ireland and how that has been translated into practice within Third Level Institutions. I am offering an understanding of the principles on which that policy was developed, what lay behind it. I am then



offering an analysis of whether that policy has that translated into changed practice around adult education in Third Level Institutions and the effect this has had on participation rates and development of policy within individual institutions.

Selecting a case study must be done in order to maximise what can be learned in the period available. The limited scope of an ED. D. research project meant that just two institutions were chosen to be analysed in further depth. Reasons for the choice are discussed later in this chapter. I was confident however that the material I had gathered for my other methods alongside the two case studies would enable me to form a detailed understanding of the topic.

Yin (1994) identified at least six different sources of evidence in case studies. He listed these as documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participation observation and analysis of physical artefacts.

My research utilises documents and archival records which relate to policy on lifelong learning. I utilised interviews with key players in Third Level Education as a way of obtaining more in depth information and understanding of policy development within selected institutions. I also employed quantitative methods in the form of statistical analyses which appear in chapter but also in the questionnaires which were distributed to all Third Level Institutions.

### **Limitations of the Case Study as an approach**

A frequent criticism of the case study approach is that the dependence of a single case study renders it incapable of providing a generalising conclusion. Case studies are however recognised as a valuable method of research with distinctive characteristics that make them ideal for many types of investigation. Hamel et al (1993) and Yin (1994) argued that the goal of the case study should establish the parameters and that a single case study could be considered acceptable provided it established internal consistency.

My choice of a case study methodology required me to understand the limitations and the advantages of the case study as a method.

### **Advantages**

The case study method focuses on one case or perhaps a small number of cases from which the researcher seeks detailed information. Case studies can be used to explain situations explain new theory or describe an object or phenomena .They can offer a holistic approach to a subject adding to a more complete understanding of a topic. One of the advantages of a case study that is set in real time is that it can offer a detailed analysis of a situation as it happens. My research with the Third Level Institutions was happening at a time when they were beginning to consider and develop policy and practice on

lifelong learning. I was able to chart the different stages that institutions were at during the period of research.

Case study research is meaningful to the subjects. During my questionnaire research and interviews I gathered that the topic I was studying was relevant and of interest to the participants, I have suggested that this may be one of the factors that contributed to a high response rate. Case study research has high validity therefore with the population being studied and any findings may be of value to participants in my case, in developing their policies and practices further.

One important factor for me in choosing a case study is the adaptive nature of case studies as a form of research.

As findings emerge the focus of the case study can change. I was able to refine my interview questions as a result of the results from questionnaires. Factors came into prominence as the case study developed e.g. a concern over the available funding to meet the demands of **Learning for Life**.

Case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex system or subject. During my research the complexity of the Irish education system became clear. This was further compounded by the discussions that were ongoing during my research into the future structures of Further and Higher Education in Ireland.

Case studies enable comparative studies to be made with other countries and institutions. I was able to use the case study

approach to briefly look at two other countries and to analyse how they were developing their policy and practice on lifelong learning.

### **Disadvantages**

One of the main criticisms of the case study as a method is that there is little generalisation possible, the case study in effect can only tell us about the particular case study and may not have any validity for future research outside of that specific case. Yin (1994) presents Giddens's view that case study method is "microscopic" because it lacked a sufficient number of cases and was therefore only relevant to the particular study. Critics feel that case studies are low in validity; any claims that the case study could be representative of other case studies is therefore seen as problematic in terms of reliability.

The question of research bias and interpretive bias is also raised as a criticism. Studying one case without any way of validating that against others can lead to the research being free to interpret evidence in whatever way he or she chooses, without, say the critics, any way of validation. I would argue that my use of quantitative alongside qualitative research methods allowed me to validate the findings against statistical and other evidence.

The nature of the case study means that there is a danger of organisation and economic change making the case out of date. Certainly there were ongoing changes and developments taking

place within the Irish education system during my period of research. I was aware of these and was able to evaluate the likely impact of these changes and incorporate those in my summary.

There are some pragmatic criticisms of the use of case studies.

The assumption is that they can be costly both in time and monetary terms and can generate volumes of data. The practical limitations of my research, i.e. the small initial population meant that I could use the case study and keep the volume of findings manageable. Another practical problem often cited is problems of access. I was fortunate in that my contacts already in the Irish education system, both personal and through work meant that this was not a problem for my research.

Having taken the advantages and disadvantages of the case study as method into account a methodological approach based on primarily qualitative research methods was still identified as most appropriate for the kind of exploratory research I wanted to carry out.

A case study involves the development of detailed intensive knowledge about a single case or a small number of related cases, which is what I wanted to develop in relation to Ireland. Typical features in the selection of a single case involve studying the case in its context and the collection of information via a range of data collection techniques including interviews documentary analysis questionnaires or observation,

often multiple sources of evidence are used as Robson (1993) confirms:

“Case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of particular contemporary phenomena within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence”

(Robson 1993, p. 146)

This was relevant to the very contemporary nature of the topic I wanted to study. Indeed there were major changes along the way, which have been referred to above e.g. the current debate on the role of further education and the OECD review of Higher Education. The fluidity of the research and the pace of developments in Ireland lent itself to a qualitative case study approach that was able to focus and refocus on contemporary and emerging issues.

As Taylor (2001) points out in relation to the UK:

“In the extreme volatility that has characterised UK higher education in the years since the mid 1980’s, there is only one certainty, that fundamental change is now endemic and unpredictable”

(Taylor 2001, p. 14)

This certainly proved to be the case in my study of Ireland. Questions I thought I might be addressing at the start of the research changed as the research progressed, e.g. I became interested in the debate over how Third Level Education is funded and on new models for the structure delivery of Higher Education, as this seemed to be a new ways of thinking for the Irish government’s views on delivery of adult education.

Structural constraints meant that these issues could only be touched on and logged for future more in depth research. In my interviews the issue of funding of lifelong learning seemed to have far more prominence for the respondents than I had originally anticipated. Schuller (1998) says that there is inevitable a degree of unpredictability in the case study approach because of its exploratory character; this was certainly relevant for me in the changes and reviews announced during my research.

Generalisibility refers to the extent to which the findings of the enquiry are generally more applicable, for example, in other contexts, situations, or to persons other than those directly involved according to Robson (1993). I was interested in whether there were lessons to learn for countries other than Ireland and the degree to which the Irish situation was unique to Ireland. If this turned out to be the case, consideration was given to the validity of the research?

I did not feel that the validity of the case study would be compromised if the results appeared to be unique to the Irish situation. As Yin (1994) suggests:

“As a research endeavour the case study contributes uniquely to our knowledge of individual’s organisational social and political phenomena. In brief the case study allows and investigation to retain the logistical and meaningful characteristics of real life events, such as individual life cycles, organizations and managerial processes”

(Yin 1994, p. 3)

There were some constraints of doing research in another country; there were some difficulties of language understanding even between two nations whose population both speak English. The term Further Education for example is used to mean different things in Ireland from my experience in UK. In Ireland the term tends to be used to mean post secondary level institutions that offer a range of provision from community education, adult education leisure classes to adult literacy provision. In the UK it refers to Further Education colleges offering a range of post 16 programmes at, certificate, and diploma and in some cases foundation degree level.

There was for me some initial overlap and confusion between Further Education institutions in UK and Institutes of Technology, Higher Education and Further Education centres in Ireland. Interestingly my research did not entirely clarify this confusion maybe because part of the problem in Ireland lies in the fact that the confusion exists. This is one of the themes of the current OECD review of Higher Education in Ireland and the review into Further Education.

The case study approach offers the opportunity to utilise a number of research methods which was useful for a number of reasons. The first reason was that I could glean different information from questionnaires, documentary analysis and interviews. I ended up with a funnelling approach i.e. starting with the broad-brush strokes of the policies to increase my



understanding of the rationale behind their development and the expectations this engendered in Third Level Institutions. The next stage of the funnelling process involved contacting third level institutions by questionnaire to ascertain who had developed a policy and how that policy was developed.

The next stage questionnaire was sent to those institutions that responded positively to the question of whether they had a policy on lifelong learning and asked more detailed questions around how the policy was developed and what the influences on it were. From these responses I was able to choose two differing institutions to focus on for my semi-structured interviews. I also chose to interview someone from the Department of Education and Science to make the link between their development of policy and what they expected to see in individual institutions. This was an interesting approach as it is at odds with what some researchers view as the more standard way to conduct case studies. Fetterman (1991) suggests that:

“Ideally the qualitative researcher begins with informal interviews to learn the appropriate questions to ask. Later as the researcher gains a basic working knowledge of the social setting the questions become more refined, focused and structured. The practice of asking structured questions prematurely, before gaining adequate grounding in the social system runs against the methodological grain of qualitative research. This kind of a priori approach is insensitive to the participant’s perspective and typically results in systematic but useful information for programme, personnel and policy makers”

(Fetterman 1991, p. 98)

From my perspective beginning with the broad-brush strokes of policy and funnelling down to the individual face to face interviews fitted my purpose better. Using a variety of methods also helped with triangulation of the results.

### **5.3: Documentary analysis**

Documentary sources of evidence were very important in this research. There were a plethora of official publications emanating from Europe and from Ireland around adult education and lifelong learning culminating in the Irish governments **Learning for Life** (2000). Sources can be primary or secondary; mine were mostly primary: official publications, documents, and government Green and White Papers. OECD documents and European Union documents were also used. Chapter 4 outlines these in more detail; Secondary sources were also used, although more sparingly, i.e. sources that represent interpretations of the material at primary source level.

Documentary sources revealed a background for issues to be explored at the questionnaire stage and also built up a picture of whom I would need to talk to at the later interview stage.

I produced an annotated chronology of the documents which was useful for me for a number of reasons. This chronology appears in Appendix 1.

At the time of beginning my research this hadn't been done before in relation to Ireland and yet to me seemed necessary in

tracing the development of policy thinking. A study by Keogh (2003) did add to the debate but did not cover all the ground I have covered. The Literature Review in Chapter 2 outlines the previous work that has been published around the development of policy.

The review enabled me to forge links between European and OECD publications and Irish publications and helped me to assess whether European policy played a strong role in the development of Irish policy.

I wanted to explore the links between policy development, social change and changes in discourse about adult and community education.

On a pragmatic level the documents I needed were readily available from the government bookshop in Dublin, again linked to my frequent visits to Ireland. These were often also available from the Internet and from my personal links into the public and education sectors in Ireland.

I ended up including some reviews and commentaries on policy documents, as they added to the understanding of how lifelong learning policy was being interpreted in practice.

#### **5.4: Questionnaires**

The choice of a questionnaire for the second stage of my research was made for the following reasons.

I wanted to be able to glean the views of a number of key players in institutions promoting lifelong learning and ascertain

how much progress they had made in their development in this area. A method that therefore allowed me to gather quantitative data which at the same time allowed me to address a number of organisations seemed appropriate. The questionnaires would, I anticipated, also point me in the direction of which institutions to choose for the more in-depth interviewing stage of my research. The emphasis of this element would be the way institutions have interpreted and implemented the policy and their perception of the barriers to that implementation.

### **Questionnaire 1**

As a result of the literature review and documentary analysis and chronology, I wanted to focus on what Third Level Institutions were offering re lifelong learning adult and community education. The process of designing the questionnaire began with me taking key themes out of the documentary analysis results, which I thought useful to explore. I piloted the questionnaire to check its ease of completion and comprehension with a colleague in another college in the UK and with a colleague in the Public Sector in Ireland who works closely with Institutes of Technology and Universities, but who would not have any direct influence on any institution.

The initial questionnaire was sent to all twenty-one publicly funded institutions in the Republic of Ireland who offer Third Level Education.

These comprised the Institutes of Technology and the Universities. Of these fourteen were Institutes of Technology and seven were Universities.

I realised after receiving the results of the first questionnaire that it was Institutes of Technology that seemed to be further down the line in their development of policies on lifelong learning with the exception of one or two universities. This realisation came partly as a result of the much lower response rates to my initial questionnaire from the universities and from my own research into institution's policy from their published material. Interestingly there were some universities who did appear to me to be doing some excellent work around lifelong learning but despite my best efforts to contact them I received little or no response. I speculate in the conclusion to the questionnaire section why this apparent low level of interest from the universities may be.

The questionnaire was organised into four main sections. The first section asked for readily available information from each institution and focussed around the number of students in the institution by category. The second section focused around whether the institution had a lifelong learning policy and when and how it was developed and published. The third section focused on responsibilities for delivering and implementing the policy within the institution. The final section asked for any

change in adult participation rates since the introduction of the policy.

Most of the questions were structured but some of them allowed the respondent to add to, clarify, or explain their answers. Each questionnaire was then given a number to protect anonymity. Distribution of the questionnaire was by post to the respondents. The percentage of people who responded to the initial questionnaire was high at 57% although the actual numbers were small due to the small size of the population, i.e. the Third Level Sector in Ireland. There were a number of reasons I believe for this high response rate.

Lifelong learning is a current issue within Ireland so caught the interest of the respondents who had clear views on the subject. Ireland had begun the process of reflecting on the system of post leaving certificate (PLC) education and the relationship between the Further and Higher Education institutions, partly as a result of needing to meet the lifelong learning agenda( see Chapter 3) so again the issue was a current one that was generating much interest. Some of the respondents in the institutions also told me that they wanted to share their progress in developing a policy. Many of the institutions had also submitted responses to the government's consultation process for **Learning for Life** so were keen to continue that process.

## Questionnaire 2

Nine of the original twelve institutions that were contacted responded positively to the question of whether they had a policy on lifelong learning. The second questionnaire was sent to all the nine institutions that responded positively.

This aim of the second questionnaire was to probe in more depth into what the influences had been on the development of the institutions' policy and to investigate how the policy was being implemented and monitored. This second questionnaire was more qualitative than the first although it did begin with a series of questions asking whether various European and Irish key policy documents had been influential on the institutions policy. I had identified the key documents from my chronology and analysis of key European and Irish publications. I felt that having ascertained that the institutions chosen had all agreed to participate in further research the respondents could cope with a lengthier and more in depth qualitative set of questions. The second questionnaire was therefore structured in the following way.

The first section asked the respondents to say whether any of a list of named documents had been influential in the drafting of their policy and also which others, if any, not listed had been influential. The second section asked them to identify from a list what the drivers had been for the development of their

policy e.g. a requirement to raise overall student numbers, or a requirement to respond to national skills shortages.

The third section asked them to elaborate on the process for the development of the policy.

The final section asked them to identify the performance indicators they would use to measure the impact of the policy in their institution and asked for the results of any monitoring that had taken place.

The second questionnaire generated another good response rate of 67%. Again this was a high response rate for the reasons outlined above but again within a small population. The institutions were asked at each stage of the research if they would like to participate further in the research, all except one agreed at the second questionnaire stage. Responses from questionnaire two were analysed with the intention of identifying institutions with which to conduct more in depth interviews. The intention was to conduct face-to-face semi structured interviews with key players in those institutions.

#### **5.6: Semi - structured interviews**

Semi structured interviews is where the interviewer defines the topic but allows the participants a wider degree of latitude in relation to the content and the time spent discussing each question. There were a number of reasons for choosing this as a method. The use of a semi-structured interview seemed appropriate as it;



“Allows respondents to express themselves at some length but offers enough shape to prevent endless rambling”

(Wragg 1978; 10)

Kvale (1996) remarks that interviews are:

“An interchange of views between two people on a topic of mutual interest”

(Kvale 1996, p. 14)

It could however be argued that as a research methodology the interview is one of the weakest because the interviewee is likely to provide the interviewer with an official account of what ought to happen rather than what actually does happen. This could have been relevant for me in the interview I carried out with the representative from the Department for Education and Science. There was a danger of being given the official response rather than maybe a more realistic one.

I did consider e-mail as a possibility but decided against this for a number of reasons. I recognised the importance of face-to-face contact and body language. Face-to-face interviews allow issues that come up to be explored in more depth and allow the interviewer to focus more on questions that are generating interesting, useful or controversial answers. One of the respondents I interviewed told me a number of interesting things “off the record” which provided me with a different but interesting dilemma. Could I use off the record comments. In

the end I used them as information to inform my thinking rather than as direct responses.

Non face-to-face interviews may also generate an official response rather than the more spontaneous response and discussion that can flow from face-to-face semi structured interviews.

Another important factor for me was being able to see and interpret the body language of the respondents. Hobson (1980) suggests that non-verbal clues e.g. when laughter or silences occur, are very important in helping the interviewer interpret the respondent's answers.

I felt that the flexibility a semi-structured interview generates was enhanced by me being there. I also wanted to visit the institutions themselves on the grounds that I perceived direct observation would help my understanding of their ethos and their role in lifelong learning.

The face-to-face semi structured interviews also offered a broader range of possibilities as prepared questions might lead to other questions and unexpected discussion. This is what happened in one of the institutions I was visiting to carry out an It led to that institution offering me the opportunity to talk to a group of adult returners who were in the institution at the time to ascertain their views on lifelong learning and to discuss some of the barriers they had faced. I accepted this offer even though I hadn't planned to take this particular piece of research into the

area. It then generated the issue for me of whether not having done that in the case of the previous institution I had visited the additional experience coloured and skewed my perception of the two institutions.

### **Choice of institutions A and B and the Department of Education and Science**

I chose two Third Level Institutions and the Department of Education and Science for my interview-based research. The choice of the Department of Education and Science seemed clear: this was the body responsible not only for writing and producing the official publications and policy on lifelong learning but which also has a responsibility for their implementation. Over the past few years the Department has been reviewing its post secondary provision along with its qualifications framework and its adult education structure. One result of this review was the publication of **Learning for Life** in 2000, which set the policy agenda for lifelong learning in Third Level Institutions. I was interested in investigating the thinking and the influences behind the policy and strategy.

The Department appeared best placed to explore the impact of European policy and the planned balance between human and social capital generation in the policy field. Were there any European influences in play? I was also interested in finding out what progress the Department expected to see on lifelong learning in Third Level Institutions and how implementation

was going to be measured, what performance indicators were to be used. In other words I wanted to know how the Department of Education and Science would know if **Learning for Life** was having an effect?

The Principal Officer for Further Education in the Department of Education and Science agreed to be interviewed. Her department had been a key player in the production of **Learning for Life** and have responsibility for overseeing its progress.

The choice of two institutions to study in more depth became more obvious after the results of the second questionnaire. I chose two institutions that had very different histories and backgrounds in adult education and lifelong learning. One was an older established institution with a national reputation and history in the provision of adult education; one was a newly created institution. One was in an expanding area of the capital city Dublin and one was an institution in a city in a more rural area in the South East of Ireland. Both had responded very fully to both of my questionnaires and had indicated their willingness to be involved in further research. Both had been involved in the government's consultation process around **Learning for Life**.

#### **Institution A**

This institution had a long established commitment to lifelong learning policy and practice; its policy statement on lifelong

learning was produced in early 2000. It is based in the South East of Ireland and has over 6,000 full time and 3,500 part time students. Lifelong learning came under the aegis of the Department of Adult and Continuing Education, which was within the School of Education.

The key member of staff responsible for lifelong learning is well known nationally particularly for her work with adults in the community and for her work in European projects focusing on social inclusion.

The institution had previously been a Regional Technical College. It had a history of senior management support both as a Regional Technical College and as an Institute of Technology for adult and community education.

### **Institution B**

This institution is a relative newcomer to the field of adult education and lifelong learning. It is located in the North West of Dublin in an area of high social deprivation and population growth, which has seen an influx of hi tech industries over the past five or six years.

It is a newcomer to the Institute of Technology sector being opened in September 1999 and is located in a purpose built campus near to a range of new technology industrial sites. It has just over 1000 full time and 400 part time students.

Its policy on lifelong learning was published in December 2002 and the responsibility for implementing the policy lay with the Head of Development and his department.

Both institutions make significant references to adult education and lifelong learning in their strategic and development plans.

Having chosen the two institutions I focused on the questions that I wanted to ask by looking first at the theoretical propositions that lay behind my choice of case study and then looking at the kinds of questions I would need to ask. My theoretical propositions were that that Ireland is developing lifelong learning policies from a social and a human capital perspective. A second proposition was that key European documents had had an effect on Irish policy development and practice. As Yin suggests:

“The original objectives and design of the case study presumably were based on such propositions which in turn reflect a set of research questions, reviews of literature and new insights”

Yin (1994, p. 103)

My questions and the subsequent interviews were then formulated to discover whether my theoretical propositions were in fact accurate.

### **Questions for Government**

There were a number of key questions that I was focusing on in the interview with the Principal Officer in the Department of Education and Science.

These were broadly;

- What does the term lifelong learning mean?
- Why is Ireland's policy and strategy on implementing lifelong learning?
- Has Ireland's policy been influenced by Global and European thinking and development?
- Is the development and policy based on a human capital response, a social capital one or a combination of both?
- How does the department want to see that national strategy being translated into policy and strategy at institutional level?
- How will the effect of **Learning for Life** be monitored and evaluated?
- Has the policy and strategy had an effect on lifelong learning participation rates?
- What are the barriers to implementing lifelong learning in Ireland at governmental and institutional level?

- **Questions for the Institutes of Technology**

In the interviews with the respondents in the Institutes of Technology I wanted to focus on the following areas;

- What does the term lifelong learning mean to you?
- What were the influences on the development of the institute's policy on lifelong learning?
- What was the procedure for the development of the policy?
- Has there been any structural change in the institution since the introduction of the policy?

- Have there been any changes in the range of programmes on offer?
- What performance indicators will be used to measure the effectiveness of the policy?
- Has there been any change in recruitment patterns since the introduction of the policy?
- What do they perceive to be the barriers to the implementation of lifelong learning?

#### **5.6: Next stage of the research**

The next stage of the research for me was to analyse the wealth of material gathered from the questionnaires and interviews using Cohen, Mannion and Lawrence's stages. (Cohen Mannion and Lawrence 2000, p.282) Stage one is the initial analysis of interview data, stage two focuses on categorising and ordering units of meaning and structuring narratives to describe the interview contents. I was looking for repeated themes in the questionnaires and interviews. The small population and the sample size used in this case study meant that I was able to categorise and analyse the results by hand rather than using the NVivo programme. This did not prove onerous or problematic.

The next chapter analyses the results from the questionnaire and interviews in more detail.



## **Chapter 6: Analysis of results**

As stated in the previous chapter my research was carried out by three separate research methods, documentary analysis, questionnaires and semi structured interviews.

The analysis of the documentary evidence research is outlined in Chapter Four. The research by questionnaire and interviews was carried out with Third Level Institutions in Ireland. The Third Level Sector in Ireland is broad in scope and comprises the university sector, the technological sector, i.e. the Institutes of Technology, the Colleges of Education and the Private Independent Colleges. The role of Third Level Institutions in the Irish education system was discussed in Chapter 3. The first three groupings, which comprise thirty-four institutions, are autonomous and are self-governing but are substantially funded by the Irish State. Adult education in Ireland has traditionally been under the direction of the Vocational Education Committees and delivered through Further Education Colleges usually offering a range of leisure classes, repeat leaving certificate courses and adult basic skills. I decided to concentrate on the Institutes of Technology and the Universities for my initial questionnaire. There were a number of reasons for this;

The Institutes of Technology correspond most closely to the Further Education sector in the UK where I am employed and own college in particular Institutes of Technology and Universities appeared from my initial research to be further advanced in lifelong learning policy development and implementation. These are the sectors government policy is concentrating on to increase the number of adult learners nationally. The Further Education sector in Ireland is largely governed by the Vocational Education Committee, and caters for second level students rather than primarily third level. Some adult education, often in form of literacy and numeracy or basic Information technology skills training, does take place. The issue of self-governing and autonomous status of the Institutes of Technology and the Universities was important, as they are free to interpret government policy e.g. **Learning for Life** for their own institution.

The second stage of the research was another questionnaire sent to a smaller number of institutions that had responded to the first questionnaire. These were institutions who had answered positively to the question asked which was did their institution have a policy on lifelong learning. The third stage of the research involved choosing two institutions from responses to the second questionnaire with whom to carry out face-to-face semi structured interviews.

## **6.1 Lifelong Learning Questionnaire**

The initial questionnaire was sent to twenty-one Third Level institutions in Ireland. This comprised fourteen Institutes of Technology and seven Universities. The following institutions were sent the questionnaire,

### **Institutes of Technology**

Athlone Institute of Technology

Carlow Institute of technology

Cork Institute of Technology

Dublin Institute of Technology

Dundalk Institute of Technology

Galway/Mayo Institute of Technology

Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown

Institute of Technology Sligo

Institute of Technology Tallaght

Institute of Technology, Tralee

Letterkenney Institute of Technology

Limerick Institute of Technology

Tipperary Institute of Technology

Waterford Institute of Technology

The following Universities were sent questionnaires

Dublin City University

National University of Ireland ,Galway

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Trinity College Dublin

University College Dublin

University of Limerick

University College Cork

### **Responses Received by type of Institution**

Responses were received from twelve of the twenty-one institutions, a response rate of 57%. A higher response rate was received from the Institutes of Technology than from the Universities. The percentage of responses is included although the numbers of respondents are small. Following the lower response rate from the Universities I did contact those who had not responded. I still received no response. It may be that the University sector is not affected by demographic changes in the same way as Institutes of

Technology. It may be that many of them have not yet produced policies on lifelong learning. I received a response rate of 71% from the Institutes of Technology and a rate of 28% from the Universities.

### Range and Scope of the Questions

Question 1 asked the respondent to outline the size of their institutions in terms of,

- Numbers of full and part time students.
- Number aged between 16 and 19.
- Number of students over 19.
- Number of on campus learners.
- Number of community based learners.

I realised after sending the initial questionnaire that I should have asked for number of students over 25. Although in my own college an adult student is usually defined as over 19 the definition in Ireland is over 25.

I was able to go back and seek that information either by e mail or from the websites of the institutions who had responded although in line with the responses to the question re over 19s many institutions could not provide that data. I added this to my analysis.

I was interested in the on campus and community based learners to get a view on whether adult students were integrated within the on campus programmes or tended to be out in community venues in a range of adult and leisure education programmes.

The responses were as follows,

The number of full time students' range from 360 to just fewer than 14000. The number of part time students ranged from 220 to just over 7000. I received a mixed response to the question asking for a breakdown on pre 19 and post 19 learners. Some institutions left this section blank. Others said they didn't have the information readily available.

Only 7 institutions were able to give me that information.

In those seven the majority of students were over 19. I had a similar response when looking for the data on over 25's.

Many institutions could not give me this data. Of the seven institutions who had given me the over 19 information far fewer students were in the over 25 bracket. Only one institution had a percentage of over 25's above 5 %, they quoted 30 % adult learners.

The question on how many students were on campus and how many off campus elicited a response for 10 institutions with two saying that they did not have a breakdown of that

data. Of those who did respond the vast majority were on campus students.

The next question asked if their institution currently had a policy on lifelong learning, 9 out of the 12 respondents said that they did have a policy. 1 said that they had a policy currently in production and 1 said a policy was planned for the future.

**Table 4 Institutions and policies**

Of the 12 respondents 9 said yes they had a policy on lifelong learning	75%
1 said no they did not have a policy	8.3%
1 said a policy was currently in production	8.3%
1 said one was planned for the future	8.3%

Of the 9 who said yes they did have a policy 8 were institutes of Technology, and 1 was a University.

The respondent who said one was being planned for the future was an Institute of Technology and the respondent

who said one was currently in production was a University.

The next question asked when the policy was produced.

Of the 9 who said yes to having a policy the year of production was as follows

**Table 5 Year of production of the policy**

1998	1	11%
1999	0	
2000	1	11%
2001	3	33%
2002	3	33%
2003	1	11%

88% of the institutions who responded had produced their policy in or after the year 2000, the year **Learning for Life** was published. The influence of **Learning for Life** was a factor to be picked up in the next questionnaire.

Question 3 asked who was responsible for the production of the policy.

The person responsible for producing the policy within the institutions was as follows, two institutions identified their Head of Adult Education as the responsible person, and in two institutions a Senior Lecturer was identified as the key person. One institution identified their Director as policy



developer and one the Head of Rural Development. In one institution there was a head of strategic development responsible. One institution responded that they had a Head of Lifelong Learning who was responsible for policy development in that area.

There was a mixed response to this question with a variety of people responsible for policy production. Only one institution had a post that was designated Head of Lifelong Learning.

The next question asked if there was a dedicated part of the institution responsible for implementing lifelong learning within the institution.

Of the 12 respondents 7 said yes there was a part of the institution dedicated to lifelong learning and 5 said no. All seven who responded positively were Institutes of Technology. Again this seemed to fit in with the lower response rate I had initially encountered from the university sector.

The next question asked if there was a named individual with overall responsibility for lifelong learning in the institution. 6 out of the 12 respondents said that there was a named person responsible for lifelong learning. Of those 6 all were Institutes of Technology.

The respondents were then asked who that person was. One was a strategic programmes manager, one the institutes acting director, one the head of development, one the vice principal for learning innovation, one was a senior lecturer and one was head of adult and continuing education.

The next question asked if participation rates for adults had increased since the introduction of the policy.

Of the nine who had a policy four said that they believed their participation rates had increased since the introduction of the policy, two said no they hadn't had an effect, three said they didn't know or it was too early to tell.

## **6.2: Summary of Responses**

A higher response rate was received from the Institutes of Technology than from the Universities. The institutes who responded ranged from relatively small rural institutes to large capital city based institutions.

5 institutions were not able to give me accurate figures on the number of pre and post 19 learners and pre and post 25 learners but in the 7 institutes who did the majority of the students were over 19 but fewer than 5% were over 25. 9 out of 12 institutions did have a policy on lifelong learning with the overwhelming majority of these being Institutes of Technology. This reflected the low level of response

received from the Universities. The year of production of the policy ranged from 1998 to 2003, the vast majority 88% were produced in or after the year 2000, the year of the publication of **Learning for Life**.

With regard to the question of who was responsible for the development and production of the policy there was a mixed response ranging from the Director of the Institute to a Senior Lecturer.

Only one institution had a post that was designated Head of Lifelong Learning. 7 out of 12 institutions had a part of the institution dedicated to lifelong learning and 6 out of 12 had a named individual. Again there was a mixed response to who that individual was, in many cases, as may be expected it was the person named as responsible for producing the policy.

When asked about any increases in participation rates four out of the nine who had a policy believed that their participation rates had increased since the introduction of the policy. Only three respondents were able to give a figure for participation increases with two stating around 5% and one 320%. That institution did state that it had started from a very low baseline and was talking about very low real numbers.

The next question asked the respondents to say whether their adult participation rates had increased and if so, by what percentage.

### **6.3: Questionnaire 2**

The next stage of the research focused on the nine institutions that had responded positively to the question of whether they had a policy on lifelong learning within their institution.

The second questionnaire in common with the first was sent by post. In each case it was sent to the person who had completed the first questionnaire.

Responses to the second questionnaire were received from five institutions, a response rate of 56%.

Of the five institutions who responded four were Institutes of Technology and one was a University.

The first question asked the respondents to briefly outline the processes involved in the development of their policy.

The second question asked whether any of the following documents had been influential in the development of their lifelong learning policy.

- **The Bologna declaration ( 1999)**

- **European Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000).**
- **Learning for Life (2000)**
- **Irish National Development Plan (2002)**
- **The Vocational Educational Committee Strategy on Lifelong Learning (2002)**
- **Their own institutions strategic or development plan.**

Question Three asked whether any other documents not on that list had been influential in the development of the institutions policy.

Question Four asked which, if any, of the following initiatives had been influential in the development of their policy.

- **The establishment of the National Adult Literacy Council.**
- **The Back to Education Initiative.**

In Question 5 respondents were asked to outline how these initiatives had been influential.

The next question asked them to identify any other initiatives that had been influential that had not been mentioned in the list.

Question 7 asked them to state what the drivers had been for the development of the policy from the following list.

- **Requirement to raise overall student numbers.**
- **Requirement to increase participation in education by adults.**
- **Requirement to respond to national skills shortages.**
- **Requirement to increase participation by disadvantaged groups.**
- **Requirements of external funders e.g. the Vocational Education Committees or the European Union**

Question 8 asked them to state the criteria they were using to measure the impact of the policy in their institution.

They were also asked at this point in question 9 whether any monitoring or evaluation had taken place.

The final question, question 10 asked them to outline the main findings of any evaluation or monitoring that had occurred.

#### **6.4: Responses by Institution**

##### **Institution 1**

##### **Question 1 Production of the Policy**

This institution started with informal processes with a series of staff meetings and a meeting with outside interests which

included local employers and schools. This process then informed the strategy and mission statement of the institution on lifelong learning, which was incorporated into the strategic plan.

## **Question 2 Influences**

Institution 1 identified the following as influential.

- **The Bologna Declaration**
- **Learning for Life**
- **Institutions own Strategic or Development Plan produced in 2000.**
- **Irish National Development Plan 2000 to 2006.**

## **Question 3 Other influential documents**

No response was received to this question.

## **Question 4 Initiatives that were influential**

The establishment of the Adult Literacy Council was seen as influential in the development of this institutions policy. It focused the attention of the managers in the institution on low literacy rates amongst adults nationally and in their region. The initiative was cited as being influential in that Institution 1 is offering a major training of trainers programme with NALA (the National Adult Literacy Agency) for the development of adult literacy trainers and

organisers. This was influenced by the work of the Adult Literacy Council.

#### **Question 6 Other initiatives that had been influential**

Institution 1 talked about a range of European Union programmes that they had been involved in which had led to Establishment of a REGSA (regional educational guidance service for adults) in their area. The institution is running a full time course for adults wishing to access third level education as a result of discussions around lifelong learning. It has also been involved in the establishment of a community education programme for adults.

#### **Question 7 Drivers for the introduction of a policy**

The following were identified as the key drivers.

- **Requirement to increase participation in education by adults.**
- **Requirement to respond to national skills shortages.**
- **Requirement to increase participation by disadvantaged groups.**

#### **Evaluating the impact of the policy**

Institution 1 felt that a numbers comparison is the only real indicator. Monitoring and evaluation has taken place within the Institution. The institution stated that it had findings



from evaluation in a wider institutional context where the overall institute has been subject to an external review body. There are also internal audit procedures. However evaluation on the specific policy impact on numbers and levels of satisfaction in the institution has not taken place as yet. This is planned to occur within the next year. The institution commented that it was too early yet to really assess the impact of policy on lifelong learning.

Currently the institution has around 30% mature students on a range of full and part time programmes. Some of these learners are campus based, the majority however are community based with most being part time.

## **Institution 2**

### **Production of the policy**

Lifelong learning was identified as a strategic project prioritised within the institutions strategic plan. The institution established pan- institute sub groups to draw up a project plan out of which grew the policy on lifelong learning. This policy was then disseminated to all staff.

### **Influences**

The following were cited as influences

- **Learning for Life .**

- **Institutions own Strategic Plan, produced in 2002.**

### **Other Influential Documents**

The respondent cited a Socio Economic analysis of third level entrants, a study (Clancy and Wall 2001) that focused on the social background of higher education entrants and educational inclusiveness. This study had pointed out that entry to Higher Education was still very much determined by social class background with comparatively few working class students accessing university.

### **Initiatives that were influential**

- **The Back to Education Initiative.**

No other initiatives were deemed to have been influential.

The Back to Education initiative was deemed to be influential in that it directed work done through the Access office in the Institute helping the development in house experience/expertise in the area of adult learning. Helping adults access funding helped the institutions recruitment.

### **Drivers for the introduction of a policy**

The following were identified as positive drivers in the introduction and implementation of the policy.

- Requirement to raise overall student numbers.

- Requirement to increase participation in education by adults.
- Requirement to respond to skills shortages.
- Requirement to increase participation by disadvantaged groups.

### **Criteria used to measure impact of the policy.**

Institution 2 felt that the most important measure would be the percentage of mature groups as a percentage of the population in the college. Student satisfaction feedback from this cohort would also be important, retention and completion rates for mature students were identified as important indicators as well. Monitoring had taken place.

### **Main findings of the monitoring or evaluation**

Institution 2 responded that they had found this a difficult area to progress; many tasks were identified as priorities to encourage more adult learners. Their view was that Lifelong Learning requires national policy interventions and substantial investment, e.g. childcare provision and major change in regulations re fees, grants etc before any real change can be seen. The institution felt that they would not make real progress in student numbers, particularly full time, unless major national structural changes were in place.

### **Institution 3**

#### **Process for production of the policy**

Institution 3 developed its policy as follows; all schools and departments internally were required to have their own strategies compatible with the overall in institutions strategic plan. Alliances were sought with external agencies to develop and deliver courses for adults.

#### **Influences**

- **Own Institutions Strategic Plan, produced in 1998.**
- **The Bologna Declaration.**
- **Learning for Life.**
- **Irish National Development Plan 2000 to 2006**

No other initiatives or documents were cited as being influential

#### **Drivers for the introduction of a policy**

The following were identified as positive drivers for the introduction of the policy.

- **Requirement to increase participation in education by adults.**
- **Requirement to respond to national skills shortages.**

## **Criteria used to measure impact**

No response was received to this question and no monitoring has taken place in Institution 3 as yet.

## **Institution 4**

### **Process for production of the policy**

Market research was carried out with existing and potential students and with employers to identify whether there was a need for adult and lifelong learning. A review of policy documents already in existence took place. A series of consultation meetings with staff were held. The Head of Development drafted a policy and this was presented to top management for their approval. As a result of discussing the policy an Access office was set up to encourage and support returners to education.

### **Influences**

The following were highlighted as influential

- **European Commission Memo on Lifelong Learning**
- **Learning for Life.**
- **Own Institutions Strategic Plan, produced in 2002.**
- **Irish National Development Plan 2000 to 2006.**

Institution 4 felt that there were no other major influential documents, referring back to the ones listed above

- **The Back to Education Initiative.**

The Back to Education Initiative was used by the Access Office to encourage potential mature students to enrol on courses across the institution. The benefits both financial and social of rejoining college were widely publicised in the local area.

The respondent commented that the financial incentive offered by the Back to Education Initiative was a powerful one. No other initiatives were cited as being influential

### **Drivers**

- **Requirement to increase participation in education by adults.**
- **Requirement to respond to national skills shortages (this was highlighted as key by this respondent).**
- **Requirement to increase participation by disadvantaged groups.**

### **Criteria for Measuring Success of the Policy**

This institution identified quality as a measure of success as measured by responses in their student satisfaction and

achievement survey. Sustainability in student numbers and income was also seen as an indicator.

Regional impact of policies was also identified, i.e. the level of involvement by regional industries and community organisations.

### **Monitoring**

The monitoring had shown high levels of satisfaction amongst mature students. Good response to the needs of local employers was also mentioned. Employers felt that their needs were being taken into consideration by the institution. A number of specific programme links had been set up with particular industries and the feedback from these was good. Nearly 5% of the student population are now in the mature student category, 70% live or work in the hinterland of the institution. The 5% are however mostly part time students, many of whom are in industry related education or training. The respondent did point out that it was still early days in the monitoring of their policy. They felt that structural changes would be needed e.g. provision of childcare and additional staffing and funding before major changes in numbers of full time mature students would be seen.

### **Institution 5**

## **Process for Production of the Policy**

The policy on lifelong learning was developed by the institutions management team as part of the strategic plan.

## **Influences**

Institution 5 identified the following as influential

- **The Bologna Declaration.**
- **Learning for Life.**
- **Own institutions Strategic Plan, produced in 2002.**
- **Irish National Development Plan 2000 to 2006.**

No other documents or initiatives were cited as being influential

## **Drivers for production of the policy**

- **Requirement to raise overall student numbers.**
- **Requirement to increase participation by adults.**
- **Requirement to respond to national skills shortages.**
- **Requirement to increase participation by disadvantaged groups.**

## **Criteria used to measure success**

Enrolment numbers were identified as the main indicator of success



## **Monitoring**

Institution 5 feels that adult numbers had not yet increased substantially. They believed that the level of support provided by the government to fund and staff adult education was too low for institutions to be able to deliver the **Learning for Life** strategy. This was cited as a reason why adult numbers have not increased substantially in this institution.

### **6.5: Summary of findings**

The question asking about the process for production of the policy elicited a variety of responses. Four institutions said that the policy had been developed as part of the overall strategic plan and one said that it had arisen as a result of review of existing policies and plans. In four cases consultation with external bodies had taken place and in three internal consultation via staff meetings and workshops. In one case an Access Office was set up to develop and implement the policy.

There was considerable consensus on which documents had been influential in development of the policy. All five institutions cited **Learning for Life** as an influence and five stated their own institutions strategic plan. Four said that the **Irish National Development Plan** had been influential

and three **The Bologna Declaration**. One institution cited the **European Commissions Memorandum on Lifelong Learning**. No institutions cited the **VEC strategic document on Lifelong Learning** as an influence. Only one other document was cited as an influence by any institution, this was the **Socio – Economic analysis of third level entrants** carried out by **Clancy & Wall**.

Institutions were asked if either the establishment of the **National Adult Literacy Council** or the **Back to Education Institution** had been influential. Two institutions cited the **Back to Education Institution** as being important and one the establishment of the **Adult Literacy Council**. When asked whether these initiatives had been influential the **Back to Education Initiative** was cited as being used by the institutions **Access Office** to encourage potential applications from mature students. No other responses were received to this question.

When asked if any other initiatives not previously mentioned had been influential one institution talked about a range of European programmes particularly focused around educational guidance for adults.

Responses from the institutions exhibited a degree of consensus when asked what had been the drivers behind the development of the policy. All of them cited a requirement

to increase participation in education by adults and all cited requirements to respond to national skills shortages. Four cited requirements to increase participation by disadvantaged groups. Only two cited the need to raise overall numbers in their institution as a factor. No institutions cited the requirements of external funders as a significant factor.

When asked what criteria they would use to measure the impact of their policy four institutions stated that the number of adult learners in the institutions would be an important factor. Two cited student satisfaction with the quality of provision as an indication. One cited completion and retention rates and one the regional impact of policies in particular the level of involvement by regional industries and community organisations.

All institutions were asked if any formal monitoring or evaluation of the policy had taken place, in four institutions it had and in one it had not. The results of that monitoring and evaluation were as follows.

In one institution the number of adult learners had increased in two it had not. In one case students were satisfied with their course. One institution stated that they had increased participation in education by local employees and built strong relationships with local industries. Overall it seemed

to me that there had been influences both from European documentation, e.g. **The Bologna Declaration** and from **Learning for Life**. What also appeared clear was that many institutions felt that it was still very early days in their development of lifelong learning policies and implementation. I was interested to discover how the two institutions I had picked for interview saw the development of this area. One of the institutions selected had reported adult learner rates of 30 %.

#### **6.6: Semi- structured interviews**

These were carried out initially with representatives from two of the case study institutions. The reason for this choice is outlined in Chapter 5.

#### **Institution A**

Institution A is a rural based institution in the South – East of Ireland. It has a separate Department of Adult and Continuing Education. It developed its policy on lifelong learning in 2000. It was heavily involved in the consultation for **Learning for Life** and had made a written submission to the Department for Education and Science on the draft Green Paper. It was established as a Regional Technical College in 1992 and changed in 1998 to an Institute of Technology. It achieved delegated authority status in 2005.

It is the second largest Institute of Technology in Ireland. It has approximately 64,500 full time and 4,550 part time students. Many of the courses are Diploma and Degree level, with a number of progression routes in place.

Institution A sees itself as the leader in the Third Level Sector for lifelong learning opportunities and access for disadvantaged groups. It has developed expertise in this area, including the development of accreditation, outreach programmes and flexible delivery modules.

The Institution's Strategic Plan discussed the need to raise the regions skill and qualification profile, responding to the needs of employers in a flexible and speedy manner. The institution feels it has responded to government policy emphasis on lifelong learning, through providing a range of learning opportunities that will attract school leavers, second change students and mature students alike. It sees itself as responding to international moves towards standardisation and increased mobility, and cites **The Bologna Agreement** in its strategic plan referring to the agreements aim of creating a unified and coherent Higher Education system across Europe. Modularisation and flexibility of the curriculum are given as key aims. The priority area as identified by the strategic plan is 'social industry' and the creation of an inclusive student centred

environment which considers all dimensions of a students needs and development, for Institution A this includes the personal, cultural, social and spiritual as well as the academic and professional.

There are many mentions of social inclusion in the strategic plan and reference to meeting the holistic needs of students including their personal, cultural, pastoral, social and spiritual needs. Institution A describes its twin pillars of enduring commitment to lifelong learning as being broadening access routes and delivery methods while offering high quality education.

The institute is committed to lifelong learning and strives to provide the broadest possible access to higher education while maintaining emphasis on quality and academic rigour across the entire ladder of progression (Institute's Strategic Plan ; 5)

The institution runs a number of discrete courses for adult returners including a one year return to learn programme for adult students, and a preparatory community based University course. The Institution also runs a successful National Certificate in Training and Development. This is a programme targeting volunteer adult and community workers with the aim of them being better placed to access paid employment after completion.

Institution A also has a range of part time programmes aimed at adult learners.

### **Institution B**

The strategy and mission statement of Institution B says that its role is to meet the needs of the local community by offering a welcoming and supportive environment to students from all educational and social backgrounds and to adults wishing to increase or update their level of technical skills, It sees its dual mission of enhancing individual educational opportunities and supporting industrial development in its environs.

The Institution outlines the following as reasons why it has an emphasis on lifelong learning development in its strategic plan.

- Relatively low levels of educational achievement in the area where the institute is located.
- Skills needs at local/national level.
- Projected decline in school leavers and the likelihood that the decline will affect the IT sector disproportionately. ( many IT and new knowledge based industries exist in the environs of Institution B)

- Social changes including the acceptance of the concept of lifelong learning, the re-entry of more women into the workforce and a demographic shift towards a greater proportion of people at work.

The Strategic Plan refers to **Learning for Life**. The Institution says that it has reviewed European, national, and regional policies relating to the provision of lifelong learning opportunities. It sees common themes, the need for partnership and arrangements to facilitate access to courses and opportunities for progression. Institution B sees the enormous potential that exists for continuing education services given the rapid growth in population and industrial and business service activity within the region. Institution B is located within a geographical area of rapid growth both in the population and in the influx of industries, particularly hi-tech, to the area.

The institution has a number of part-time programmes many of which are based around upskilling and the needs of new technology industries. The institute is a registered academy in the CISCO National Academy programme. It also runs a Foundation Programme for those wishing to return to Third Level education.



The institute has introduced the Accumulation of Credits and Certification of subjects (ACSS) scheme, a scheme that allows part time and mature students to study individual modules one at a time and gain certification for them.

The vision for the institution is to be:

“ A leader in the provision of high quality and sustainable continuing education, at third level which will be relevant to the lifelong learning needs of people living and working in the region”

(Institutes Strategic Plan 2002, p. 13 )

The institute will do this by achieving consistently high standards of reliance and quality in teaching, research development and consistency. It also talks about offering a welcoming and supportive environment to students from all educational and social backgrounds and to adults wishing to increase or update their level of technical skills (Strategy of the Institution for Continuing Education 2003.)

As outlined above the two institutions chosen are different both as institutions and in the focus they have adopted towards lifelong learning. Institution A is a large institution based in the South East and it is long established in the area of lifelong learning with a history of involvement in adult and community education and adult literacy. It sees itself

as a leader in the Irish Higher Education sector with lifelong learning opportunities and access for disadvantaged groups and has responded to the needs of lifelong learning by developing expertise in accreditation, outreach and flexible delivery modes

Institution B is a relatively new Institute of Technology, opened in 1999 based in the North West of Dublin. It gained delegated authority status in 2006. It sees its mission as being to serve its students and the community by meeting the skills needs in the economy and increasing the level of participation in Third Level education and training in Dublin North – West and its environs. Institution B therefore sees its dual mission as enhancing educational opportunity and supporting industrial development in its environs.

### **Summary of Questions asked representatives of Institutions A & B**

The two institutions were asked a series of questions based around the following,

What does lifelong learning mean to you?

Why is lifelong learning important for your institution?

Why the institution decided to have a written policy on lifelong learning?

What was the process for the development of the policy?

What were the key influences on the development of the policy?

How has progress been on implementing their policy?

Have there been any changes in the structure of their institution to develop lifelong learning?

What performance indicators will be used to measure success?

Have there been any changes in recruitment patterns to the institutions since the introduction of the Policy?

What are retention rates for adult learners like?

Does the institution provide learning certificate programmes?

What do you perceive to be the barriers to lifelong learning?

What do you see as the future of lifelong learning in your institution?

## **6.7: Summary of Responses**

### **Institution A**

#### **Position and Responsibility for Lifelong Learning**

Respondent A's role is Head of the School of Education.

The original structure of the institutions was a school - based structure equivalent to University facilities. Each School had a number of departments within it. Adult and Continuing Education was under the School of Business, for convenience more than anything else. From October 2003 two new schools were created, one of which is the School of Education. The School of Education grew out of adult and continuing education. Respondent A observed that in other schools of Education the focus is on leader education with adult education as a 'tag on'. The School of Education at Institution A sees its central core as adult and community education and the fostering of lifelong learning opportunities. The institution as a whole is now looking at adult education, and the development of Accreditation of Prior Learning and Experience and new programmes for lifelong learners.

#### **What does Lifelong Learning Mean to You?**

For respondent A lifelong learning means education from where people finish their full time formal education. For

some people that could have been at the age of twelve for other people it could be with a degree or even a postgraduate qualification. Institution A has a holistic approach to lifelong learning by which it means it focuses on the development of the individual for their own personal development, for the social contributions to their family and community and for the development of their work skills. Lifelong learning for respondent A also meant education for the pure personal development of people who are neither socially excluded or need work skills.

#### **Why is Lifelong Learning Important for Institution A?**

Institution A sees itself as having a mission commitment to lifelong learning. There is a gap in their geographical area of people who need work skills and they see themselves having a role in addressing that. They also see themselves as having a mission commitment to individual's social and personal development.

Demographic changes have also played a role in their thinking. Their prediction is that from 2006 there will be a drop in students attending Third Level Institutions so there is an economic imperative for the Universities and Institutes of Technology. They do stress however, that their primary concern re lifelong learning is to bring Third Level Institution education to those who didn't previously have

access to it. They also see themselves as being strongly influenced by European policies which emphasise lifelong learning for citizenship within a changing European and global context.

### **Why Did Institution A Decide to Have a Written Policy on Lifelong Learning?**

Respondent A felt that the institution had a strong commitment to lifelong learning from the top management team downward. It was seen as important to create the policy as part of the overall strategic plan and mission of the institution. This would give it strength and credence and send the right message re its importance to staff and students.

### **What was the Process for the Development for the Policy?**

Respondent A felt that as in any policy development in any institution policy is led from the top. Their Director was very interested in lifelong learning. Their strategic plan had monitored lifelong learning prior to a separate policy.

Senior management were responsible and involved in drawing up the policy. Local adult learning groups were involved in the consolidation and reference was made to national and European policy development. Institution A

was also involved in a number of European projects which were influential in the forming of the policy.

### **What were the Key Influences on the Development of the Policy?**

Respondent A felt that there were a number of key European influences on their policy development. They were involved in an EU funded project developing community education programmes in the 1990s. The project was focused around adult education and guidance. The institution was interested in people who are disadvantaged and who don't complete Second Level education. Respondent A felt that the White Paper **Learning for Life** was important in raising the profile of adult education but felt that it had too much of a focus on further education as opposed to Third Level. Respondent A felt that the White Papers focus was to steer towards forcing people back into traditional routes, whereas respondent A felt that institution A's focus was more on getting people who hadn't finished their education into Third Level programmes.

Institution A did make submissions on both the Green and White Paper on adult education and respondent A went to group sessions at the Department of Education and Science to give submissions on the White Paper.

Respondent A also cited **The European Memorandum on Lifelong Learning** as an influence on their policy development and also saw this as a big influence on the Department of Education and Sciences thinking around the White Paper.

### **How has Progress been on implementing the Policy?**

Respondent A felt that institution A had a number of key programmes in place, some of which pre-dated their written policy and pre-dated the Government White Paper. They had set up a number of adult guidance services which had subsequently been 'taken over' by the Vocational Education Committees. They also have a foundation course for mature students which in 2003/2004 had 245 full time students. Some of these students move onto other programmes at institution A successfully. Also important for respondent A was the personal development and growth in confidence the attendees on the foundation programme said they had developed. In terms of number of adult learners progress is steady.

### **Have there been any Changes in the Structure of Institution A to Help Support Lifelong Learning?**



Respondent A said that there had been recent changes to make Continuing Education part of the School of Education in October 2003.

The School Education at Institution A has a very clear focus on adult and continuing education. Respondent A now has a separate funding stream as a result of the Government White Paper. This was focused on the development of a programme for literacy tutors and organisations. Now the School of Education receives funding internally to run and validate that course. Respondent A felt that since the **International Adult Literacy Survey of 1997** which showed that Ireland had the second lowest rates in Europe second only to Poland the adult literacy movement has moved away from operating on a voluntary basis with little cohesion of delivery to a more structured national programme. Institution A was playing its part in this by training volunteer community workers to help them access paid employment in the area of adult literacy and community education.

**What Performance Indicators will they use to Measure the Success of the Policy?**

Respondent A said that there were a number of measurable indications e.g. the number of programmes run for adult learners, the number of students studying on them and their

retention and achievement rates. Institution A also set one of its performance indicators around student satisfaction.

**Have there been any Changes in Recruitment Patterns since the Introduction of the Policy?**

Respondent A felt that the institution as a whole had been making steady progress in recruiting mature students since the late 1990's. A big issue for institution A has been that they have developed and are still developing specific programmes aimed at certain groups of mature learners. They currently have an application in to run a project around assessment via the European Union. They are also looking to develop programmes on the training needs of the older worker. Respondent A's view is that lifelong learning is not just about getting a few more adults on existing programmes or running a couple of add on courses but rather it is about developing pathways and routes through education for an individuals life.

**What are Your Retention Rates for Adult Learners Like?**

Respondent A said that although there were no clear figures for mature students it was felt that adults were often the most committed to study once they had returned.

Respondent A felt that there were around 30 % adult

learners both on and off campus in her Institution although most of these were part time.

**Does Institution A Provide Leaving Certificate Programmes for Adults?**

Respondent A said that they didn't. A student who wanted to re-take a leaving certificate or an adult who had never completed education could go to a plc centre or to the Vocational Educational Committee Centres.

They then might come to institution A's foundation programme and through the system. Respondent A felt strongly that many adults had the will and capacity to undertake third level education but were often directed first into further education.

**What do you perceive to be the Barriers to Turning your Lifelong Learning Policies into Practice?**

Respondent A felt that time was a barrier at a local level for many individuals wanting to access their programmes.

Often adults who wanted to join their programmes were people who were working or had family responsibilities.

Institution A doesn't currently have a childcare facility but has plans to build one in the future.

On a national level the barrier was perceived to be funding, the institution is funded for staff on the basis of full time students. Full time staff are teaching adult education courses at part time rates. One barrier for individuals might be that they have to pay, although adults on social welfare get courses at half price.

**What do you see as the Future of Lifelong Learning at Institution A?**

Respondent A sees the future as encouraging more adults into learning and the setting up of more programmes for adults probably via European Union projects. One proposal is to set up a separate academy "an academy for living and leisure" which will run courses in professional development and certificate these courses so that employers will recognise them. The courses will be a mixture of work related and personal development programmes.

**Are there any other Issues you would like to raise re Lifelong Learning Policies and Practise?**

Respondent A reiterated that Institution A had piloted a number of programmes that had been picked up by other institutions. In 1995/96 a group of local women, a partnership of women's groups who were working in their local communities came to see Institution A's Head of

Adult Education. In the 1990's a lot of European money came into Ireland for Community Development projects, there was paid employment in that sector that wasn't there before. But it was mainly graduates from Social Services Department that were getting the work. The women who had the experience and had done all the work getting the EU money weren't getting the paid jobs.

The delegation approached institution A for help so institution A worked with the women to develop the National Certificate and National Diploma and now run a BA in Community Development and Education. This was seen as a bottom up development.

This group were in institution A that day and I was invited to meet them and talk to them about their experiences.

The group consisted of around 20 men and women, all over 25. They came from a variety of backgrounds, one was a settled traveller who had ten children, one was a refugee from Nigeria, and many were parents, some single parents.

Most had received little formal qualifications, in the case of some of the older members of the group very little formal education past the age of 10 or 12. Most of them were volunteers in their local community; some were paid community workers or adult literacy workers. They were all enthusiastic about the programme they were on and

around 2/3rds were planning to progress to another course, some at degree level. When I asked what were the barriers to completing or accessing Third Level education they all said getting the right advice & guidance was important.

Most mentioned funding and paying fees as an issue, and all the parents mentioned childcare. They all feel that the community based certificate course they were on was building their confidence.

Respondent A also told me that they were very involved in developing Accreditation of Prior Experience and Learning.

This had been used successfully in a number of programmes including their national certificate for literacy tutors and organisers. The institution is very keen on using the skills and knowledge that adults already have and acknowledging these. Developing and using APEL is a good way of achieving that. Institution A sees itself as having a primary mission in research and development into adult education as well as the delivery of programmes in that area.

## **Institution B**

### **Position and Responsibility for Lifelong Learning**

Institution B provided two people to formally conduct the interview. Their roles were as Head of Development and

Industrial Liaison Officer within the Access Office. The majority of answers were given by the Head of Development who occasionally referred for verification to the liaison officer. Part of the Head of Development Role is to manage Continuing Education and the work of the Access office. The Institutes Academic Council set up a sub committee on lifelong learning and adult education and continuing education in 2003. Part of the remit of the sub committee is course development and quality assurance and dealing with strategic issues around lifelong learning. The sub committee is also responsible for developing a range of programmes for adults across the institution.

**What does Lifelong Learning mean to you?**

For respondent B the term lifelong learning means that all people have access to education throughout their working life. It is distinguished from the normal First and Second and Third Level education.

Essentially it is the opportunity to upgrade skills or personally add value to their working life. It is viewed as education at any stage of life and dipping in and out of education was deemed to be important for people who hadn't been in education before.

### **Why is Lifelong Learning Important for Institution B?**

Respondent B saw the mission of their institution to enhance educational opportunity and access to work. Their institution is located within an area where there is a low level of participation in Third Level Education. They are concerned with developing lifelong learning to get local people working in the retail sector, in the major IT industries and as operatives. There are a lot of new industries in North West Dublin and an expanding population. Their mission is the provision of educational opportunity and skills development because what employees want is for the institution to work with them to develop a skills base. Respondent B didn't see a shortage of students as a key factor, their area has strong population growth, and for them the focus is on providing access to education and employment to meet that growth.

### **Why did Institution B decide to have a Written Policy on Lifelong Learning?**

Respondent B felt it was part of their overall strategic mission and needed to be given the same formal emphasis. They also said that as a new institution they liked to 'write things down' so that staff and students are clear on the focus and direction of the institution.



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They said that they felt that the continuing education sector is still the 'Cinderella' of the education system in Ireland and a written policy helped to keep continuing education and lifelong learning at the forefront of priorities. People having to read it and comment on it helped staff to "buy into" the policy.

When questioned further about being the 'Cinderella' part of the sector the response was that they feel the continuing education sector is badly funded by central government.

They say that a lot of people who have previously being out of education are discouraged from re-entering education because of their personal circumstances or because they don't have the money to access it.

They see this as a barrier to study, for adult institutions are meant to cover the costs on a self-financing basis. Their view was that until the government supported its paper commitment to lifelong learning then the numbers of adults accessing education would not change significantly.

### **What was the Process for the Development of the Policy?**

Senior management were responsible for drawing up the policy but prior to that there was a consultation process.

The institution conducted market research in the local area

to test the demand for continuing education. They did local research and also asked people about their interests and potential commitment. They talked to local employers to gauge their interest and ascertain their needs. Staff were consulted via a series of four focus groups. Student focus groups were also set up to take student's views. European Union policies on continuing education were also looked at.

The Head of Development then wrote the document based on the research and on previous institution B policies.

Once the document was prepared it was submitted to the senior management groups at institution B and to the governing body. The document was approved and published. It is perceived as a kind of reference document in terms of developing continuing education. It contains strategic goals that are reviewed every year.

### **What Were the Key Influences on the Development of the policy?**

Respondent B felt that the **European Memorandum of Agreement on Lifelong Learning** was the main influence.

The institution felt that a lot of provisions in the memorandum are policies they had in mind, retraining, upskilling, researching needs, promoting inclusion; these were the kind of things institution B was keen to achieve.

They felt that there were many common themes at local,

national and European level. The themes were around disadvantage, social inclusion, participation and up-skilling.

The Irish government White Paper **Learning for Life** was also a strong influence on their policy development.

Respondent B felt that this echoed the European themes and gave them an Irish emphasis.

### **How has progress been on implementing the policy?**

Respondent B felt that a lot of policy was in place but progress was still slow. When asked to expand on this further respondent B said funding was still a problem for institutions and commitment from employers and from individuals. Their hope is that an OECD review of adult education might address some of the funding issues.

### **Have there been any Changes in the structure of Institution B to Develop Lifelong Learning?**

Respondent B said that the structure of the institution had remained the same but the adult education department had expanded in terms of staff numbers. Another significant development has been that the institutions Academic Council have set up a sub committee on lifelong learning and adult and continuing education. Part of the remit of that sub committee is course development and quality assurance and developments around strategic issues.

**What Performance Indicators will they use to Measure the success of the policy?**

Respondent B said that there were a number of key performance indicators in their strategic document. The most obvious one is growth in the overall number of mature students. There are also performance indicators on the retention rates of this group of students, and the academic achievement rates. Other key indicators are more qualitative and are focused on student satisfaction and happiness with their course.

**Have there been any changes in recruitment patterns since the introduction of the policy?**

Respondent B said that initially adults had wanted to take computing programmes and most of the adult learners came onto these courses; now they are trying to introduce more skills training across the board. They are also trying to encourage more adults to access a broader range of programme. At Institution B computing is still their main attraction for adults partly helped by the influx of new technology industries into the area.

Most of them are part time learners, in full or part time work. Institution B reported only a small number of full time adult returners 'a handful every year', less than 5 %.

**What are retention rates for adult learners like at Institution B?**

Respondent B felt that this was hard to gauge and stated that the institution didn't really keep these kinds of figures. On their National Certificate course which is part time, people dip in and out and gain the modules they want, therefore retention on the course as a whole is difficult to judge. On other programmes e.g. Social Care the retention rate for the previous year had been good, only two dropped out from a group of 35 starters. The institution is a Cisco training academy and retention on that programme is good, particularly helped by high fees. Respondent B felt that having made the commitment and paid, most adults completed. Any drop outs usually occurred in programmes within the first 4-6-weeks.

**Does Institution B provide Leaving Certificate programmes for adults?**

Respondent B said they wouldn't offer a leaving certificate programme. Most young people who fail the leaving certificate would go to a plc centre or back to school. Institution B takes mature students without a leaving certificate.

Institution B sees its National Certificate which is part time and flexible as a better option for mature students. This programme generally attracts people in part or full time employment.

**What do you perceive to be the barriers to turning Lifelong Learning policies into practice?**

Respondent B said that the National Certificate programme is flexible so could meet people's needs re work. However the programme did tend to attract people in the 25 – 30 age bracket who did not have children. Respondent B felt that lack of childcare on site and the high cost of nearby crèches might be a barrier to parents joining the programme at institution B. Some funding is available via the Access office but it is limited.

Funding was identified as a main barrier. Adult and continuing education is meant to be a self-financing activity, the institution is only funded for staff teaching on full time programmes. Institution B does not have staff to commit fully to adult and continuing education; the programmes are generally taught by full time staff doing additional contracted hours at a higher rate. Institution B would like to have a department and staff totally committed to adult provision and to ensuring the quality of the provision.

**What do you see as the future of Lifelong Learning in Institution B?**

Respondent B saw the future as 'to grow and to keep pushing the links with industry' and to meet the needs local people in the area.

**Are there any other issues you would like to raise re Lifelong Learning policies and practice?**

Respondent B was keen to talk about the industry partnership that institution B had developed. They had identified in 2002 a shortage of skilled workers in the IT industry. They developed and ran two programmes on block release and one on day release to upskill workers in the IT industry in partnership with the local industries themselves. They were also proud of the Cisco academy development which works in developing progression rates from FE colleges into Third Level and into the industry. They perceived this to be a much-needed co-operation between the Further Education and the Third Level sectors. They view the industry partnerships as important as they bring back students who wouldn't usually access Third Level education.

Respondent B talked about the review of the Further Education sector that is underway. The view of institution



B is that the government is trying to move the Further Education sector closer to Third Level Institutions. Some of the Institutes of Technology see themselves as moving closer to Universities.

There is, in the opinion of Respondent B, a divide between those institutes who want to move closer to Further Education and their type of student and those who want to move closer to the Universities.

#### **6.8: Interviews with the Department for Education and Science**

##### **Questions asked to the Department of Education and Science**

Can you tell me your position in the Department of Education and Science?

What does the term lifelong learning mean to you?

Why is lifelong learning important for Ireland?

What were the key influences on the development of learning for life?

Can you briefly tell me how post leaving certificate education is structured and funded in Ireland?

What have been the drivers for these proposed changes?

Have there been any policy changes since the publication of learning for life.

What are the banners, if any, to implementing lifelong learning in Ireland?

Where do you think Ireland is now in implementing learning for life?

**Can you tell me your position in the Department of Education and Science**

Respondent C is a Principal Officer for Further Education in the Department of Education and Science.

**What does the term Lifelong Learning mean to you**

Respondent C said that the term meant education from the cradle to the grave. Although the government used the term lifelong learning Respondent C feels that this is problematic as it is used in so many different ways. The underlying principal of lifelong education for Respondent C is any person being able to return to education at any point in their lives. The White Paper **Learning for Life** talks about the role of a number of different parts of the education sector in Ireland in promoting lifelong learning. Respondent C said this included formal education establishments such as Third Level Institutions as well as community based learning.

**Learning for Life** also focused on workplace learning which Respondent C felt was another important area in adult learning

### **Why is Lifelong Learning important for Ireland**

Respondent C said that Ireland focused on the concept of lifelong learning from a social perspective. Social inclusion is important. There is a problem of early school leaving and of children who don't transfer to post secondary education across the board. There is an 80% completion rate of school leavers; the target is 90% this was set in the early 90's. Research is being done now on why Ireland is not achieving that target, on why there are still children who don't complete the Leaving Certificate and Second Level education; resources are being put into this area Respondent C said. There is an understanding in the Department that lifelong learning has to link up with the Department of Employment, as lifelong learning is a major strategy in upskilling people to meet the needs of the economy. There are better linkages now than there were in the past. Officials make joint statements in relation to education and training. Respondent C said that the Department of Education and Science feels it is important for Ireland to look at lifelong learning from a social

inclusion perspective as well as from an employment and training one.

**Can you explain that a bit more?**

Respondent C stated that Ireland is looking for economic advantages in skills development especially in young persons.

A young person's employment skills are key whether in applied areas, or other training or into an Institute of Technology or Higher Education. The Department of Education and Science also wants to develop skills and second chance education for adults and is trying to bring the two strands together. This is proving difficult to do.

Succeeding it was felt would help decrease some of the social isolation felt by many adults particularly in the rural areas, and helps promote social inclusion.

Respondent C said that the main influences in the school curriculum were academic until the mid 80s. Applied vocational plc programmes would have been opportunities for those with no aspirations for college. The plc's focus now is on Labour market preparation, general education, work experience and skills training; it is focussed on particular service areas. There is a wide range of options

for lifelong learning in Dublin but access is restricted in rural areas.

### **What were the key influences on the development of Learning for Life?**

Respondent C stated that there were strong influences from Europe and input from member states. **The European Memorandum on Lifelong Learning** was a key influence. Ireland is very much contributing to lifelong learning policy development in Europe. There is a focus on social inclusion to combat social exclusion.

The Department of Social and Family Affairs offers benefits to encourage a return to education. There is an allowance for unemployed people for a period of time to return to education instead of unemployment benefit. This is under review at present. The philosophy would be to encourage unemployed people to engage in education and training. Respondent C also talked about the **Bologna Declaration** which Ireland was very keen on as a way of developing Higher Education in Ireland and throughout Europe.

**What was the process of consultation for Learning for Life?**

Respondent C said that for the White Paper **Learning for Life** there was a huge consultative process. This was upbeat and forward looking; contributions both written and oral came from across the board, from community groups, public sector organisations, Third Level Institutions and women's groups. The Irish government was keen to elicit the views of a cross section of Irish society. The Green Paper on adult education was hugely influential in setting the scene for future developments.

**Can you briefly describe to me how Post Leaving Certificate Education is structured in Ireland?**

Respondent C stated that post leaving certificate education in Ireland is structured in the following way.

Those who complete the leaving certificate successfully can move into Further Education, to Third Level, onto Higher Education, to the Universities, Institutes of Technology or into Employment. Certificate, Diploma and Degree courses are offered at Third Level i.e. in the Institutes of Technology or the Universities. Those who are not successful can return to school to re-take their leaving certificate or can go to plc centres. There is a debate

currently going on in relation to Access and Foundation courses. Colleges and Third Level Institutions should not be providing these courses. The Minister for Education believes that these should be provided by the post leaving certificate institutions instead. There are a number of issues of debate going currently with Third Level institutions; the plc centres and the Unions as to the shape Third Level Education should take. The Further education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) will accredit and ensure the quality of Access and Foundation courses. The plc's department won't interfere with established qualifications such as City and Guilds but will work with third level institutions and plc centres on new programmes. Changes are taking place within the whole Third Level structure at present.

**What have been the drivers for these proposed changes?**

Respondent C said that the drivers were coming from the plc centres that see the need for skills training to meet labour market needs. Pressure is also from some of the universities to clearly define their role in Higher Education. Currently there are up to 28,000 students in plc centres and 10,000 + in Further Education colleges. The Department of Education and Science is concerned as to whether the 28,000 are following full time programmes and achieving

full qualifications. It is felt that some may only be getting records of achievement. People who wish to access re-sit learning certificate programmes could do this under the VETOS programme if they are unemployed and in receipt of benefits. Currently people, who want to take the learning certificate after schooling can return to school, access a plc centre or a Further Education centre or a VETOS centre. The Department of Education and Science is keen to simplify this process and clarify the role of Third Level Institutions. These structures are under review at present.

**Have there been any policy changes since the publication of Learning for Life?**

Respondent C stated that there had been a plc review carried out by Mc Iver which was now being looked at in relation to lifelong learning policies and structures. The implications of this were still under consideration.

Respondent C said that the department's two key reference documents are still the **European Task Force Report on Lifelong Learning and Learning for Life**. Respondent C felt that policy implementation was moving along and the Department has achieved a successful strategy and successfully published **Learning for Life**. The need now is for structural review.



**How is the Post Leaving Certificate Sector funded at present?**

Respondent C said that currently further education is managed by the VEC's independent statutory bodies under the aegis of and funded by the Department of Education and Sciences. Institutes of Technology and Universities are predominantly funded by the Department according to student numbers although there are some fee paying students.

The department would like VEC's to have a wider remit for adult and continuing education. Active community education groups would tend to be disparaging of the Higher Education statutory sector. There needs to be appropriate education facilities in VECs to link those working in community to statutory bodies.

Further Education and the VECs would have a focus for adult and community education. The VECs run plc courses via further education colleges. There is a need for investment in literacy and youth reach and VECs in prisons. Respondent C wanted to see greater clarity between the role of Further Education colleges, the VEC's and the Institutes of Technology. The International Literacy survey of 1997 showed Ireland to have the second lowest levels of adult literacy in Europe, only Poland had lower. Lots of money

has been invested in literacy and second chance education but the infrastructure has not been there to support this; they have recognised this and are beginning to take on structural issues.

**What are the barriers, if any, to implementing Lifelong Learning in Ireland?**

Respondent C said that there were a number of barriers to implementing lifelong education in Ireland. Two of them were flexibility and modularisation of the curriculum.

Respondent C felt that currently the structure of education in Ireland is too rigid and proscribed, this acts as a barrier for adults who need more flexibility.

The provision of education in the workplace was desirable and was a focus in **Learning for Life** but again employers were not always keen or able to be flexible enough to allow this. Getting information to people was also an issue particularly in more rural areas and to the long-term unemployed and communities such as travellers; these groups may not have enough access to information and guidance. The Department for Education and Science sees itself as a prime mover in this area along with the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

Childcare can be a major barrier, particularly for women. Transport in rural areas is also a major difficulty. The Educational Disadvantage Committee of the Department of Education and Science held a learning forum at which eight adult learners told their stories. Many of these spoke of lack of information, money and access to childcare as barriers they had to overcome.

There are a number of youth reach and traveller's training centres around the country offering second chance education and childcare is overseen by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, which has a national childcare committee. Money from Ireland's **National Development Plan** is being targeted on childcare provision to help make lifelong learning more accessible.

**So where do you think Ireland is now in Implementing Learning for Life?**

Respondent C said that there is still more work to be done but that Ireland is definitely moving in the right direction. The view is that there is a great will to get it right. Ireland will, according to respondent C, still be looking to Europe and to the OECD countries for further discussion on lifelong learning. Respondent C views this process as still in its early stages.

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusion**

This study commenced with an outline of my rationale for undertaking the research and identified the lack of academic study within the field of lifelong learning policy and practice in the Republic of Ireland. A justification was given as to the focus upon this topic; the use of documentary analysis, questionnaires and semi structured interviews and the overall qualitative and quantitative methodologies employed. This study aimed to address the gap in this area of research and to identify topics for further research.

The main study was carried out in Institutes of Technology in Ireland. Interviews were also held with key players outside of those institutes, in the Department of Education and Science, the Dublin Vocational Education Committee, and a College of Further Education.

The key issues for this research are identified in the questions in section. These were:

- How was policy on lifelong learning developed in Ireland; what were the principles behind this development?
- How has Ireland's place in Europe and their view of themselves as European, influenced the development of policy on lifelong learning?
- Are there human capital principles at work, social capital, or a mixture of both?

- What effect has the development of national policy in **Learning for Life** had on policy and strategy development at institutional level?
- What effect has this had on adult participation in Third Level Institutions?
- How will lifelong learning policies be monitored and evaluated?

This research was a case study of the Republic of Ireland. As a case study it investigated only one area, in this case lifelong learning policy development and practice in one particular country. Reference was made to two other nations, Denmark and Sweden, to understand the reasons for their high participation rates of adults in education. The conclusions are therefore only related to the area under study although I believe that the issues and themes are relevant to a number of countries which are trying to implement lifelong learning policies. It seemed to me from my research that there was a great deal of similarity in the development of policy and strategies amongst European nations. Ireland seemed to me to owe a lot in its policy development to a number of key European documents. Other countries could, in turn, learn a lot from Ireland.

The Third Level Institutions I was researching consisted of fourteen Institutes of Technology and seven Universities. I contacted them all in my initial research and although I had a high response rate the number of institutions I was dealing with

overall was small. Initially I had responses from twelve institutions. I felt that this did not invalidate my research in any way but enabled me to focus on the smaller number for a more in depth study.

I received a higher response rate from the Institutes of Technology than from the Universities. It seemed to me that there may have been several reasons for this. The University Sector in Ireland had not traditionally suffered from a shortage of student numbers; it may be that there were no financial or numerical imperatives for them to look at lifelong learning. It may also be that they have not had the same focus on social inclusion as the Institutes of Technology. It did appear to me though that with a target of 15 % adult participation in Higher Education by the year 2005 Universities should have been exploring lifelong learning options with more vigour.

This concluding chapter now discusses the outcomes of the research in terms of each of the above questions

### **7.1: The development of policies in Europe and Ireland**

My research traced the development of lifelong learning policies in Europe and in Ireland. It seemed to me from my research that the current debate on lifelong learning began in the early seventies with the publication of **Learning to Be**. This espoused a holistic view of adult education with an emphasis on developing the complete man (sic) prepared for employment and for citizenship. In my view this approach

changed in the 1980s when there appeared to be more of a focus on education for employment and for upskilling. My research charted the links between changes in the economic and social context and changes in the emphasis on lifelong learning. Globalisation began to appear for example as a theme in lifelong learning in the 1990s, a period when the needs of the global economy and talk of the global village was paramount.

Ireland did not really enter the debate around lifelong learning until the late 1980's although concerns about levels of adult education had been raised with the publication of the **International Adult Literacy Survey** of 1997. When the Irish Government did begin to produce its policy documentation there were clear and acknowledged influences.

## **7.2: Irelands place in Europe**

The institutions I studied acknowledged influences from Europe and from the Irish government. **The European Memorandum on Lifelong Learning** and the **Bologna Declaration** were cited as key documents in the development of individual institutions policies. Most institutions lifelong leaning policies had been produced after the publication of **Learning for Life** in 2000, many acknowledged the influence of this White Paper. The process for developing the policy was varied, some institutions had involved outside agencies in a consultation process, and others had produced the policy in house. Most had advocated a dual approach to lifelong

learning, both as a vehicle for dealing with the issue of national skills shortages and as a way of tackling social exclusion. Many also saw the development of the individuals and their families as important outcomes of lifelong learning policies.

### **7.3: The influence of human and social capital principles on policy development**

The European and Irish documents display both a human and a social capital approach although as my chronology suggest that varies through time and is partly dependant on prevailing social and political conditions. It could be argued that demographic changes and major skills shortages provided a key impetus for Ireland to develop its policy as well as any concern for social inclusion.

What was interesting for me was the notion that lifelong learning offers the solution to broad social tensions. This seemed apparent in the literature and in the interviews. In both of these references were made to education for equality, for personal fulfilment and for the promotion of better citizenship. There seemed to be a strand in much of the literature that suggest that lifelong learning increases social awareness which leads to better more active citizens which in turn decreases social tensions. What I couldn't find was any evidence that this was the case. Broad social tensions do exist in contemporary Ireland, e.g. between those in and out of work, between the city dwellers and the rural population, between young and old, and



between travellers and non travellers, immigrants and the indigenous population. It seemed to me to be naïve to assume that lifelong learning held the key to many of these problems. They seemed to me to require more long term political solutions.

This is not to decry lifelong learning. The respondents I spoke to were quite justifiably committed to the provision of opportunities for all and were keen to move their institutions forward. The group of lifelong learners I spoke to were also keen advocates of returning to learning both for themselves, but also for their families and communities. There seemed to me to be a belief in the role of lifelong learning as empowering individuals and communities as well as providing them with job skills. Both of these seemed to me to be important aims.

#### **7.4: The development of national policy and its influences on institutional policy**

There did appear from my research to be a strong correlation between the development of national policy and institutional policy. None of the institutions I studied had developed a lifelong learning policy prior to the publication of **Learning for Life**. Some of them had been influenced by the prior Green Paper on Adult Education but all acknowledged the importance of **Learning for Life**. Many of them had been involved in the consultation process for the White Paper which had influenced their own thinking in their institution.

### **7.5: The effect of policy development on participation rates in institutions**

This proved to be quite difficult to measure as in many cases the institutions at the time could not give me figures for participation by adults in their institutions. Some were only beginning to collect the data, others could give it for some courses specifically but not for the institution as a whole. In one of my case studies they could give me accurate information which probably reflected the fact that they appeared to be much further down the lifelong learning road than many others at that time.

Where figures were given the percentage of adult learners was still relatively small. In terms of overall student numbers most institutions still reported less than 5 % adult students in only two cases were there figures higher than this.

Many institutions spoke about the structural barriers to adults accessing learning, these appeared to be

- **Childcare**
- **Funding**
- **Non flexibility of programmes**
- **Lack of awareness and advice and guidance**

- Rural isolation and transport difficulties
- Confidence of learners themselves.

### **7.6: Monitoring and evaluation of lifelong learning policies**

Many of the institutions I studied seemed to me to be concluding that it was still early days in evaluating the effect of their policies on lifelong learning. Many did not yet have evidence via monitoring of adult participation rates. The respondents in the two institutions I interviewed also felt that without major changes in government funding for adult learning the effect of their policies was going to be minimal. The particular changes referred to were childcare provision and funding for adult education staffing. I concluded that there was progress in the institutions but in some cases this was slow.

### **7.7: The way forward**

Ireland has made great strides forward in its policy development on lifelong learning. From a position where very little attention was paid to this prior to the 1990s there is now a major White Paper. Almost every government publication now has a reference to the role of lifelong learning in the future development of Ireland. I did feel that while some individual

institutions had made great progress there is still a long way to go. The structural and funding issues referred to appear to be major barriers to fully implementing **Learning for Life**.

Many institutions and the government itself did not appear to have mechanisms yet in place for fully evaluate the influence of **Learning for Life** and the ensuing strategies on adult participation rates. The Irish government itself recognises that there is still a long way to go in order to make lifelong learning a reality. There is recognition also that change may have to be made in the structure and funding of Third Level Education to facilitate this progress. Some of the interim proposed changes are around the positioning of the Universities and Institutes of Technology. There is a debate amongst the Institutes of Technology and the Universities as to their role. Some universities want to have a clearer focus on research; some Institutes of Technology seem to me to want to become more degree course based like the Universities. Alongside this some Institutes of Technology want to maintain a clear community focus and develop more lifelong learning opportunities. The transfer of the responsibility for the Institutes of Technology from the Department of Education and Science to the Higher Education Authority reflects this closer co-operation. Funding systems it is argued should incentivise inter institutional co-operation and ensure appropriate balance in the Third Level system at national and local levels between subject and

disciplinary provision, levels of undergraduate and postgraduate provision and research activity.

There appeared to me to still be a lack of clarity around responsibility for lifelong learning in the post leaving school sector in Ireland. This was an interesting area for me and warrants further research.

## **7.8: Strengths and limitations**

### **Strengths**

This study has the potential to inform others in the field of lifelong learning in an area which has not hitherto seen much academic research. Although the study was limited in size, both by the parameters of an Ed.D thesis and by the population size it has relevance for others in the field of lifelong learning. It has particular relevance for those wishing to study the development of lifelong learning in a particular country. It identifies the key research questions that could be used in other case studies. It also provides a useful chronology of European and Irish policy development.

### **Limitations**

A single case study of a particular country in this case, may be criticised on the grounds of non generalisibility (see Chapter 5). The relatively small population size could also be criticised, however my contention is that this was the area of study and indeed the small sample size allowed for greater depth in focusing on particular institutions. As was noted in chapter 5

case studies can serve many purposes. Case studies are useful in indicating the need for further research; there were certainly many areas in the research that lay outside of the parameters of this piece.

### **7.9: Areas for further research**

As stated at the outset of this thesis, although much research has been undertaken in the field of lifelong learning there was a lack of academic study into Ireland and its policy development and progress. This study aimed to address this shortfall. It was both enlightening and interesting for me to chart the development of policy in Ireland. I learned a lot about how policy is developed, often with the best intentions, and how difficult it can be to translate that policy into real practice and to make real progress. The changing economic and social landscape and its effect on that policy was a fascinating area. This thesis highlighted the need for further research into associated areas. To that end my recommendations for further research arising out of this study are;

- Monitoring and evaluating the long term effect of policies on national participation rates and participation rates in individual institutions.
- Analysis of what effect **Learning for Life** has had on the upskilling of adults and workplace training
- Outcomes of the reviews currently underway and their possible effects on adult participation.

- **There is still much to learn from adults themselves. Individuals and groups experiences of lifelong learning in the institutions is a major area of interest, listening to the adult education stories themselves and the effect on individuals and communities would provide useful evidence of what is needed to raise participation rates and overcome the barriers I identified which prevent adults accessing Third Level education.**
- **The rural /urban split in relation to the qualifications gap**

**Helen Keoghs article (2003) refers to adult education in Ireland as the Cinderella sector. This Cinderella theme also came up in my discussions with respondents at the Institutions I studied, particularly in relation to funding and staffing. Several respondents stated that they felt that when lifelong learning has been under discussion the Institutes of Technology have been Cinderella institutions in relation to funding. Keogh conclude that progress has been made and that Cinderella has now gone to the ball; my view is that she is at the ball but she arrived late and she has forgotten her purse.**

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## **Appendix 1**

### **A Chronology of Key European and Irish Policy Documents on Lifelong Learning**



## Annotated chronology of key European and Irish documents on lifelong learning and adult education

European	Irish	Key themes
<p><b>1946 Ellsinore conference</b></p>		<p>First major conference held on adult education. Attracted seventy-nine delegates and observers mainly from the West. Began the debate about the need for coherent policies and strategies to increase adult participation particularly for those with few or no qualifications into learning. Focused on the need to educate adult populations to support the needs of the economies of developing nations.</p>
<p><b>1957 Treaty of Rome</b></p>		<p>Referred to education only in terms of vocational education and training and secondary education, no reference made to lifelong learning.</p>
	<p><b>1973 Survey by the Committee on adult education</b></p>	<p>Tried to map the provision of adult education in Ireland for the first time. Survey discovered that for many rural residents and for many women, access to, and participation in, adult education was minimal.</p>
	<p><b>1976 Formation statement of AONTAS national body for adult education in Ireland</b></p>	<p>First national body established for adult education. A cohesive and united body that looked at the needs of adults in education and the economy. Still saw adult education in terms of community based evening class provision. Little discussion of workplace education upskilling or third level or university education for adults.</p>
<p><b>1972 Faure report.</b></p>		<p>Focused on the needs of European nations to adopt lifelong learning as a key strategy in order to produce what it referred to as the complete man. The complete man, the paper argued, would build up a continuous body of knowledge both for citizenship and for life as well as skills to meet the needs of the economy. The paper espoused a social capital approach to education as well as human capital. This paper began the contemporary debate around lifelong learning and adult education.</p>

<p><b>1979 Unesco report on Terminology of adult education</b></p>		<p>Discussed the plethora of terms relating to adult education and argued for the systematic usage of a term that encompassed all the venues and ways in which adult education could occur. Continued the debate started with Faure and Friere about what constitutes learning. Recognized informal learning and proposed that learning could take place in a variety of settings, both formal and informal.</p>
	<p><b>1984 report of the Commission of adult education</b></p>	<p>Lifelong learning emerged as a central theme in this report. However it contains little practical suggestions as to how it could be implemented. Government concern at the time lay with the financial crisis of the mid 1980's expanding unemployment and rapidly expanding youth population, many of who had few qualifications. The report did suggest, however, the ideal of lifelong learning and second chance education.</p>
<p><b>1985 Unesco report The development of adult education aspects and trends</b></p>		<p>This paper analysed the number of adults entering adult education programmes across Europe. Concluded that the numbers were increasing, but pointed out that provision still appeared to be reaching the more educated sections of society. Stated the need to introduce adult education provision that would meet the needs of individual nation's economies and the needs of Europe as a whole. Concluded that strategies were needed to reach adults who were not well educated and who did not access any post school education.</p>
<p><b>1992 Maastricht treaty</b></p>		<p>Accorded the European Commission partial jurisdiction over educational matters but did not fully endorse the European union as a major player for nations in determining the role and value of education for individuals and nations.</p>

	<p><b>1995 White Paper Charting our educational future</b></p>	<p>This document referred to the need to promote lifelong learning. Talked about the need for continuous education and training and updating of skills. However its main focus was still on Second Level education, a front loaded model of education as preparation for life. Focused on younger age groups rather than mature students.</p>
<p><b>1996 European year of lifelong learning Lifelong learning for all OECD</b></p>		<p>Major focus in both the EU and the OECD on lifelong learning both to support the individual's educational progress throughout the life cycle. Talks about long-term benefits for the individual, for enterprise and the economy. Says there is a reciprocal arrangement between social change and developments in education and training interventions. Lifelong learning can help break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage. Says that lifelong learning is the responsibility of a number of stakeholders, individuals, family's teacher's social partners and governments.</p>
<p><b>1996 European Commission Strategy for lifelong learning</b></p>		<p>The Commission focused on the case for lifelong learning on a number of grounds but in particular on the institutional and policy challenges posed by a lifelong learning particularly in issues such as the transition between education and work, on progression, on accreditation and on teacher training.</p>
	<p><b>1997 Government White Paper on human resource development</b></p>	<p>Government paper which emphasized the comparatively low levels of education of Irish adults within an OECD context. Refers to the negative economic and labour market implications of such a situation if it was allowed to remain unaddressed. Pointed out the need to upskill adults in the workplace and bring more adults, particularly the unskilled and the poorly skilled who would require training as well, into the workplace. Says this is necessary due to skills shortages in the Irish economy and in the low numbers of school leavers leaving secondary school education due to demographic changes.</p>
<p><b>1997 International adult literacy survey</b></p>		<p>Major survey documenting literacy rates in adults in European nations. The survey indicated that Ireland had high numbers of adults with literacy problems compared to most other European nations. Concerns were raised about the low levels of literacy for two reasons. One was the effect of this on the workforce development due to skills shortages; the second was a concern that illiterate adults may be more likely to be disaffected citizens.</p>

	<p><b>1998 Green Paper on Adult education in an era of lifelong learning</b></p>	<p>Major paper, which was the forerunner of the 2000 White Paper Learning for Life. The purpose of the Green Paper was to begin a national debate and inform government policy on the key role of adult education in meeting the needs and challenges of Irish society. Papers role was to identify priorities and develop policy on adult education at a national level. The government was looking for ways to co-ordinate the sector within a holistic and inclusive system of education and to make a national policy commitment of lifelong learning. The green paper pointed out that at the time the educational attainment of Irish adults compared unfavourably with most other industrialized nations. Low levels of adult literacy, low levels of educational attainment poverty, intergenerational disadvantage were all described as major areas needing action. The relative uncompetitiveness the Irish workforce was identified as a problem. The green paper proposed a number of initiatives all within a framework of lifelong learning.</p> <p>These included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A national adult literacy programme</li> <li>• A commitment to upskill the workforce</li> <li>• A range of proposals to increase adult participation in higher education</li> <li>• A focus on community based education</li> <li>• A focus on outcome based assessment</li> <li>• A system of guidance and counselling for adults</li> <li>• A system of tutor training and recognition of qualifications</li> <li>• Development of national structures for co-ordination of adult education and training</li> </ul>
<p><b>1998 Lifelong learning towards 2000 (European union of Education for adults</b></p>		<p>Proposals on lifelong learning by the European union on education for adults. The paper outlines the vision of a Europe of knowledge with lifelong learning at its heart, and calls for new policies to realise the vision that encourages demand, improves the supply of learning possibilities and promotes a consistent approach.</p>
	<p><b>1999 Government White</b></p>	<p>This paper focused on the importance of good early childhood education and identified the</p>



<p><b>Paper on early childhood education Ready to Learn</b></p>	<p>principal objectives of government policy in relation to early childhood education as supporting the development and educational achievement of children. Focused on high quality early childhood education as important in fostering lifelong learning. Focused particularly on groups facing disadvantage and those with special needs. Makes commitment to lifelong learning and shifts the focus from schools and Second Level education to “a continuum of lifelong learning”, stressing the importance of parental involvement in early childhood education.</p>
<p><b>1999 National Employment Action Plan for Ireland</b></p>	<p>The plan proposed a number of initiatives and strategies to effectively meet the needs of a changing economy. It refers to the need to upskill adults and deal with problems of non-achievement in school leavers. It refers positively to the concept of lifelong learning as being good for the economy as well as individuals</p>
<p><b>1999 Qualifications and (Education and Training) Act</b></p>	<p>This Act established for the first time a National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. It planned to develop a national qualifications framework for non-university education and training awards. It also had a focus on Further and Higher education. The Authority set up would establish and maintain a framework of qualifications, establish policies and criteria and co-ordinate education and training awards. The Authority would have a role in maintaining quality standards and in facilitating access transfer and progression. The Act established two councils FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council and HETAC (Higher Education and Training Awards Council).</p>
<p><b>1999 Bologna Declaration</b></p>	<p>The Bologna Declaration was an agreement signed by seven countries, of which Ireland was one. It confirmed the intention of the participating countries to work together to promote a European system of Higher Education. It talks about the importance of education co-operation in order to facilitate a comprehensive and understandable Higher Education system across Europe. The aims include the creation of comparable degrees, development of a cross European credit framework and the promotion of the European dimensions of Higher Education. It also talks about enabling mobility across and between European Higher education institutions and promoting broader cultural understanding.</p>
<p><b>2000 Government White Paper Learning for Life</b></p>	<p>This White Paper was the first major document on adult education lifelong learning in Ireland. It followed from many of the proposals outlined in the Green Paper of 1998. It was produced following an extensive period of consultation with a range of partners and individuals. It looked at a number of key areas,  Adult Education  Adult Literacy  Community and Continuing Education</p>

		<p><b>Workplace Education Further and Higher Education</b></p> <p>The paper marked a radical new departure for Ireland. It indicted a shift in educational policy thinking from the traditional front loaded model of Irish education to a lifelong learning model to meet the needs of the individual and the economy. It proposed both social and human capital perspectives. Lifelong learning was perceived to be beneficial in upskilling adults and dealing with skills shortages e.g. in the new knowledge industries. It also refers to education for citizenship and for equality and diversity and refers to the need for Ireland to develop what it calls interculturalism and inclusion. Ireland is perceived in this document as a potential key economic player both in Europe and globally.</p>
<p><b>2000 White Paper on youth policy</b></p>		<p>Focused on the need to develop the youth of Europe through education and training. Refers to lifelong learning as important both for fostering a love of learning amongst youth but also as a way of ensuring continuous upskilling to meet needs of economy. Says that lifelong learning is necessary if nations of Europe are to be successful and prosperous. Says that the main responsibility for lifelong learning is national and should be based on a culture that reduces the barriers to learning and promote new basic skills including Information and Communication technologies. It suggests that a review is needed of the resources used in training in the workplace. Emphasises e commerce and technology as important facets of lifelong learning.</p>
	<p><b>2000 Employment Plan</b></p> <p><b>National Action</b></p>	<p>This sets out a comprehensive framework for labour market reform to support economic and employment growth and reduction in social exclusion. It targeted strategies for the unemployed, guidance, counselling and support, placements in industry and education and training. Priority is given to education and training as a way of addressing skills shortages. The plan focused on the need to assist return to work and participation in the labour market especially for women and for older unemployed workers. It promoted lifelong learning particularly through the expansion of e commerce and workplace upskilling.</p>
	<p><b>2000 Education Welfare</b></p>	<p>This government act raised the school leaving age from fifteen to sixteen or completion of</p>

	<b>Act</b>	<p>Second Level education. The intention was to try and deal with the large numbers of non-achievers at Second Level education. It established the Education Welfare Board to monitor school attendance and support children at risk to stay in school. It required, through the setting up of Education Welfare Boards young people aged 16 to 18 to register if they intended to leave school early. The Boards would help them plan their future education and training. Certificates of work would be issued to young people once they had been through the board. The aim was to improve school retention rates and improve tracking and referrals to Further Education. The Act required Further Education institutions to think about the vocational training needs of 16 to 18 year olds as well as the needs of the more traditionally academic students.</p>
	<p><b>2000 Programme for prosperity and fairness</b></p>	<p>Comprehensive range of actions aimed at promoting Ireland's capacity as a socially inclusive knowledge based society adaptable to change. It focuses on a range of measures from early childhood through to adulthood. Focused on issues such as early school leavers, literacy, and the promotion of science technology and languages. It was intended to tackle barriers to access and progression, and had a focus on the social inclusion of specific groups e.g. travellers, rural unemployed. Increasing participation in second chance education, adult education and Third Level education and training were all proposed as key components of the Programme. It proposed the enhancement of employment services, advice and guidance for adults. It also proposed family friendly policies, with emphasis on the need to provide high quality childcare to enable adults to access education and training. It set targets e.g. 15 % of those entering Higher Education to be adults by the year 2005.</p>
<p><b>2001 European Commission report Making the European year of lifelong learning a reality</b></p>		<p>Talks about a European arena of lifelong learning and how to make this a reality. Aims to empower citizens of Europe to move freely between learning settings jobs regions and countries making the most of their knowledge and competences to meet the goals and needs of the European union to be more prosperous, inclusive, tolerant and democratic. Wants to see lifelong learning should make the while spectrum of formal and informal dedication active citizenship, personal fulfilment social inclusion etc, as well as employment related aspects. Values all forms of learning, gives adult information, advice guidance and counselling. Need to invest time and money in education. Need to develop innovative pedagogy. Says traditional policies and initiatives are increasingly ill equipped to deal with consequences of globalisation digital technology and environmental change.</p>

	<p><b>2001 Progress report on the work of the expert group</b></p>	<p>The aim of the group was to identify areas and countries within which companies believes links could be made in order to identify good practice, exchange experience and define common policy objectives focussed on quality of school education and participation. Proposed that lifelong learning practice be discussed and good practice disseminated.</p>
<p><b>2001 Eurostat report on Measuring lifelong learning</b></p>		<p>This report discussed the importance of recognizing non-formal as well as formal learning as a way of increasing the skills and knowledge of the population of Europe. It linked lifelong learning to the needs a global economy and of individual nation states. The report recommended developing a classification system of learning activities to cover all types of formal as well as non-formal education and learning. It recommended the design of a new European adult education survey with a view to developing a comprehensive European lifelong learning survey. Uses the term lifewide as well as lifelong.</p>
	<p><b>2001 Department of Education and Science strategy statement</b></p>	<p>This statement outlined the Irish government's plans for the development of education to meet the countries economic and social needs. It aimed for all individuals to achieve their full potential and participate fully as members of society and as active citizens. The report says that the government wants to see all individuals contributing to Ireland's social cultural and economic development. It talks about promoting equality and inclusion, promoting quality outcomes, and promoting lifelong learning. Planning for education that is relevant to personal social and cultural needs and economic need is also discussed. One aim is to enhance the capacity of the DFES for effective service delivery policy formulation and research and evaluation.</p>
<p><b>2001 Commissions Strategy on building new labour markets</b></p>		<p>High level skills and mobility task force set up to identify the main drivers and characteristics of the new European labour market, with a particular reference to skills, lifelong learning and mobility.</p>
	<p><b>2002 National anti</b></p>	<p>This major strategy document set new targets for the reduction and elimination of consistent</p>

	<b>poverty strategy</b>	<p>poverty. Eliminating long-term unemployment is a key theme along with proposals to halve the proportion of school pupils with severe literacy problems by 2006. Lifelong learning is seen as a key driver in reducing poverty, particularly inter- generational poverty.</p>
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## **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to study lifelong learning policy development in the Republic of Ireland and its translation into practice in Third Level Institutions. The specific purpose of the study is to map the development of policy and investigate the influences on this development including the changing socio economic and political context within Ireland and its membership of the European Union. The focus of the research is also **Learning for Life**, the Irish government's major White Paper on adult education and lifelong learning, published in 2000. The research also begins to investigate how Third Level Institutions in Ireland have interpreted **Learning for Life** and other policy documents in their own policies and practice. I was also interested in investigating the barriers that were perceived to exist by people, in both government and educational institutions, to the successful implementation of lifelong learning policy in Ireland.

The thesis also explores the approach that has been taken to lifelong learning in Ireland analysing whether this approach has taken a predominantly human or social capital approach or a mixture of both.

Although a number of studies have investigated the impact of lifelong learning policies on national and institutional practice in other countries, very little research has been carried out on Ireland. This thesis makes a valuable contribution by providing a case study

based analysis of policy development within a changing economic and social context. It also provides an insight into the approach taken by one individual country and the influences on that approach. Although the study is clearly and deliberately a case study I have included reference to two other European nations who have high adult participation rates in education, Denmark and Sweden, as comparators with the experiences of Ireland.