

2000

The Story of the Dublin Institute of Technology

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The Story of the
**Dublin Institute
of Technology**



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The Story of the Dublin Institute of Technology

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Preface

This book traces the development of the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) from its origins over 113 years ago. There are many aspects of the history of the Institute and its predecessor colleges and schools that deserve study. There were many people who made significant contributions to its development and who deserve wider recognition, not only in the educational sphere but in the national arena as well. This book will be a great success if it stimulates such studies and related publications.

The aim of the book is to capture the broad sweep of the story of the DIT but not to describe the fine details of every development. In consequence some highlights, and indeed some weaknesses, do not receive the attention that they might deserve.

The book is directed primarily at the Institute community — academic and support staff, professional and industrial associates in Ireland and abroad, alumni and their families and students and their families. We hope it will add to their well founded pride in the Institute and its achievements. It is also directed at future students and their families and advisers in second level schools, to provide them with broad background information about the programmes, ethos and spirit of the Institute. The book will also be of interest to local and national politicians, as well as to local and national government officials, who have a major stake in the Institute and its progress. The book will further be of value as a reference to students of education at home and abroad as a perspective on the changing currents in the Irish educational system.

This book is offered as a record of achievement, in trust that the next generation will take the Institute to greater heights of educational service and accomplishment.

May 2000

Introduction

The Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) was established by statute as an autonomous institution on 1 January 1993, under the Dublin Institute of Technology Act 1992, “to provide vocational and technical education and training for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the state”. It was constituted from the six higher education colleges of the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC). These colleges, located in the city centre both south and north of the River Liffey, had provided applied and higher vocational education and training programmes, mainly in areas of technology and business, for over a century.

The six colleges that amalgamated to form the DIT, with the foundation year of each given in brackets, were as follows:

- College of Technology, Kevin Street, Dublin 8 (1887)
- College of Music, Chatham Row and Adelaide Road, Dublin 2 (1890)
- College of Commerce, Rathmines, Dublin 6 (1901)
- College of Marketing and Design, Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1 (formerly on Parnell Square, Dublin 1) (1905)
- College of Technology, Bolton Street, Dublin 1 (1911)
- College of Catering, Cathal Brugha Street, Dublin 1 (1941).

Since the earliest years the colleges developed programmes in different areas of speciality, with the underlying vision of providing the educational services needed by society — by students, industry, business, the community and particularly the disadvantaged sections of the population. The colleges responded flexibly and imaginatively to the changing needs arising from changes in technology in the city and in the country as a whole. In their new form as the DIT they continue to respond to the new challenges including those posed by the revolution in information technology and communications.

In the early years most of the programmes were at second level, but over the century, the Dublin colleges came to specialise mainly in higher

level educational work, while second level work was transferred to other schools in the CDVEC system. At the present time the Institute offers close to 300 courses in a wide range of disciplines, in a multi-level context.

The colleges have grown and developed such that the annual enrolments are now about 22,000 — 10,500 full-time third level students, 4,000 apprentices and some 7,500 part-time, usually evening, students. The Institute has the highest student enrolment of all the higher education institutions in the state.

This book describes the main features of the evolution of the Institute, from its beginnings more than a century ago to its academic development over the past thirty years. The approach is firstly to provide a general historical chronology together with the macro-political factors influencing developments, then to review the highlights of the academic profile of the Institute and finally to consider the challenges facing it in the early years of the twenty-first century.

The growth of the colleges from which the DIT has been formed is traced from their origins in the Technical School established on Kevin Street in 1887. To provide the backdrop and context for this story, the highlights in the development of higher education in general and the other higher education institutions are also outlined.

The detailed review presented in this book describes the ways in which the DIT and its predecessor colleges, under the CDVEC and the earlier City of Dublin Technical Education Committee, contributed and continue to contribute to educating young people in Ireland and to developing Irish society, industry and higher education. While the Institute has withstood challenges and availed of many opportunities to improve the educational service it provides to the community, it will be apparent that it also missed valuable opportunities. The various judgements and evaluations made in this book at different junctures about the development of the Institute and its predecessor colleges clearly have the benefit of hindsight and should be taken in that light. They should also be taken in the context of the predominantly progressive and constructive thrust of the programmes developed across all the colleges.

The Institute and its predecessors pioneered applied education and training in a wide range of occupations, trades and skills, in close consultation with the relevant industries, professions and trade unions. Throughout their history they developed solutions in a wide range of disciplines to the complex and conflicting demands made on them by the short-term training needs of industry and business and the long-term educational needs of students. In this conflict, expressed in recent times as between, on one

side, a possibly narrow instrumentalism or vocationalism focussing on instruction/training for the job, and on the other side, the broader educational development of the students for life, they strove to keep the interests of students at their core.

The Dublin colleges pioneered full-time education and practical training in applied areas that were not widely available due to the lack of a strong industrial infrastructure in the city and country. They helped to develop a range of new professions and the advanced training needed to establish and maintain them. They pioneered the development of technician and technologist training and education, a factor that helped in no small way to energise the emergence of Irish industry over the past thirty years. In that period the Institute has produced some 50,000 diploma, certificate and apprentice certificate graduates. It also developed an unprecedented partnership with the University of Dublin that has provided thousands of places on degree and professional courses during the rapid expansion in higher education that began in the 1970s and continued through the 1980s and 1990s. It has produced over 12,000 such graduates over the past twenty-five years. The DIT has provided, and continues to provide, access at all levels from apprentice to postgraduate level, with part-time, evening and full-time courses with clearly signposted transfer tracks between the different levels in most disciplines. Historically, in each academic year, it has provided more part-time and second-chance educational opportunities than all the other higher education institutions in Ireland combined. It pioneered applied research with strong industrial applicability at postgraduate level and recognised, at a very early stage, the key role of research and the related advancement of knowledge in underpinning all areas of higher education. It has maintained extensive and fruitful links with the professions, industry and business, nationally and internationally, for over a century.

As a multi-level higher education institution, the DIT continues this tradition and is developing and adapting it for future generations of students.

Dedication

This book is a tribute to:

- all the members of staff of the schools and colleges, for some forty years under the administration of the City of Dublin Technical Education Committee and the Rathmines Urban District Council Technical Instruction Committee, then for over sixty years under the aegis of the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee, and latterly within the autonomous Dublin Institute of Technology
- the far-seeing members of those committees
- the administrative staff of those committees

who, down the years, worked often in adverse circumstances, to make the Dublin Institute of Technology the inspiring educational giant that it is today.

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