

Kerry Education and Training Board June 2016

Call for Consultation

Department of Education and Skills

Statement of Strategy 2016-2018

In the context of the call for consultation on the Strategy for Education and Skills 2016-2018 by Richard Bruton T.D. Minister for Education and Skills, Kerry Education and Training Board (Kerry ETB) has identified the following areas for consideration and prioritisation:

Prioritising Early Years

- *Continue to recognise and further build on the Family Learning Programmes delivered by ETB Adult Literacy and Basic Education Programmes. They play a key role in supporting learning in the home. Parents who are literate, interested and engaged in education are proven to support their children to stay in school and achieve in learning.*
- *Continue to build on the role of ETB Community Education Parenting Programmes as the societal gains from parenting programmes should never be underestimated.*
- *Provide early years' pre-school and after school childcare to support the development of children and also remove a barrier to participation of parents in Further Education and Training (FET).*

Tackling Disadvantage

- *Make the Childcare Education and Training Scheme (CETS) available to all FET learners, no matter what programme they are participating in, full time and part time pro rata. Supports in FET should follow the learner according to their need and not be attached to the programme due to guidelines and funding rules.*
- *Provide Rural Transport options to FET Learners and introduce a Student Travel pass that will be accepted on all the National Transport Authority (NTA) routes and systems, from Bus Éireann to Rural Transport Routes.*
- *Address the costs inequity that exists for learners in accessing Further Education and Training programmes so that learners can choose the course that will best meet their need rather than the one with the least associated costs. For example, there are no fees for ETB Training Centre courses whereas there may be costs associated with FE Programmes (Post Leaving Certificate) such as*

fees, exams and materials. There are differences in travel, accommodation and other allowances and supports available across Further Education and Training (FE and T). People living in rural areas may not have access to Training Centres programmes i.e. many people may not be able to access these programmes due to travel distances etc.

Diversity and Choice for Parents

- *The growth in demand for greater diversity of provision at national school level could be addressed by divesting the patronage of national schools to the patronage of the local ETB using the Community National School model. Nationally there are currently 11 Community National Schools and it is estimated that there are circa 400 multi denominational schools are needed. This need can be addressed directly by setting achievable targets for the establishment of new Community National Schools and the divesting of patronage of existing primary schools to the local ETB.*

Promoting Excellence and Innovation in Schools and Adult Education

- *Increase investment in instructional leadership and andragogy appropriate for teaching preschool, primary, post primary and adult learners, across all levels of education and FET. Invest in senior and middle management and leadership capacity.*
- *Enhance investment in a robust quality assurance system that is also flexible and responsive so that timelines and systems aid in the delivery of programmes that are responsive to the needs of business, industry, changing technology and people.*

Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurial Capacity in Students and Adult Learners

- *Support and encourage experiential learning opportunities for students/learners to develop simulated and real business plans and enterprises.*

Making Better use of Educational Assets within Communities

- *Introduce Capital Budgets for FET Centres, particularly to sustain rural communities and ensure that they do not fall behind in educational, training, social, cultural and economic outcomes.*
- *Work strategically with the Department of the Environment and Local Government and Local Sports Partnerships to develop a model to facilitate the community to avail of school sporting and recreational facilities during evenings, weekends and school holidays.*

Special Needs Education (SEN)

- *To evaluate the impact of the Alternative Provision Programme (APP) for students with Emotional and/or Behavioural Difficulties or Disorders (EBD) with a view to rolling it out across all post primary schools.*
- *To support and incentivise schools to implement team teaching approaches to support students with SEN.*
- *To provide for Psychological Assessment supports for adults engaging in FET. The costs associated with professional educational psychological assessments means that many adults never get to discover and deal with their underlying educational disadvantage.*

Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future

- *Ensure that literacy, numeracy, adult guidance, work experience and basic Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills are integrated into all FET programmes, including apprenticeships.*
- *In association with ETBs nationally document and show case the many existing fine examples and models of employer engagement where provision has been developed in direct response to employer needs and skills gaps. At the recent DSP, DES and DJEI event in Dublin Castle (17 May) the examples provided almost exclusively focused on HE examples. There is a need to ensure that the new Regional Skills Fora address this area and highlight examples and models of employer engagement by the ETBs where provision has been developed in direct response to employer needs and skills gaps. Many skills gap areas are for medium level skilled workers and ETBs have the capacity to develop and deliver FET programme graduates in a shorter timeline and at a lower cost without creating wage inflation.*
- *The Adult Literacy and Basic Education Skills for work Programme should be nationally branded, promoted and marketed to employers who have needs amongst their low skilled workers. It is an existing infrastructure that needs to be maximised and programme levels should be expanded to include provision at NFQ Level 4.*
- *Prioritise increased investment in adult guidance in an integrated fashion so that it is available to all learners in FET. Guidance practitioners need Continued Professional Development (CPD) on future skill needs.*
- *The allocation of Post Leaving Certificates (PLC) places nationally needs to be addressed. Essentially the current allocation needs to be re-balanced to ensure ETBs are positioned to address demand for courses. Currently the allocation of PLC places to Kerry ETB represents circa 2% of the total allocation.*

Reference to the Statement of Strategy 2015 – 17

Statement of Strategy 2015-17 Goal 3 Supporting Inclusion and Diversity states:

“We want an education and training system that welcomes and meaningfully includes learners with disabilities and special educational needs, learners from disadvantaged communities/backgrounds, and those with language, cultural and social differences”

- *In addressing same we need to invest in Intensive Tuition models for the Adult Literacy and Basic Education Service. This area needs additional resourcing to deliver at a sufficient level to meet the demand and make a more significant impact in terms of outcomes.*
- *Invest in an integrated approach to family learning and literacy similar to that supported by the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Family literacy in the past.*

Statement of Strategy 2015-17 Mission states:

“To facilitate individuals through learning, to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland’s social, cultural and economic development”

- *We need to increase the resources available for guidance and counselling provision from 1st year to Leaving Certificate which will enable students to develop their self awareness, discover their strengths and motivation and make informed career choices.*

Statement of Strategy 2015-17 Goal 2 Improving Quality and Accountability states:

“We need an assessment system which acknowledges and validates all intelligences and builds confidence and self-esteem as well as knowledge and skills. We need a senior cycle assessment system that complements the new Junior Cycle. We want to provide for the delivery of a high quality education and training experience for everyone and improve accountability for educational outcomes across the system”

- *While accountability and transparency is always to be welcomed, the current reporting systems between ETBs and SOLAS often require dual reporting. This is not sustainable with current staffing levels, nor is it efficient use of public funds (e.g. FARR, PLSS, Salespulse and DES Annual Returns). The administrative burden on ETB staff will impact on front line services and staff and the reporting systems and process need to be rationalised.*

Statement of Strategy 2015-17 Vision states:

“An internationally recognised education and training system based on evidence informed policies designed to anticipate and respond to the changing needs of learners, society and the economy”

- *We need to enhance and build the FET provision pillar, including Apprenticeships, into a recognised, robust and expansive system across craft trades and industry within the FET sector.*

- *In line with the 5th Goal in the SOLAS National FET Strategy which is to promote the standing of FET, there is a need for a national public branding, marketing and PR campaign to promote course provision of national interest because some are unique to certain ETBs and not available in every area of the country. Ironically these are usually specialist courses that meet a specific industry need and are of exceptionally high quality (e.g. Kerry ETB Wind Turbine Maintenance, Outdoor Activity Instructor Traineeship and the award winning Kerry ETB National Digital Skills Centre). Not to do so is to under utilise existing specialist expertise and public investment.*
- *Work with DSP to increase the numbers of appropriate referrals to FET programmes, both full time and part time.*

This Section relates directly to questions referenced in the consultation survey

Question: What is DES doing well / what could they do differently

- *There is a possible risk with the loss of valuable expertise and tradition (organisational memory) from DES in the transfer of FET to SOLAS as their sole responsibility. A possible loss of the understanding embedded in many of the old DES Circulars, especially in relation to the focus on education for disadvantage and social inclusion.*
- *The increased focus on “skills for the economy” agenda in the FET sector could lead to a loss of focus on core transferable skills that are vital for social cohesion and equality. The DES Strategy Mission gives a clear mandate for a broad range of provision much wider than just skills for the economy. It is important that people have the desire and motivation to engage in life long learning, both formal and non formal, so that a culture of learning is developed, valued and maintained in society. The role and contribution of Community Education in this regard is to be valued and promoted.*
- *It is important to continue to recognise and acknowledge the important role of education in addressing social justice and developing a society that values and cherishes all citizens.*
- *In recent years there has been a seismic change in the area of FET, a period of consolidation is now required to ensure that the planned benefits arising from these changes can be maximised.*

Question: Measuring success

- *The current focus on targets in FET are is largely quantitative and not fully balanced with qualitative goals. While the outcomes based model of funding is to be welcomed for accountability we need to agree on other evidence based methods of measurement. For example, what is our barometer for community mental health as an education outcome (not acute health issues which are the remit of the HSE to address). How do we really measure literacy and numeracy levels, rising certification levels alone are not enough empirical evidence as there are people exiting Higher Education (HE) Level 8 programmes with weak literacy. Reducing social disadvantage is a measurement of success.*

Question: Issues outside your own area of expertise

- *Currently there appears to be a societal gap in Community Development. Rather than Local Development Companies getting involved in the direct provision of FET (e.g. Literacy and numeracy and employability skills under the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP)), which*

is essentially duplication, would it be more prudent for them to focus more on addressing the community development gap in motivating and supporting people and communities in the uptake of statutory services, which is their area of expertise, qualifications and experience.

- *It is concerning that DSP as a key partner to ETBs, as well as DJEI, does not promote ETB provision as the **first port** of call. ETBs are a statutory provider of FET, accruing a significant exchequer investment, yet the skills to work (www.skillstowork.ie) website (not to be confused with the ABE Skills For Work Programme) promotes Skillnets, Momentum, Springboard, Job Bridge etc. ahead of ETB provision. Unfortunately most DSP Literature does the same.*

Question: New areas for DES to work on/address

- *Develop an integrated student support structure for both primary and post primary education which involves access to occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, play and art therapies.*
- *Review current model of Home School Community Liaison in conjunction with TUSLA with a view to providing a long-term and effective approach to parental involvement and participation in education.*
- *Work with ETBs to develop parent fora's representative of Parents Councils in ETB schools.*
- *Integration of migrants and refugees as this is likely to become a growing community of learners.*
- *Address the strong focus on Higher Education (HE) by employers, parents, guidance counsellors and learners. This is linked to the standing of FET and it is imperative to communicate the message that a significant level of all future jobs requires medium level skills, which is the role of ETBs to deliver.*