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Looking to the Future – Ending Disadvantage?

Keynote Address by Áine Hyland, Professor of Education, University College Cork, to the National Forum on Primary Education, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. 3rd July 2002

Throughout the second half of the 20th century, equality of educational opportunity has been an important aim for educational policy-makers across the western world. In 1963 in Ireland, Minister for Education, Dr. P. J. Hillery, when commenting on the need for the State to provide an opportunity of "some post-primary education for all" referred to "the equality of educational opportunity towards which it is the duty of the State to strive"¹. In the 1960s, equality of educational opportunity was interpreted as equality of access and when the barriers to access were removed (through the abolition of school and university fees and the introduction of free transport for pupils attending primary and second-level schools), it was initially thought that this would suffice to achieve equality of opportunity. In subsequent decades, the focus moved from equality of access to equality of participation and from that to equality of achievement / outcome / benefit.

The 1992 Green Paper on Education *Education for a Changing World* defined educational disadvantage as "barriers to participation, which militate against those from disadvantaged backgrounds" resulting from "a complex set of factors which influence the extent to which young people and adults participate in education."² The Conference of Major Religious Superiors (1992) and the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (1996) referred to the discontinuity between the school and non-school experiences of children who are poor "resulting in the socio-economically disadvantaged child being unable to participate fully in the school experience"³. The European Social Fund Programme Evaluation Unit (1997) saw educational disadvantage as a phenomenon which arises "if a person's experience of, access to, participation in and benefits from education are not characterised as equitable."⁴ Boldt and Devine (1998) stated that "educational disadvantage may be considered to be a limited ability to derive an equitable benefit from schooling compared to one's peers by age, as a result of school demands, approaches, assessments and expectations, which do not correspond to the students' knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours into which (s)he has been socialised (as opposed to those with which (s)he is naturally endowed)"⁵. Section 32.9 of the Education Act 1998 defines educational disadvantage as "the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in school."⁶

¹ Minister for Education, Dr. P.J. Hillery, "Speech given at the first meeting of the Steering Committee of the OECD Investment in Education team, October 1962". cited in Á. Hyland and K. Milne (ed.) *Irish Educational Documents Vol. 2* (Dublin 1992)

² Government of Ireland *Education for a Changing World: Green Paper on Education* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1992)

³ Government of Ireland *National Anti-Poverty Strategy* (Dublin: Stationery Office 1996)

⁴ ESF Programme Evaluation Unit xxx

⁵ S. Boldt and B. Devine (ed.) *Educational Disadvantage and Early School-Leaving* (Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency 1998).

⁶ Education Act 1998 (Dublin; Stationery Office, 1998).

As the focus moved from access to participation to outcome, there was an increasing realisation that equalising public investment in schools would not result in equalising opportunity for pupils. It was recognised in many western countries during the past two decades that equality of educational opportunity could not be achieved without a focused targeting of additional resources to those most at risk and most in need.

A generation ago in Ireland, more than 55% of the age cohort had left school by the age of 15 and less than 20% of the age cohort completed second level education⁷. Today only 3.2% of the cohort leaves before completing junior cycle and over 80% sit a Leaving Certificate. Of those who complete the Leaving Certificate course, over 85% proceed to some form of further or higher education or training⁸.

While these figures are heartening and are a tribute to what has been achieved during the past three decades, we must also recognise that much remains to be done. By the end of the 1990s, it was estimated that (out of a cohort of about 65,000) between 800 and 1000 young people failed annually to transfer from primary to second level schools. Of those who entered second level schools, about three thousand did not stay on to sit the Junior Certificate three years later. Over 12,000 of those who sat Junior Certificate in 1994 did not sit the Leaving Certificate in 1996 or 1997. Of these, 6,500 left formal education after the Junior Certificate. In all, at the end of the 1990s, about 17,500 young people (almost a quarter of a cohort) left school annually without the Leaving Certificate⁹. It is clear then that if the Leaving Certificate is regarded as a necessary qualification for life (although not everybody would accept this), the school system is currently failing almost a quarter of our young people.

The financial implications of early school leaving are stark. Those who leave school early are at high risk of long-term unemployment and are likely to be a burden on the Exchequer in terms of social welfare benefits and health care costs for prolonged periods of their lives. Investment in education is a sound investment from State's point of view. The economic returns to educational investment are high, both for the State and for the individual¹⁰. The more the State invests in education, the higher the return. It behoves the State then to target its educational spending at those children and young people who are most at risk. But traditional patterns of State expenditure on education benefit the relatively wealthier groups in society. Per capita State expenditure on primary education is lower than expenditure on second-level education which in turn is lower than expenditure on third-level education. By the end of the 1990s, it was estimated that the State spent about 19,000 Euro on a child who left school at the end of primary school. For a young person who left school after two years in junior cycle, the State would have spent about 27,000 Euro on that young person's education. In the case of a young person who completed a four-year programme at third level, the State would have invested over 61,000 Euro of state money in his/her education¹¹. The cost of maintaining a young person in a Detention Centre or prison is almost 100,000 Euro for one year.

⁷ Dept. of Education / OECD *Investment in Education* (Dublin: Stationery Office 1966).

⁸ Dept. of Education *Annual Statistical Report 1999/2000*. (Dublin: Stationery Office 2002).

⁹ National Economic and Social Forum *Early School Leavers; Forum Report No. 24* (Dublin: NESF, March 2002).

¹⁰ Brian Nolan and C.T. Whelan *Loading the Dice? A Study of Cumulative Disadvantage* (Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency, 1999).

¹¹ Calculated from figures in Table 4.2. in NESF *Report on Early School Leavers*, March 2002.

Within the past decade in Ireland, a large number of targeted interventions have been introduced to support young people from socially and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. These range from the Early Start programmes for pre-school children to Access programmes for young people from backgrounds which were traditionally under-represented in third level education. Additional resources have been invested in primary and second level schools in educationally disadvantaged areas in the form of extra teachers, extra facilities, a higher capitation grant and other targeted programmes. These targeted programmes include the Breaking the Cycle Scheme (Urban and Rural), the Home School Community Liaison Scheme, Giving Children an Even Break, as well as the 8-15 Early School Leaving Initiative and the Stay in School Initiative. (The latter two schemes have recently been subsumed into the new School Completion programme). There are also many programmes which are funded from departments and sources other than the Department of Education and Science. For example, the Area Development Management Partnerships invest a significant proportion of their funding in preventative (education) measures.

While many of these initiatives have been welcomed by the schools and communities in which they are located, initial evaluations of many of the initiatives are disappointing. Additional resourcing for schools through targeted interventions almost invariably results in improved conditions for teachers and pupils in the form of a more comfortable and welcoming physical environment (e.g. brighter, warmer and more cheerful classrooms), in smaller classes and often a more individual and positive relationship with pupils, but there is little or no convincing evidence that measurable pupil outcomes such as examination results or literacy and numeracy levels have improved as a result of these interventions. Surprisingly, even school attendance and pupil retention figures do not show significant improvement in schools which have been targeted for additional resourcing under these programmes. However, since base-line data is often scarce and unreliable, and since there has not been a tradition in educational circles in Ireland of focused target setting or of statistical measurement, it is difficult to assert with any degree of certainty what the outcomes of many of the targeted interventions have been.

The report of the National, Economic and Social Forum on Early School Leavers (2002)¹² charts the growth of government intervention in relation to educational disadvantage in recent years. It refers to the increasing focus on the individual child from a disadvantaged background rather than on designated disadvantaged schools. The report is clearly aware of the major challenges that this poses within the educational sector and particularly to those schools where the emphasis has been on academic achievement, to the detriment of the recognition of the multi-faceted potential of each child.

The NESF Report recommends that a whole child approach be taken and that there should be a seamless delivery of integrated and co-ordinated approaches and local delivery which takes account of the individual, the family and community, the school, and training, further education and work. In relation to the individual the focus should be on literacy and numeracy, the building up of self-esteem and confidence building and the provision for special needs/culturally appropriate education. As

¹² Op. cit. 2002.

regards family and community, interventions must take account of the need to address basic rights for food, clothing and shelter. They should provide family support and parenting support and ensure that effective partnerships are enabled and encouraged between formal and non formal sectors. Networking and integrated development is crucial as is the empowerment of those within the families and communities involved.

The National Development Plan (2000-6)¹³ has emphasised the commitment of government to social inclusion measures and supports an integrated and holistic approach to the delivery of services to "at risk" communities. The Plan states that such an approach should involve the target communities and bring together the services of a range of Departments, Local Authorities, relevant State agencies and the voluntary sector. It goes on to state:

Encouraging marginalised communities to help themselves by identifying their own problems and working towards their solution in a planned and integrated way with the agencies of the State, will be an essential element of the process. Moreover, prioritisation of projects will be essential if the significant resources, which are being set aside within the NDP to deal directly with social disadvantage, are to yield real material benefits for the disadvantaged of our society, their communities and society at large. Spreading the resources too thinly over a range of initiatives or putting in place a set of diverse programmes lacking integration and focus, will not address the real and acute needs of those suffering from social exclusion.

There is widespread recognition internationally that successful initiatives to respond to the problem of educational disadvantage require integration and collaboration between statutory and voluntary agencies and between educators/trainers and parents and their communities.¹⁴ Inter agency co-operation is also important. The integrated provision of education, health and social services is a promising solution to the problem of educational disadvantage and some very successful integrated projects have been undertaken in other countries. For strategies to be successful, collaboration should go further than involving just existing agencies and institutions. Other partners in the educational process should also be involved. Private enterprises and foundations should all contribute to "developing supportive frameworks for children from birth through to their integration into the workplace". Universities and other third level institutions can contribute to alleviating the risk of early school leaving through collaborative partnerships.

A major international study carried out by the OECD in the mid 1990s provided examples of how communities in different parts of the world have implemented a services integration agenda which puts the needs of families and children at the heart of planning¹⁵. Successful integrated initiatives involved the whole community, including business, churches and the voluntary sector in elaborating common social and educational goals and developing structures and approaches for co-ordinated delivery of services and supports. Writing in the year 2000, Peter Evans, who co-

¹³ Government of Ireland *National Development Plan 2000-2006* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 2000).

¹⁴ See for example OECD *Successful Services for Our Children and Families at Risk* (1996); *Integrating Services for Children at Risk* (1996); *Our Children at Risk* (1996). (Paris: OECD); *Overcoming Failure in School* (1998).

¹⁵ OECD *Co-ordinating Services for Children and Youth at Risk; a world view* (Paris: OECD 1998).

ordinated the OECD project, emphasised the importance of co-ordination and co-operation in the provision and delivery of community based services, stating that

Providing community based services requires substantial co-ordination and co-operation between a diverse range of actors across a vertical structure running from the community, and the practicalities of implementation, through to government, which usually sets the legal framework and has responsibility for justifying the use of taxpayers' money which, in turn, supports the developments on the ground.¹⁶

He stated that community-based services must have strong support from central government. Such support might require changes in the law being made as and when necessary, which may have to cover issues relating to the sharing of budgets across departmental boundaries, the training of professionals, and allowing for information on clients to be shared across professional groupings.

In Ireland at least seven government departments are involved in providing support for communities where there is a high level of educationally and socially disadvantaged people. These departments include the Department of Environment and Local Government; the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Department of Health and Children, the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Department of Education and Science. At regional or local level, there are separate and often independent structures responsible for administering funds from different departmental budgets which target "at risk" groups. For example, funding for health-related projects is administered by the Health Boards; funding for vocational education and training and for some forms of community education as well as youth services are administered by the Vocational Education Committees; funding for environmental projects and some community enterprises are administered by the local authorities. This separation of responsibility is often reflected in a lack of cohesion in delivery on the ground. At community level, one often finds different and sometimes competing bodies and agencies, each with responsibility for allocating and monitoring funding for projects which may in practice be very similar in terms of their intent and impact. For example, it is not unusual in parts of urban Ireland to find two or three out-of-school homework support clubs, run by different organisations or agencies, in a disadvantaged area, all targeting the same group of young people, with sometimes only limited communication with each other or with the schools in the area. Instead of collaboration, there can often be competition between groups or agencies on the ground, each one of which is involved in praiseworthy activities.

The diagram in Appendix A, indicates the complexity of the issue and the extent to which the growth of funding for young people at risk in recent years in Ireland, has led to a proliferation of schemes each with its own delivery and monitoring structures. The fact that the funding emanates from different government departments has led to a lack of collaboration and co-operation and at national, regional and community level there is often overlap and duplication, with a consequent waste of resources.

¹⁶ Peter Evans "Co-ordinated Services for Disadvantaged Children: An International Perspective" in Theo Cox (ed) *Combating Educational Disadvantage: Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable Children* (London: Falmer Press, 2000).

Arising out of the National Development Plan, structures have been set up to identify areas of the country which have the highest concentration of deprivation and to prioritise government investment in these areas. The urban-based programme RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) and the rural-based CLAR programme are the vehicles through which this investment will be channelled. At the launch of the programme in February 2001, the rationale underpinning the RAPID programme was articulated as follows:

Despite the improvements in economic and social standards which Ireland has enjoyed over recent years there are still many people who have not shared in this prosperity. We can't get away from the fact that there is real deprivation in lots of areas. How we can look after those who are left behind is a measure of our responsibility as a society and as a nation and we must take advantage of the opportunities which our prosperity provides in order to distribute our wealth and share our country's success, more fairly.¹⁷

The RAPID information leaflet prepared at that time pointed out that investment would be targeted at the 25 most disadvantaged areas in the country:

The targeted areas will be prioritised for investment and development in relation to health, education, housing, childcare and community facilities including sports facilities, youth development, employment, drug misuse and policing. Each area will, however, have varying needs and priorities. At local level, any individual household identified as in need of support, will be able to avail of the services of a number of agencies at once, rather than the independent system of provision at present.

The mechanism for delivery of services in a RAPID area is a local forum, called the Area Implementation Team, which brings together local State Agency personnel (Health Board, Local Authority, VEC, Dept. of Social, Community and Family Affairs, FAS etc), the local Partnership Company, residents of the local community, and where they exist, Local Drugs Task Forces. The AIT is responsible for drawing up an implementation plan for the area, and there is a specially appointed Co-Ordinator in each area. However, as can be seen from the above list, there is no representative of the primary or (voluntary) secondary schools on the AIT because in Ireland there is no local co-ordinating structure for primary and secondary schools (which are attended by more than 80% of all school-going pupils). This is proving to be a major obstacle to including educational services within the integrated provision and is a serious issue which must be addressed without delay. In a recent report, the National Crime Council refers to this anomaly in the following words:

The Department of Education and Science has traditionally been a highly centralised body, with their only local representation manifested in teachers and school principals. As a result, locally based inter-agency bodies have always had difficulty engaging with the Department in a meaningful way at local level.¹⁸

¹⁷ Speech by Eoin Ryan, T.D., Minister for State at the launch of RAPID programmes, 8th Feb. 2001.

¹⁸ National Crime Council *Tackling the Underlying Causes of Crime: A Partnership Approach* (Dublin: National Crime Council 2002).

Added to this anomaly is the fact that specially targeted initiatives funded by the Department of Education and Science, such as the Home / School / Community scheme (HSCL) and the newly set up (March 2002) School Completion Programme (SCP), have developed their own (separate) local / community-based administrative structures and have appointed local co-ordinators who are separate to and independent of the RAPID AITs. And since the criteria for identifying and selecting RAPID areas are different to the criteria used by the Department of Education and Science for identifying schools which are targeted for additional funding under either HSCL or SCP, it is now emerging that some areas and/or provincial towns which are in the RAPID programme have not been targeted for funding under the School Completion programme and have little or no support under the HSCL scheme. Conversely, there are many areas and school clusters which are benefiting under HSCL and / or the School Completion Programme which are not in designated RAPID or CLAR areas. Moreover, the approach being taken both by the School Completion programme and the HSCL scheme is informed by a centrally determined model and would appear to be less flexible in terms of responding to locally identified needs than the approach taken by the AITS under the RAPID scheme, an approach which international research would suggest is more likely to show positive results.

Another new initiative launched by the Department of Education and Science in January 2001 to support primary school pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds - Giving Children an Even Break - also appears to be out of synch with the National Development Plan. This initiative had the laudable objective of targeting individual pupils rather than schools, and figures recently released show that over 75% of primary schools have benefited to some extent from the additional resources targeted for this scheme. However in the case of a number of schools, the amount of additional funding provided is less than Euro 1,000 p.a. Is this not a case of "spreading the resources too thinly" - an approach specifically warned against by the NDP? And could not the proliferation of education initiatives be described as "a set of diverse programmes lacking integration and focus" - also frowned upon in the NDP?

It is difficult to understand why new educational programmes were launched so recently by the Department of Education and Science outside the structures set up under the National Development Plan. It is particularly difficult to understand why the Department proceeded with the School Completion Programme in March 2002 and put in place a new local/community structures for its administration and delivery when AITs were already in place or were about to be put in place in RAPID areas. Surely it would have made more sense for the Department to work in collaboration with RAPID with a view to setting up a co-ordinated system of delivery? However, as Evans has written:

Creating these changes (to achieve co-ordination and co-operation) is neither easy to initiate nor to sustain. They need a great deal of determination and forward vision.

What is frustrating at present in Ireland, is that the timing was right within the past year to proceed on an integrated services delivery basis for these new programmes and policy-makers were clearly aware of the findings of international research which highlighted the effectiveness of a co-ordinated, integrated approach to such delivery. A national inter-departmental committee had been set up on which all relevant

government departments, including the Department of Education and Science are represented, to ensure inter-departmental co-operation. One would have thought that international research, particularly the well-publicised work of the OECD, would have been convincing enough to persuade policy-makers in individual departments to adopt the new collaborative approaches which had been formally endorsed at the highest level of government through the National Development Plan and the Programme for Government. To quote Evans again:

The fact that (these changes) are happening all over the world is important in convincing countries' administrators that other ways can be better and providing international perspectives is very important in this regard. No magic formulae are being proposed since the implementation details are too varied from country to country. What is clear though is that reforms are necessary and *the community based services solution is one of the few on offer which is consistent with our democratic future.* (my italics)

We can only hope that it is not yet too late for the Department of Education and Science to rethink their strategy in relation to co-operating with other government departments in providing an integrated approach to the delivery of services to disadvantaged communities. The basis for a model of integrated services delivery has been or is being put in place in the 25 RAPID areas in the form of the AITs. Other government departments appear to have bought into this model. Ireland has an opportunity to be at the cutting edge internationally in this regard.

Other Issues:

Other speakers at this Forum have emphasised the importance of providing support for families and children at risk from the earliest age. The earlier the intervention, the better and I am totally in agreement with my colleagues who have highlighted the need for greater investment by government in quality early childhood education and care.

I am also aware of the potential benefits for young children of being taught in small classes in the early years of primary schooling. There is solid evidence from international research that young children (up to the age of 7 or 8 years of age) benefit from being in small classes i.e. classes of under 20 pupils, and I fully support initiatives which result in smaller classes, such as the Breaking the Cycle (Urban) project. However, research evidence also highlights the fact that reducing class size is of little benefit unless teachers use the benefits of smaller classes to change their teaching style and to take advantage of individual learning styles and approaches. In this regard, it is a well documented fact that the quality of teaching is the single most significant factor in improving pupil achievement. The increasing number of untrained teachers in Irish primary schools has to be a matter for concern, in particular, the growing number of untrained teachers in schools in disadvantaged areas. There is little point in reducing class size unless there is an adequate pool of trained teachers available to fill the additional posts created by such a move. The experience of other countries where class size has been reduced but where there the pool of trained teachers in the system is inadequate, shows that when the opportunity arises, trained teachers will move away from disadvantaged schools to seek employment in more advantaged schools. This results in a situation whereby posts in schools in disadvantaged areas are more likely to be filled by untrained teachers and

achievement levels in those schools fall, regardless of what other additional resources are made available. Measures need to be taken to attract and retain trained teachers in schools in disadvantaged areas. Why should the government not provide a financial incentive to attract and retain good teachers to schools in disadvantaged areas? There are extra allowances for teachers in island schools and for teachers in all-Irish second level schools and in comprehensive schools. There would appear to be no reason why additional allowances should not be made available for teachers in schools in disadvantaged areas.

One of the issues which has been identified in the NESF Report as being a contributory factor to early school leaving is the issue of the inflexibility of senior cycle provision. There is a need for flexibility in the delivery of education at senior cycle in Ireland. A growing number of students in senior cycle work on a part-time basis. This pattern contributes to a situation where early school leaving may be an easier option for a young person, especially a person from a socially and economically disadvantaged background, than staying on in school. The schooling system will have to adjust to the reality of part-time work in areas where there is a high concentration of disadvantage and recognise that senior cycle pupils are adults. For many of these pupils, current school organisational patterns, including discipline and uniform requirements, are/can be inappropriate. The current model of educational provision which is provided on a full-time 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. - five days a week - is not the only possible model. Consideration needs to be given to introducing a modularised credit-based senior cycle programme. This would mean that some young people would cumulate credits for the Leaving Certificate over a four or five year part-time basis instead of attending school on a two year full-time basis, sitting an end of year examination in all subjects during the one fortnight, as is the only effective option at present. A greater flexibility in senior cycle provision could be one way to increase the current school completion rate and attain the government target of completion by 90% of the age cohort.

Teachers, parents and society need to redefine the concept of educational "success". Traditional views of school success have been very narrow. Various educational commentators have pointed out that schooling systems in the western world have largely concentrated on two intelligences - the linguistic and the logical / mathematical - and have largely ignored the other intelligences¹⁹. If school is to be a preparation for life, schools should value, enhance and accredit as many forms of intelligence as possible. This requires a recasting of the examination system and many calls have been made in recent years in this country for such a recasting²⁰. If "success" is narrowly defined, as it currently is, it is inevitable that significant numbers of pupils will experience failure from an early stage of schooling. A growing body of research indicates that failure in school is a learned pattern of behaviour and expectation and that such learning begins in the early years of school. Students who experience failure, quickly learn to accept failure and then to expect it. Therefore, they will be unlikely to accept a challenge, tackle a difficult task, or even sustain a commitment to a task which requires attention over time. An early manifestation of such learned failure is expressed 'I can't do it'. By the time such a

¹⁹ See Howard Gardner *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

²⁰ See for example *the Report of the Points Commission* (Dublin: Stationery Office 1999).

student transfers to post-primary school it is likely to have developed into ‘I can’t be bothered trying’²¹.

Many of the issues referred to above have been taken on board in the agenda of the current government as articulated in the Programme for Government (June 2002)²². The programme contains an unambiguous commitment to building an inclusive society. Among the measures which the Programme promises are a commitment to funding early years education and to improving class size for pupils under 9 years of age. It also promises to improve teacher supply as well as to implement changes which will assist schools in educationally disadvantaged areas to recruit and retain teachers. The Programme contains a priority to reducing absenteeism and early school leaving and commits government to a second chance guarantee to those who lost out first time round.

What are the immediate measures which need to be taken to improve the current situation for young people at risk in Ireland? Firstly, there has to be a more integrated approach to providing the various support services - education, health, welfare etc. The Department of Education and Science must re-assess both its programmes and its approach to the delivery of those programmes. If the Department's approach to delivery is out of line with other national social inclusion measures, this approach will have to be changed. The Department must also recognise that there is no one right solution. Intervention and support programmes need to be flexible depending on local needs, conditions and culture. Providers must listen to the voices on the ground and respect the views of those who are being supported. At local level those involved in providing services need to have a shared vision and to work more closely together. There needs to be a whole school community approach to the problem.

Within the schooling system teachers need to be supported in understanding the complexity of issues relating to educational disadvantage. They should be supported to move away from a deficit view of the situation. Educational disadvantage is not inevitable or attractable and there are interventions which can help. Assessment needs to provide affirmation of success not certification of failure.

There are many impressive initiatives currently dealing with pupils and young people at risk. Some of these have had little or no support from formal sources and work on a shoestring. Such emerging models of in-school and out-of school support centres for students with difficulties should be evaluated and extended where appropriate.

Finally, a quotation from an OECD Report of 1997 highlights the importance of attitudes which are developed by students and young people during their schooling days²³.

Policies to increase equity and efficiency in education and training should consider carefully not only the incentives for pursuing further studies but also the quality of and attitudes to learning in a life-time perspective. They should aim to ensure that as many young people

²¹ National Council for Curriculum and Assessment *Review of the Junior Cycle* (Dublin: NCCA, 1998).

²² *An Agreed Programme for Government between Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats* (Dublin: June 2002).

²³ *OECD Education Policy Analysis 1997* (Paris: OECD 1997)

*as possible gain positive and constructive experiences of learning
on which they can continue to build throughout adulthood.*