

SECTION TWO

**Highlights of the DIT's Academic
Profile**

Chapter 7

Apprenticeship Education

During the first half of the twentieth century, the Dublin colleges, together with similar colleges in Cork and Limerick and a few other centres, developed a wide range of technical courses, mainly on a part-time basis, which were usually delivered in the evening. Comprehensive and innovative course provision and good standards were achieved even in the early years of the century.

The Dublin colleges pioneered apprenticeship education and such courses developed into the first systematic programmes with higher level components involving daytime attendance. Apprenticeship education became the broad foundation for the development of higher level work in technical, vocational and technological areas in the colleges, and indeed the foundation on which the Dublin Institute of Technology was built.

EARLY APPRENTICESHIP EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In the early 1900s, seminal developments within the Dublin colleges in the provision of part-time continuation education by day took place in the area of apprenticeship education. At the time there was no national scheme and the colleges developed schemes in collaboration with employers and trade organisations to facilitate and encourage apprenticeship. The colleges operated a competitive scholarship scheme and each year consulted with employers to decide the appropriate number of apprentice students to recruit and scholarships to offer. Each apprenticeship lasted for two years, thirty hours each week in the college, ten hours weekly of homework to be assessed and one month each year placement in the workshop of the employer. In 1926 there were 106 apprentice scholars in the Dublin colleges studying carpentry and joinery, cabinet making, electrical engineering, painting and decorating, motor car engineering, plumbing, printing, sheet metal work and quantity surveying.

DEVELOPMENTS UNDER THE APPRENTICESHIP ACT 1931

Following the Apprenticeship Act 1931, called for in the 1926 report of the Commission of Inquiry on Technical Education (see Chapter 3), which was designed "to make better provision for the regulation of apprenticeship in certain trades", the Minister for Industry and Commerce was empowered to declare a trade to be designated. This allowed relevant apprenticeship committees, including employer and employee representatives and ministerial nominees, to be set up to regulate the apprenticeship for those trades. They could not make it mandatory that an employer train and instruct an apprentice in a specific manner. Unfortunately, most trades did not adopt specific training and instruction schemes. Nevertheless, government bodies such as the Office of Public Works, semi-state bodies such as the Electricity Supply Board (ESB), the Irish Sugar Company and C oras Iompair  ireann (CIE), together with some private industries such as the Society of Irish Motor Traders and Arthur Guinness & Son, played a major role during the 1930s and 1940s in pioneering co-operative links which now are a common feature of apprenticeship and other educational work release schemes.

By the mid 1950s, there were 1,435 day release apprentices on training programmes distributed amongst the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) colleges and catering for the following trades:

- Bolton Street — printing, cabinet-making, motor, carpentry, CIE mechanical work
- Kevin Street — ESB electrician, ESB fitter, bakery, cinema projection
- Parnell Square — drapery, grocery, victualling, hairdressing
- Cathal Brugha Street — hotel and catering.

Day release varied from three hours to two and a half working days each week for the first two years of the apprenticeship. The CIE scheme was enlightened in that the apprentices were given a wider education, enabling some of them to advance to higher professional status. Most significant however, was the close association between the Dublin colleges and the industrial, trade and business life of the city.

Since the Dublin colleges pioneered apprenticeship education before the 1931 legislation, craft and apprenticeship activities were always a significant component of the work of the colleges and continue to be an important feature of the work of the DIT.

Until the 1960s the apprenticeship system was mainly a shared relationship between the employers and the colleges, as there was no indus-

trial training authority in the country.¹ Employers were encouraged to release their apprentices, first for a half-day and later a full day or more per week to attend the colleges and to sit for craft related examinations set by the Department of Education. This helped to raise the standards of craftsmanship in the country. But the effects were uneven geographically and tended to benefit industries that were already strong while leaving weak industries lagging behind.

APPRENTICESHIP EDUCATION UNDER THE APPRENTICESHIP ACT 1959

The Apprenticeship Act 1959 established the National Apprenticeship Board (An Cheard-Chomhairle) in 1960. It outlined day release and block release schemes for apprentice education. The Board was empowered to require all employers to send their apprentices to training courses in the colleges and technical schools. It also set the Day Vocational Certificate as the basic entry requirement. The Board specified the type of education and training for apprentices in the different trades and issued certificates at junior and senior level to successful apprentices. National apprenticeship committees for the different designated trades were set up as well as local advisory groups.

In 1963 the Council for Education, Recruitment and Training for the Hotel Industry (CERT) was founded by the government to co-ordinate education and training with employers and the colleges, including apprenticeship training, for the hospitality industry. This was not a designated trade, but the approach was similar to that of the National Apprenticeship Board for the engineering, technology and construction areas.

These schemes had a major impact on the apprentice education work of the Dublin colleges, especially those in Bolton Street, Kevin Street and Cathal Brugha Street. By 1965 the Dublin colleges had some 3,300 day release apprentices which was more than double the number of a decade before, and about 30 per cent of the national cohort. In Kevin Street alone the number of apprentices rose from some 300 in 1956 to over 1,100 in 1965.

In the elaboration of the Ballymun Project proposals, a key related plan was the development of the Bolton Street college as an apprentice education institute, gathering in apprenticeship activities in technological disciplines from the Kevin Street college.

1. P Gunnigle, N Heraty and M Morley, *Personnel and Human Resource Management: Theory and Practice in Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan), 1997.

AN CHOMHAIRLE OILIÚNA (ANCO) AND RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

From the 1960s to the 1980s apprenticeship education and training underwent a significant change after the Apprenticeship Act 1959. The reorganisation of the Government's involvement continued with the enactment of the Industrial Training Act 1967 which led to the setting up of a new national training authority, An Chomhairle Oiliúna (AnCO). AnCO was to play an active role in reforming the apprenticeship system and regulating entry to different designated trade areas.

By the 1970s the Dublin colleges had considerable involvement in apprentice training and in 1976 the Apprentice Education Board was established within the DIT by the CDVEC to co-ordinate the activities in this area. At the time there were widespread concerns about the potential shortages of craftspersons for different trades. In the 1980s AnCO received extensive European Community funding and established a number of its own well equipped training centres to engage in extensive training activities, part of which duplicated the work of the DIT in relation to apprenticeship.

The colleges of the DIT continued to provide courses for apprentices attending through block release or day release arrangements and special efforts were made to eliminate duplication of efforts between the education and AnCO sectors. The relationship between the colleges and AnCO was essentially one in which the colleges provided an educational and training service as specified by AnCO as a client. However there was also considerable co-operation between DIT staff (generally in conjunction with the Apprentice Education Board) and AnCO in relation to up-dating and developing syllabuses and the co-ordination of work-release arrangements.

APPRENTICE EDUCATION BOARD

In 1976 the CDVEC established the Apprentice Education (Industrial Crafts) Board to advise on matters of policy regarding apprentice education with particular reference to:

- co-ordination and development of courses
- the relationship with AnCO and other external bodies.

The board was to be chaired by the head of the School of Trades in the Bolton Street college and the membership would include the department heads in building trades, metal fabrication, auto engineering, aero-engi-

neering, engineering trades, electrical installation, cookery, waiting, bakery, and printing. The principals in the Kevin Street and Bolton Street colleges also nominated members. Later, elected staff representatives became members of the board.

Initially the board reported to the CDVEC but, after the establishment of the DIT and its Governing Body in 1978, the board reported to the Governing Body.

The Apprentice Education Board was responsible for validating all trade and trade related courses in the Institute. In conjunction with course advisory committees, the board organised the continuous review of courses as changes happened in work practices, materials, products and industrial technology. It co-ordinated the arrangements for educational release of apprentices in liaison with other educational institutions, the training agencies and external training centres.

Broadly the Apprentice Education Board functioned in parallel with the Academic Council, the former relating to apprenticeship courses and the latter to general third level courses.

With the statutory establishment of the DIT in 1993, the Apprentice Education Board was fully incorporated within the Academic Council as the Apprentice Education Committee with specific terms of reference relating to the education, training and employment of apprentices.

REFORM OF APPRENTICESHIPS UNDER FORAS ÁISEANNA SAOTHAIR (FÁS)

Under the provisions of the Labour Services Act 1987 AnCO was reconstituted by the new Department of Labour into a new Government agency, Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS), with a wider remit relating to manpower services.

As part of the Government's national programme in 1991 it was decided to establish a new standards-based apprenticeship for the twenty-six designated trades, which would have three main features as follows:

- standards-based — for successful completion of the apprenticeship and the award of a national craft qualification, the apprentice must achieve pre-set standards of skill and knowledge
- modular in structure with alternating phases of training on-the-job with the employer and off-the-job in a FÁS training centre or educational institution
- the national qualification as a compulsory requirement for recognition as a craftsperson by employers or trade unions.

FÁS was given the leading role in structuring and implementing the new system. The Department of Education, the DIT, the Regional Technical Colleges, employers and trade unions also engaged in a series of tripartite committees dealing with the different trades.

The new system began its implementation stage in 1993. The DIT colleges in Bolton Street and Kevin Street are involved in the following trade areas: construction plant fitter; heavy vehicle mechanic; toolmaker; metal fabricator; plumber; bookbinder; carton maker; originator; printer; bricklayer; cabinet maker; painter/decorator; plasterer; wood machinist; aircraft mechanic; refrigeration craftsperson; sheet metal worker; vehicle body repairer; carpentry and joinery; fitting; motor mechanic; electrician and instrumentation.

Under the most recent arrangements, each apprentice's overall three year programme will be divided into seven phases. Phases 1, 3, 5 and 7 will be "on the job" in the apprentice's place of employment and phases 2, 4 and 6 "off the job", generally attending a FÁS training centre for phase 2 and college (including the DIT) for phases 4 and 6. Typically phase 2 extends over twenty weeks of full-time attendance and phases 4 and 6 are each of ten weeks duration, although there are likely to be some variations in the arrangements depending on the trade specialisation.

The assessment arrangements leading to the award of national craft qualifications are still under discussion but it seems likely that they will be issued under the aegis of the proposed National Qualifications Authority.² This new authority is planned to be an umbrella organisation co-ordinating the work of the new Further Education and Training Awards Council. This in turn will make appropriate awards, replacing those now made by the NCEA, the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) and other bodies such as FÁS, Teagasc and CERT.

In this changing situation, some of the DIT schools are still involved in offering day release courses for apprentices in non-designated trades and crafts, who continue to prepare for City and Guilds of London Institute and national examinations and awards. It is likely that these programmes will be phased out in the coming years and converted to programmes leading to awards under the proposed National Qualifications Authority.

The new apprenticeship scheme was envisaged as having a national intake of 3,500 young people each year, giving a total apprentice population of over 10,000 at any one time. With the recent improvement in the

2. *Qualifications (Education and Training) Act* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair), 1999.

economy, this figure has reached over 16,000 during the 1998–1999 academic year. There are now more apprentices registered than at any time since the early 1980s and since 1996 there are more than 4,000 new candidates registering for apprenticeship programmes annually. Table 8.6 gives the apprentice enrolments in the DIT since 1982. By the early 1990s the DIT catered for some 40 per cent of the national apprentice population and if this percentage is maintained, the Institute is expected to have some 5,000 to 6,000 apprentices enrolled in the years ahead. Based on their time in the Institute and their corresponding study load, the number of apprentices attending on a part-time basis corresponds to an equivalent full-time student number of up to 2,000.

In order to underpin the Institute's commitment to a continuing significant role in apprentice education, the policy is to integrate craft apprentice activity into departments within related schools in the proposed faculty structures.

The Scientific and Technological Investment Education fund launched in 1997 afforded £10 million in funding to the Institutes of Technology for the provision of extra places on phases 4 and 6 of apprenticeship training programmes. While some of the Institutes of Technology have benefited significantly from this funding, the DIT has been unable to benefit to the same extent because of limitations on the physical expansion possible in the trade areas of the Institute. The development of the new campus at Grangegorman should allow this expansion in the early years of this decade. With the construction, engineering, food and tourism industries now growing at an unprecedented rate in Ireland, it is safe to predict that extra skilled craftspeople will be needed over that decade.

SUMMARY

In the newly independent Saorstát Éireann, the Dublin colleges helped to shape the Vocational Education Act 1930 and then proceeded to steadily plan and develop their services within the CDVEC, under the aegis of that legislation. Under the different Apprenticeship Acts and the national systems established, the colleges contributed to the provision of the educational elements of apprenticeship training in a wide range of disciplines.

This will continue and apprenticeship programmes will be an important and developing aspect of the multi-level nature of the Institute.