



Responses to early school leaving in Ireland

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Ireland – geographical





Ireland - political





Ireland - historical

- Colonised by Great Britain
- Lack of industrialisation
- Dependence on agriculture
- Emigration (famine in 1840s → huge exodus)
- Current population 4.5m in state; 1.8m in NI
- Economy in recent years
- Present context (digital technology, economic and cultural globalisation, extended adolescence, etc)



Presentation

- NESSE report (2010)
- Rates of ESL in Ireland
- Measures to respond to ESL in Ireland
 - Prevention – within mainstream schools
 - Intervention – alternatives for young people
 - Compensation – further education for adults
- What seems to work best when delivering intervention measures



NESSE report (2010)

- *Early school leaving: Lessons from research for policy makers*
- NESSE: Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education and Training
- Draws on European and international literature to examine
 - Consequences
 - Causes
 - Possible remedies



Consequences of ESL

- Problems for the individual (unemployment, social and mental health difficulties, shorter life expectancy)
- Problems for the economy (lower productivity and reduced tax revenues, increased social welfare costs)
- Problems for society (increased crime, reduced social cohesion and civic participation)

Factors in disengagement

School factors	Curriculum factors	Family factors	Individual factors
Teachers lack skills to work with disengaged students	Perceived irrelevance of curriculum	Education not valued – limited support to remain in school	Issues with self-esteem, confidence, social skills, coping skills and resilience
Lack of training opportunities for teachers	Prescribed academic curriculum	Absence condoned by parents	Negative experience of school including discrimination, academic failure and transfers to lower level of education
Lack of educational resources and support staff	Lock in to inappropriate vocational/academic courses	Household problems, processes and dynamics	Relationships with peers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outsider/loner/bullying • Friends beyond school attracting out of school
School admission policies	Reduction in pastoral time as a result of curriculum pressure	Contradictory social, behavioural and cultural expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alpha female/male – high degree of autonomy, behaviour problems and actively influencing others' disengagement • Colluder/disputant – non-attendance influenced by truanting peers
Lack of supportive pastoral systems	Inappropriate pedagogy – focus on curriculum content rather than learners	Expectations of assumption of adult roles and caring responsibilities	
Insufficient career advice and guidance	Incompatible learner and school norms		
Teacher/pupil relationships	Lack of alternative education provision with formalised accreditation		Lack of academic ability, special educational needs and difficulties in coping with traditional assessment procedures
Low status of vocational education			Boredom, alienation, discouragement, health problems including mental, health problems leading to absence and substance misuse



Possible responses

- Pre-emptive interventions
 - Preschool
 - Early education
- Preventive interventions
 - Structural reform – decreasing ghettoisation
 - School actions
 - Student focused actions



School actions

- Fostering of connectedness in students
- Increasing trust in students and raising their expectations
- Providing tasks with immediate and tangible outcomes
- Encouraging parental involvement



Student focused actions

- Building resilience and ability to cope with adversity
- Promotion of community engagement
- Individualised support (e.g. mentoring)
- Comprehensive addressing of needs / difficulties
- Liaison with range of services
- Relevant curriculum
- High status VET
- Second chance programmes (alternative approach)



Conclusions

- The seriousness of the issue of ESL has neither been properly recognised nor effectively responded to
- Level of investment is quite inadequate
- Lack of attempt to join up successful interventions into a comprehensive approach
- Need for policy responses at both education system and individual school levels
- Need for policy responses at wider employment and social policy levels
- In light of “Europe’s demographic time bomb” – the major shift in the ratio of earners/taxpayers to pensioners



NESSE (2010) report available online

- <http://www.spd.dcu.ie/site/edc/documents/ness2010early-school-leaving-report.pdf>



Some education statistics for Ireland

- Approximately 520,000 students in primary and 390,000 in secondary schools (Sept 2012)
 - 3152 primary schools (8 years from age 4 to 12)
 - 720 secondary schools (6 years from age 13 to 18)
- Tracing 2006 intake to secondary schools:
 - 278 children did not transfer from primary
 - Destination of another 1,033 unknown
 - 96.3% sat Junior Cert in 2009/10 (lower secondary)
 - 90.2% sat Leaving Cert in 2011/12 (upper secondary)



School completion statistics cont.

- No. of students completing upper secondary is up 6% in 8 years*
- 80.1%* completed upper secondary in Deis (designated disadvantaged) schools – up 7%
- 10.6%* left school without completing upper secondary education, down from 13% in 2004
- EU average is 14%
- EU 2020 target is < 10%
- Irish 2020 target is 8%

*2011 figures



Measures to respond to ESL in Ireland

- Prevention – within mainstream schools
- Intervention – alternatives to mainstream schools for young people
- Compensation – further education for adults



The key **prevention** measure: DEIS Programme

- Range of additional supports for schools serving families with concentrated levels of social and economic disadvantage
- In 657 (21%) primary and 194 (27%) secondary schools nationally
- Main focus on:
 - Attendance and retention
 - Progression and accreditation
 - Literacy and numeracy attainment
 - Partnerships with parents and community




Provision under DEIS

- Early Start in 40 DEIS schools [but 94% of all children from 3:02 years avail of State funded pre-school year]
- Enhanced student : teacher ratio (smaller classes, more support and specialist teachers)
- Enhanced access to literacy and numeracy resources and education programmes
- Range of additional grants (for books, meals, etc)
- Home school community liaison teacher
- School Completion Programme (SCP)
 - 124 projects in 15% primary and 31% secondary schools
 - Targeting 36,000 children and young people
 - SCP coordinators and local management committees
 - Planning and review processes



Evaluations of DEIS by Inspectorate

- Significant gains in reading and maths scores
- Positive engagement with education by parents and increased satisfaction levels
- Significant improvements in attendance
- 100% progression from primary to secondary schools



Another **prevention** measure: the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)

- Statutory remit to support all children
- Prioritises its services to DEIS schools
- Oversees SCP
- 75 Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) follow up individual cases of poor attendance or ESL



The key **intervention** measure

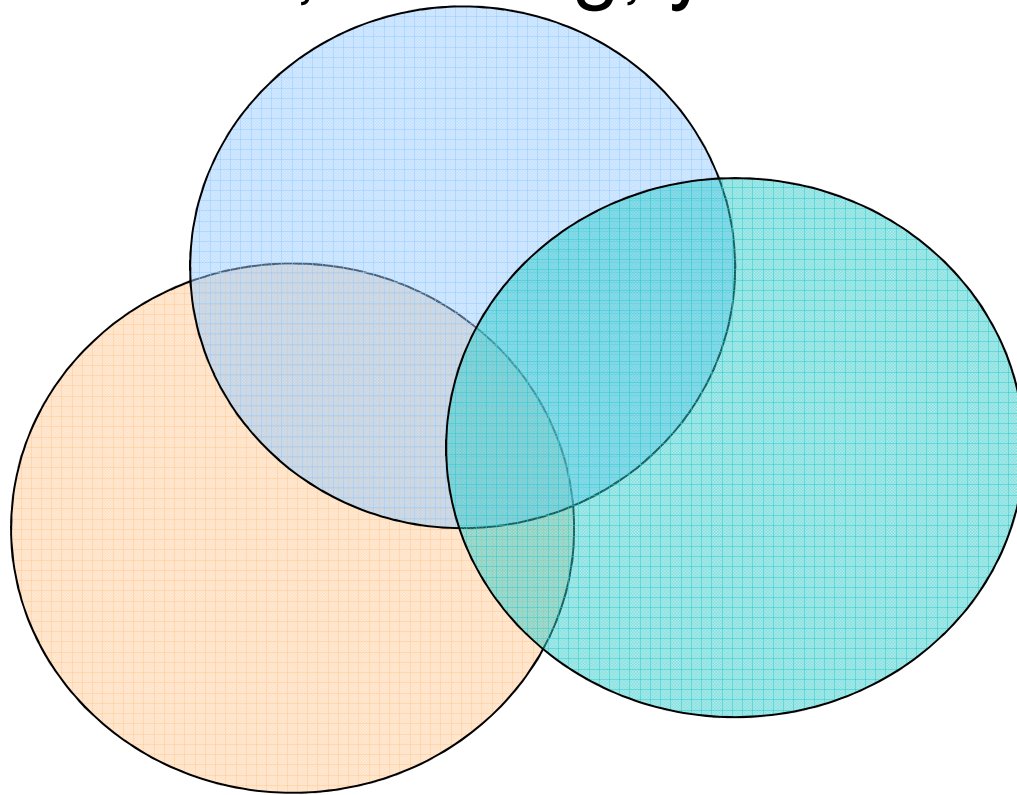
– Youthreach Programme

- 2 year full time programme for early school leavers aged about 15 to 20 years
- 6000 places in approximately 150 centres nationally (average centre size: 40)
- Training allowance paid to 16+ year olds
- Curriculum:
 - Basic skills (literacy, numeracy, IT)
 - Vocational training and work experience
 - Personal and social development



Youthreach: a synthesis of three traditions

education, training, youth work

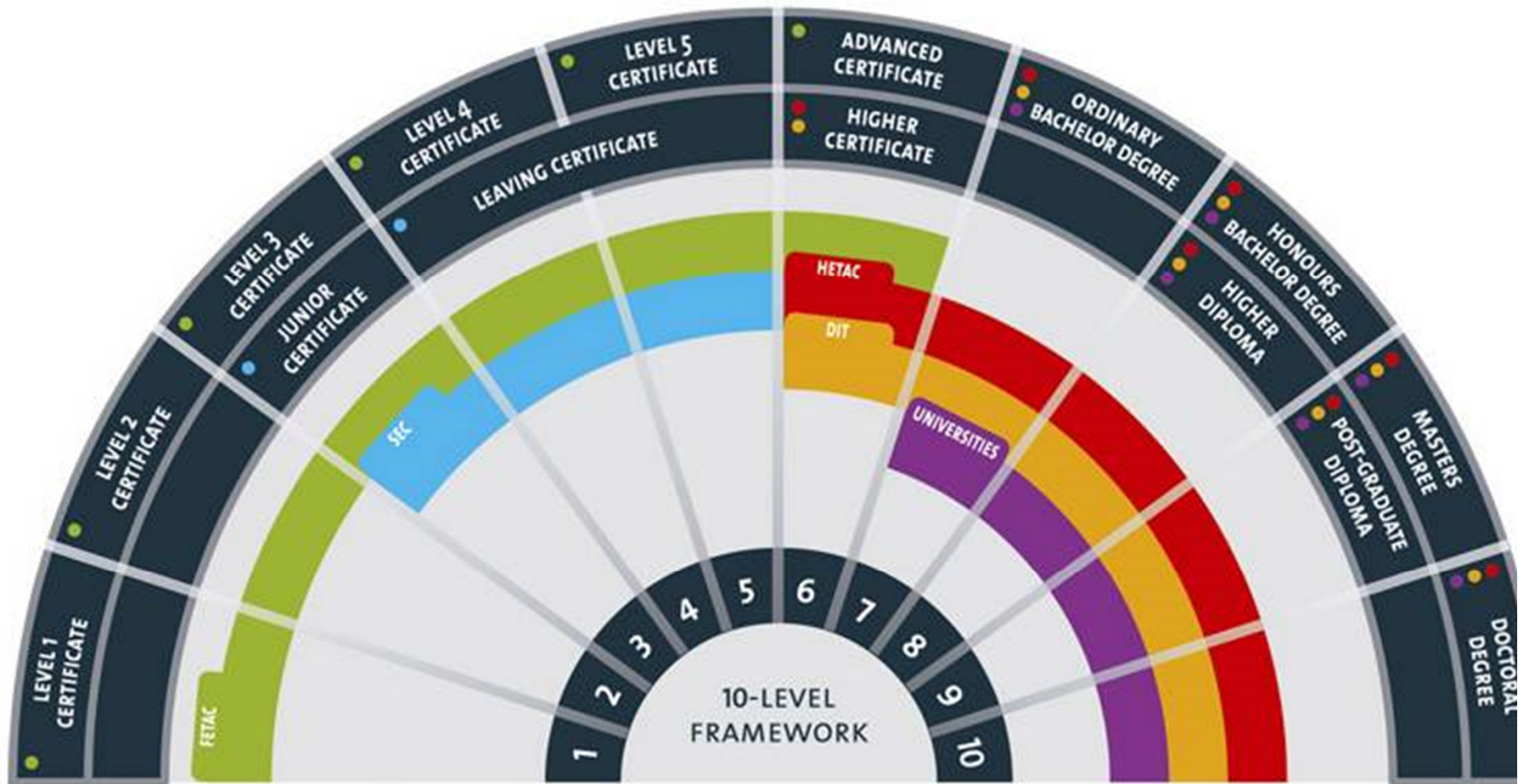




Compensation measures for adults

- Funded and coordinated by Solas, the national further education and training authority of Ireland
- Programmes provided through 16 local Education and Training Boards (ETBs)
- Certification under Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) authority – levels 3 - 5 primarily

National Framework of Qualifications






Further Education and Training programmes

- Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)
 - Full time programme
 - For unemployed persons over 21 year (long-term unemployed, low-skilled, disadvantaged)
 - 6000 places nationally
 - NQF levels 4 – 5
 - Allowances paid (training, childcare, travel, meals)




Further Education and training programmes cont.

- Post Leaving Cert (PLC)
 - Full time programme
 - For adults who have completed upper secondary or adults returning to education
 - Focus on enhancing prospects of employment or progression to further training or higher education
 - 33,000 places in 175 centres nationally
 - NQF levels 5 - 6



Further Education and training programmes cont.


- Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)
 - Part time, allows people to combine return to education with family, work and other responsibilities
 - Targets vulnerable adults (e.g. those with disabilities, lone parents, ESLs, unemployed, Travellers, ex-offenders, homeless, etc)
 - NQF levels 3 - 5
 - Guidance and childcare supports available
 - 32,000 learners participated in BTEI in 2012



Further Education and training programmes cont.

■ Adult Literacy

- Part time
- For adults with low levels of literacy and those for whom English is not their first language
- Targets vulnerable adults (e.g. those with disabilities, lone parents, long-term unemployed, Travellers, ex-offenders, homeless, migrants, etc)
- Initiatives for a number of different contexts (e.g. prison, centres for unemployed, workplaces)



Further Education and training programmes cont.

■ Community Education

- Outside formal education sector
- Located in communities and area- or issue-based
- Hybrid approach of community organisation and community development models – response to identified need (e.g. to combat social isolation, foster personal development) or promote social actions
- Assists local not-for-profit community education groups
- Social inclusion agenda – focus is primarily on reducing educational and social disadvantage



Further Education and training programmes cont.

- Wide range of full and part time vocational training courses
 - Different levels and durations
 - Focus on addressing identified gaps in skills for labour market
 - Upskilling employed and unemployed workers
 - Reskilling unemployed workers



My own work

- Educational psychologist
- Responsible for coordinating nationally the support services provided to learners in Youthreach programme for past 11 years
- My focus: building the capacity of centres to engage and work effectively with their learners



What works in the successful provision of **intervention** measures?

- Smaller, more intimate, ‘safer’, emphasis on student rather than subject; ‘relevant’ curricula
- Methodology
 - Flexibility
 - Greater emphasis on personal and social development and on constructively challenging offending behaviour
 - Relationships, belonging, listening, trust, challenge
 - Strong ‘welcoming’ culture; high expectations
 - Problem solving (incl. negotiation)
 - Mentoring

Mentoring



- WebWheel model
 - Relationship-based → engagement
 - Invites learner to talk about their lives
 - Increases their self-awareness
 - Allows them to get in touch with what they want for themselves → agency
 - Focus on the future and on action
 - Develops fundamental psycho-social competencies



Evaluation of WebWheel model

- Learners who were mentored showed marked and significant increases in
 - Engagement and retention within the programme
 - Attainment of accreditation
 - Personal and social competencies
 - Interest in learning
 - Initiative and willingness to take responsibility
 - Self-awareness
 - Ability to manage negative feelings and conflict
 - Openness to the world
 - Willingness to acknowledge difficulties and to seek help



Multi-dimensional nature of intervention measures

- Increase emotional maturity and sense of identity
- Increase self-regulation and confidence
- Increase social awareness and interaction skills and civic responsibility
- Increase basic skills (literacy, etc) and practical life skills
- Increase employability
- Enhance mental health



Leaving Cert Applied Year 2 2003





Contact

- *Youthreach SEN Initiative Research Study Report (2013)* available on website (youthreach.ie/webwheel – in Resources section under WebWheel Library)
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