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## Where Next?: Mapping and Understanding the Post First Degree Destinations of Mature Disadvantaged Students in three Higher Education Institutions

Aidan Kenny

*Technological University Dublin, aidan.kenny@tudublin.ie*

Andrew Loxley

*Trinity College Dublin, aloxley@tcd.ie*

Ted Fleming

*National University of Ireland, Maynooth*

*See next page for additional authors*

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**Authors**

Aidan Kenny, Andrew Loxley, Ted Fleming, and Fergal Finnegan

# Where Next? Mapping and Understanding the Post First Degree Destinations of Mature Disadvantaged Students in three Higher Education Institutions

*This study was part funded by the Combat Poverty Agency*

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**An Pobal seminar, 24th September 2009, Cork.**

Community Based Access as a Route to Further and Higher Education.

Session: Retention, Progression and Choices within Higher Education.

**Presentation by Dr. A. Loxley and A. Kenny.**

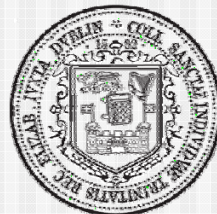
Report authors;

Dr Ted Fleming, National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM)

Dr Andrew Loxley, Trinity College Dublin (TCD)

Mr. Fergal Finnegan, National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM)

Mr. Aidan Kenny, Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)



# Thematic Workshop

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- During this workshop we will;
  - Detail the aims of the study.
  - Provide some comments on the policy & theoretical background to the study.
  - Present the methodology of the study.
  - Outline some of the main findings.
  - In groups discuss some of the main themes.

# Thematic Workshop

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- Intention is to explore & discuss the following areas which are central to involvement in HE
  - Motivations for Degree level study
  - Family Support
  - Financing Degree study
  - Destinations: outcomes & incomes

# The Study: Main Aims

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1. Map the post-first degree destinations of those students who have entered HE via an access programme or equivalent in the past 7 years;
2. Explore the processes and experiences of these ex-students transition from HE into (or back into) workplace or other arenas;
3. Investigate the ex-students reflections on their motivations to entering HE, expectations and experiences.



# The Study: Some Specific Questions

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- The relationship between type of first degree and 'choice' of destination
- The relationship between experiences of being in HE institutions and destination
- The kind and form of supports offered and provided by HE institutions to help students' in their career decision making
- The identification of and relationship between non-HE factors (e.g. finance, family context, position in life-cycle, gender, ethnicity, geographical mobility etc) and destinations;
- Short and long-term expectations of career paths
- Perceived barriers to secure graduate employment and the job application process
- Expectations and experience of the type and nature of employment post first degree
- Assess the experience of being on social welfare while in HE

# The Study: Summary of main findings

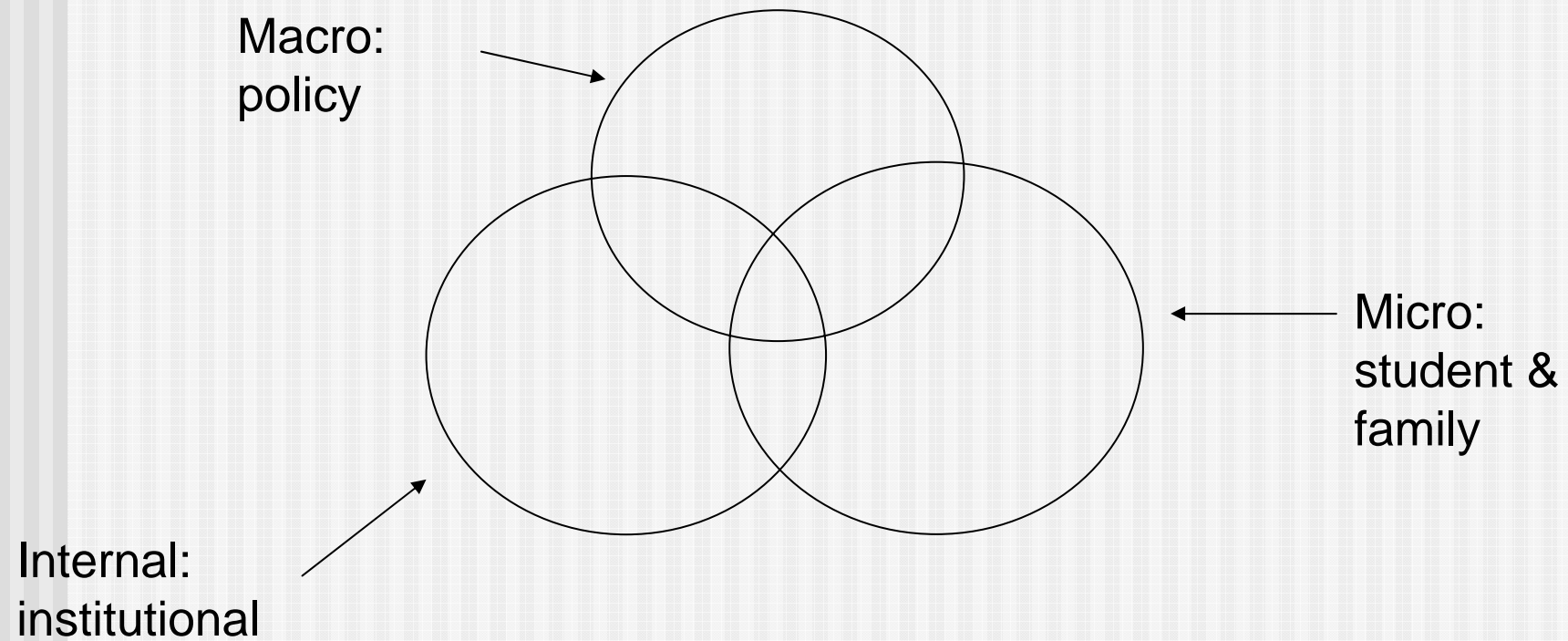
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- Education achievement is valued and perceived as a mechanism that can alleviate poverty.
- Continued support services are needed to facilitate mature disadvantaged students progression routes.
- Maintain free fees and other modest financial supports for mature disadvantaged students.
- Access needs to be reconstructed as a seamless process of progression opportunities.
- Education as a vehicle for both instrumental and self-development
- Facilitate the development of mature student support network can increase retention and opportunities (instrumental & social).



# Three overlapping contexts?

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# The Study: Background Issues

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- Green Paper Lifelong Learning (2000) target 15% mature students by 2005.
- 1999 Qualifications (Education & Training) Act, recognition, access , transfer, progression.
- Towards 2016, access, support for disadvantaged.
- NDP 2007-2013, Chapter 9, Human Capital
- National Plan for Equity & Access (2008) 12.5% 23+ in 2006.
- HEA (2005) Equity & Access, 23+ 10% FT, 30% PT 2006.
- EGNFSN (2007) upskill 500,000 in the labour force by one NFQ level by 2020.
- HEA Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF II) Access, retention, progression.
- EU Lisbon agenda participation rate of 24-64 in education and training by 2010 12.5%
- OECD (2008) average participation of 23+ 19.5%

# Some demographics

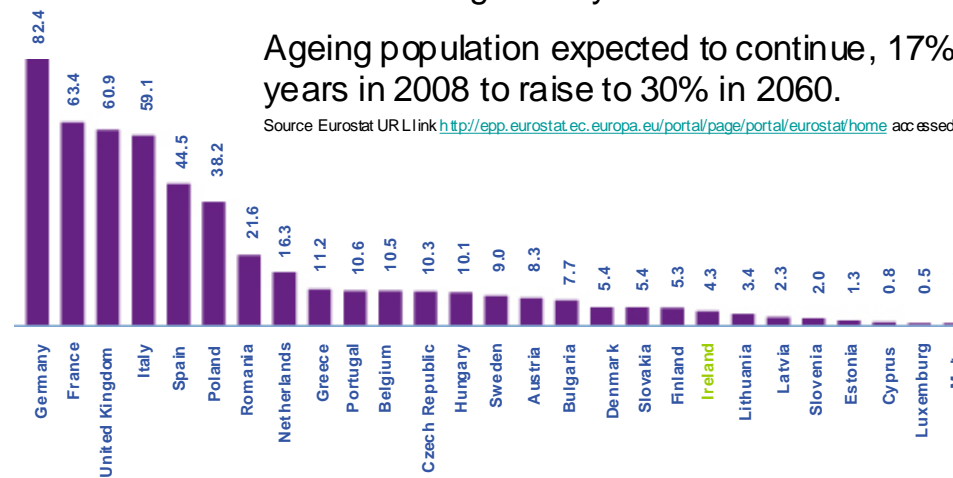
## EU 27 Population

The EU 27 population reached 499,794,855 on the 1/1/09.

Projected EU population growth to 521 million in 2035, there after to gradually decline to 506 million 2060.

Ageing population expected to continue, 17% over 65 years in 2008 to raise to 30% in 2060.

Source Eurostat URL link <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home> accessed 8/8/09.



Graph shows population of EU 27 member states 2007

Source Europa URL link [http://europa.eu/abc/euslid/es/in dex\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/abc/euslid/es/in dex_en.htm) accessed 10/8/09

# EU Unemployment

## Unemployment rates EU 27, 2009

Source Eurostat URL link <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home> accessed 15/8/09.

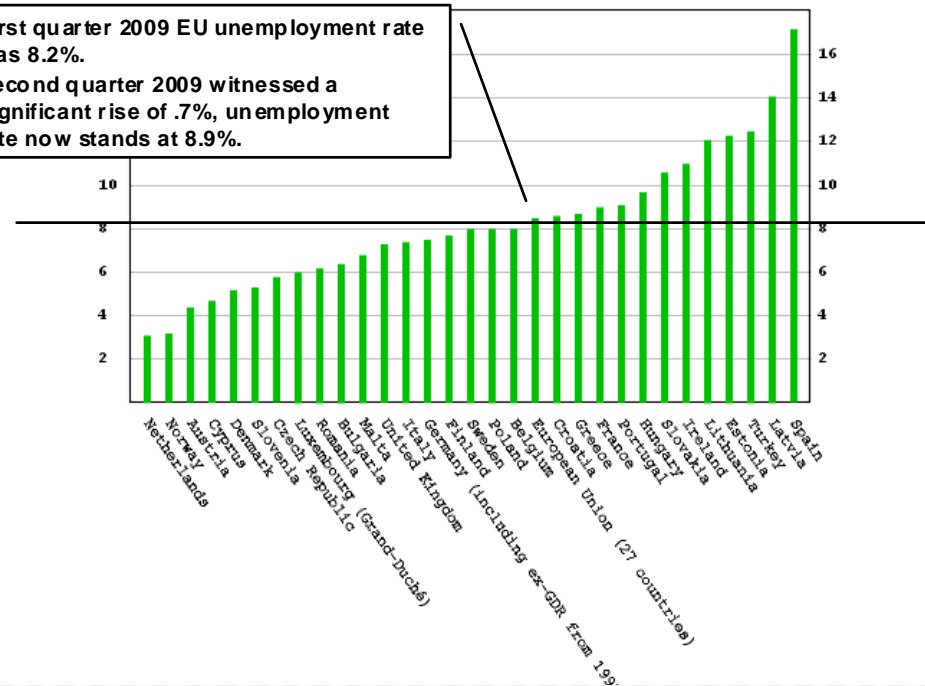
EU 27, 21.5 million people unemployed July 2009,

source URL link <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=552&furtherNews=yes>

Harmonised unemployment rate by gender - total

% (SA)

First quarter 2009 EU unemployment rate was 8.2%.  
Second quarter 2009 witnessed a significant rise of .7%, an unemployment rate now stands at 8.9%.



# EU Tertiary education

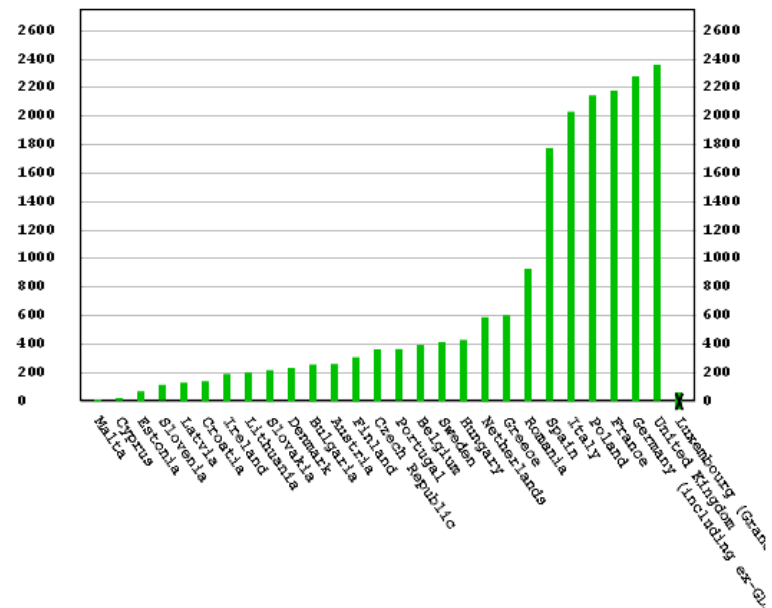
## Tertiary Education EU 27

Source Eurostat URL link [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshGraphSort\\_label.do?tab=graph&toolbo\\_x=so.itAndLabel&plugin=1&language=en&pcod.e=tps00062](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshGraphSort_label.do?tab=graph&toolbo_x=so.itAndLabel&plugin=1&language=en&pcod.e=tps00062) accessed 10/8/09.

In the EU in 2007 over 19 million students participated in tertiary education (both university and non university studies)

### Students

Tertiary education (1 000)





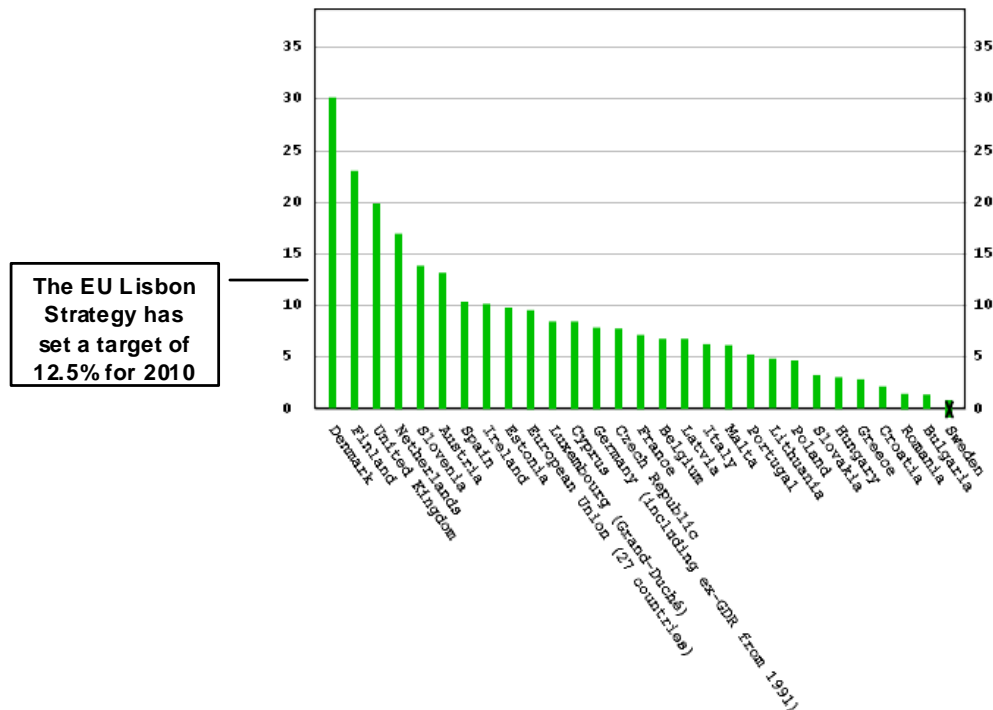
# EU Life-long learning

## Life-long learning EU 27, 2008

Source Eurostat URL link <http://ep.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/gm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&code=tsiem080> accessed 10/8/09.

### Life-long learning by gender

Percentage of the adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training

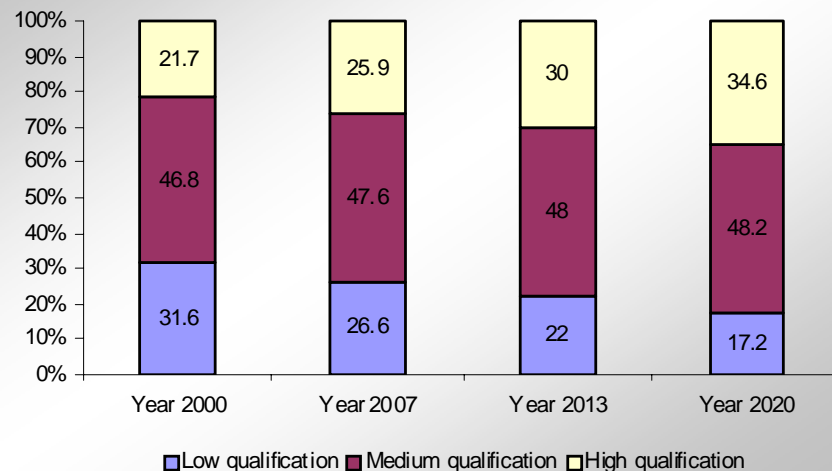


# EU Skills needs 2020

## EU Labour force skills needs

The projected skills profile for the EU 25 workforce shows a significant increase in the percentage of workers who will need high level qualifications (Tertiary, ISCED 5-6) a significant decrease in demand for workers with low level qualifications (Lower secondary, ISCED 0-2, 3c) and a moderate increase in the demand for Medium level qualification (Upper secondary, ISCED 2-3).

EU 25 Labour force (15-64) qualifications profile and projected change from 2000-2020

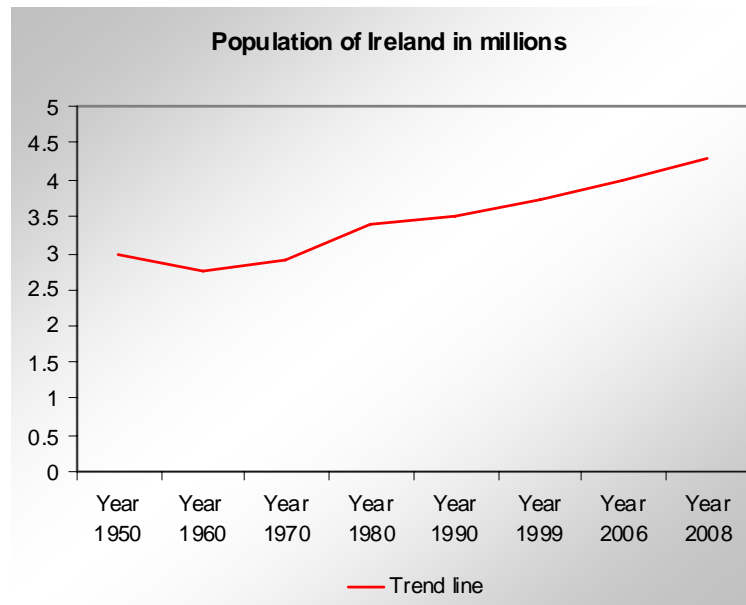


Data Source, CEDEFOP (2009, p52) URL link [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/themes/theme\\_a/news.asp?dnews=4551](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/themes/theme_a/news.asp?dnews=4551)

# Ireland population trend

## Population of the Republic of Ireland

For the first time this century the population of the Republic of Ireland went about 4 million in 2006 .  
During the height of the so called 'Celtic Tiger' period (1999-2006) the population increased by over .45 million.



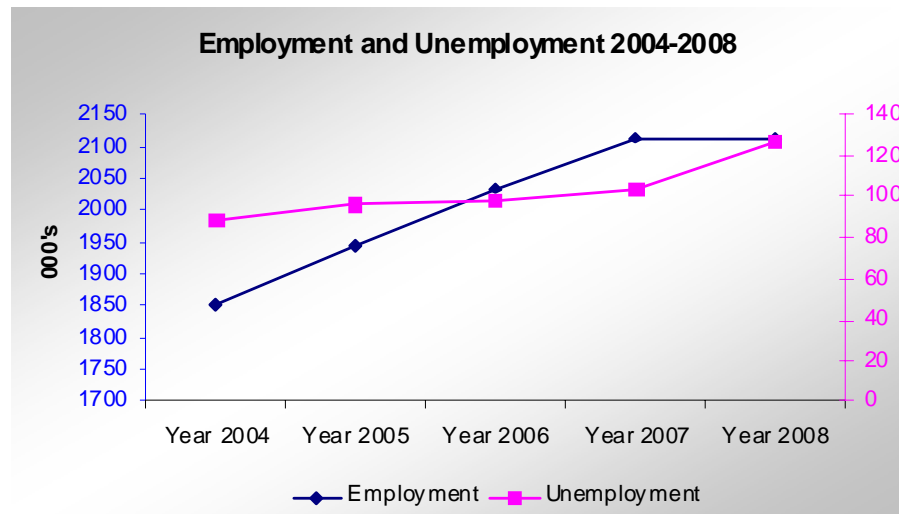
Population by age 2006	
00-14	864,449
15-24	632,732
25-44	1,345,873
45-64	928,868
65+	467,926

# Employment/unemployment

## Labour force

During the boom period of the 'Celtic Tiger' employment growth reached unprecedented levels, peaking during 2007 at 2.1 million.

The number of unemployed during the same period remained constant under 95,000, however things changed dramatically from 2007 onwards, 2008 witnessed a sharp rise in unemployment to 126,000.



The rate of unemployment in Ireland has significantly changed, remaining below 5% from 2000-2006, then marginally increasing to 6.4% in 2008. However there was an alarming increase of over 5.8% recorded up to June 2009 the Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rate now stands at 12.2%.

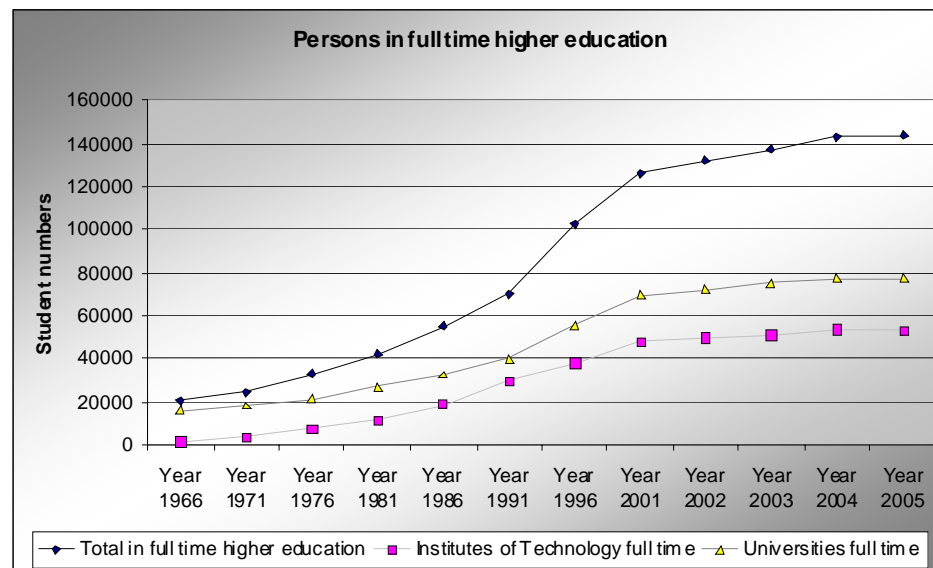
It is currently estimated (August 2009) that over 400,000 of the labour force are experiencing either partial or full unemployment.

Data sources, Central Statistics Office (2009) URL link <http://www.cso.ie/statistics/LabourForce.htm>

# Tertiary education

## Structure, Massification (Tertiary level)

The binary system began to emerge in Ireland after the passing of the Vocational Education Act 1970, which enabled the establishment of Regional Technical Colleges (RTC's). Successive national reports during the 1960's identified the need for increased investment in education and training, and the provision of high level technical programmes. The RTC's were formally recognised as a distinct sector under the RTC Act 1992, thereafter they were termed Institutes of Technology (IoT's). However the The Dublin Institute of Technology became a hybrid higher education institute under the DIT Act 1992, the DIT was neither an IoT or a university, in 1998 DIT gained degree awarding power.



Total number of Persons in Full Time Third Level Education from 1966 to 2005, numbers for both Universities and Institutes of Technology & DIT. Data sources CSO (2008), DES (2006) and HEA (2007).



# Projected growth

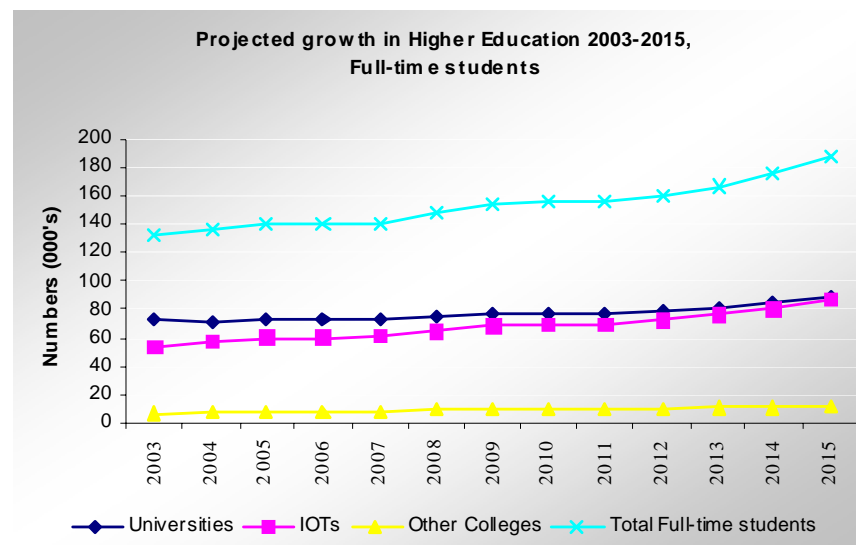
## Higher Education (Tertiary Level)

### Public funded higher education institutes;

- 7 Universities, 4 Higher colleges, 12 Institutes of Technology and the Dublin Institute of Technology.

### Private higher education providers;

- 8 colleges are members of HECA, variety of other specialised providers.



### Student Enrolments 2007-08

University sector;

FT 87,033, PT 16,518.

IoTs and DIT,

FT 51,572, PT 15,909.

**Total 171,032**

### DIT

FT 9961, PT 3594

\*Apprentices 2650

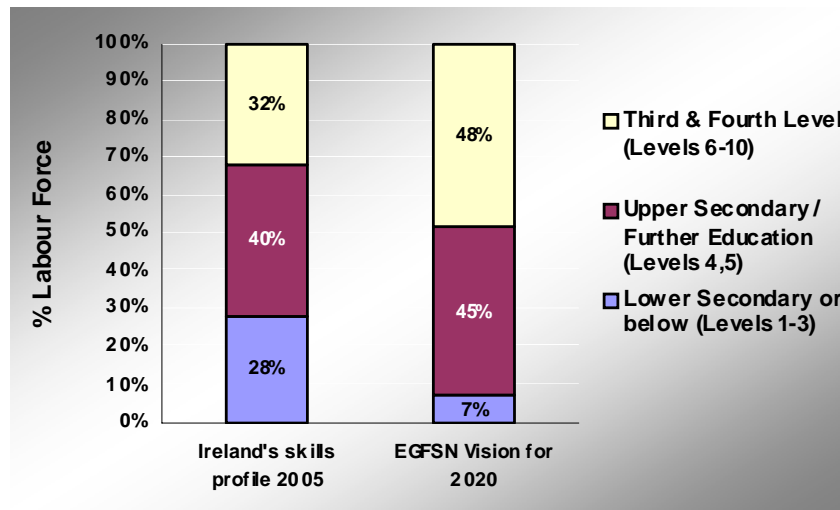
\*Other 4500

Data source, HEA (2009), \*other sources

# Knowledge economy

## Future Skills

In order to move towards a knowledge based economy the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) report (2007) projected that there was a need for a significant shift upwards in the skills profile of the labour force. Forecasting that by 2020 the majority (48%) of the labour force would need a tertiary qualification and 45% of the labour force would need a level 4-5 qualification, the remaining 7% holding a Lower secondary qualification.



To realise this skills shift a national strategy for upskilling the labour force is necessary. This would include developing closer cooperation between education and training providers. Implementing initiatives on the recognition of formal and non formal education and training. Increase access and providing flexible pathways for learner/workers.

# Methodology

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- Study was of a mixed-methods design
- Self-administered postal questionnaire
  - 400 returns in total
  - NUIM = 215/820 (26%)
  - TCD = 140/500 (28%)
  - DIT = 57/72 (79%)

# Methodology

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- Face-to-face & telephone interviews
  - NUIM = 20
  - TCD = 15
  - DIT = 17
- Also interviewed identified stakeholders:
  - HEA, EGFSN, IBEC, ICTU, etc.

# Methodology: The Questionnaire

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- Questionnaire built around following sections:
  - Personal information (age, gender etc)
  - First degree (type, programme duration etc)
  - Financing of study period
  - Studying with a disability
  - Experience of college life and studying
  - Post degree work and employment
  - Post degree further study
- In total encompassed 150 separate data items
- Data compiled and analysed via SPSS



# Methodology: The Interviews

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- Interviews were semi-structured and based around the following themes:
  - first degree and 'choice' of destination;
  - between experiences of being in HE institutions and destination;
  - supports offered and provided by HE institutions to help students' in their career decision making;
  - relationship between non-HE factors (e.g. finance, family context, position in life-cycle, gender, ethnicity, geographical mobility etc) and destinations;
  - short and long-term expectations of career paths;
  - barriers to secure graduate employment and the job application process;
  - expectations and experience of the type and nature of employment post first degree;
  - assess the experience of being on social welfare while in HE.

# Some of the Findings: Demographics

## Age of Respondents (n & %)

AgeBand	N	%
<39	163	41.9
40-49	112	28.8
50-59	79	20.3
60>	35	9.0
Total	389	100.0

- Male = 34% Female 66%
- 57% 'married', 26% 'single', 13% 'living with a partner' and 1% 'separated'

# Some of the Findings: Demographics

## Socioeconomic Groups Prior to Studying

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	n	%
Employer & Managers	36	11
Higher Professionals	25	8
Lower Professionals	75	23
Non-Manual	135	42
Manual Skilled	14	4
Semi-skilled	27	8
Self-employed	6	2
Farmer	2	1
Others	2	1
Total	322	

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## Some of the Findings: Motivation to undertake a Degree

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- Similar patterns across the narratives
- Mix of self-transformation & instrumental motivations
- Punctuated by very personal epiphanies

# Some of the Findings: Motivation to undertake a Degree

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47% cited to 'improve employment prospects',

43% 'personal interest' and

7% 'other' (change career; didn't get the chance etc).

Question: *Would you choose the same course again?*

80% saying 'yes'

14% 'no' and

one person said they 'didn't know.'



# Motivations

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I wasn't in a good place in the job I was at the time, no luck with applications for new jobs, the job I was in wasn't very demanding, wanted something more stimulating.  
*(DIT participant)*

I used to pass the college [TCD] when I was going to Grafton street and I would see all these student types coming in and out and as I said I left school at 14 and thought that I could never belong in a place like that. . .I guess I envied the young people with the opportunities they had and I thought I'd give it a go, I didn't even know I would get it. . .I applied for [other courses] and when I did get it I was a bit 'iffy' as I'd picked that college for personal reasons and was it the best course?  
*(TCD participant)*

	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
	In general the college was a welcoming place	0	3	8	46	44
	I felt unprepared for studying at degree level	25	37	13	19	6
	The approach(es) to teaching that I experienced was well matched to how adults learn	1	10	17	52	20
	I found other students on my course supportive	2	3	9	52	33
	I met a lot of students from a similar background (e.g. age, social class etc) as myself at college	7	21	17	36	19
	Studying for a degree has changed me personally	4	9	21	41	26
	My age impacted on my experience of college	19	18	10	41	12
	My life experience was an advantage to me	1	2	7	49	42
	Studying on a degree course has changed the way I approach my job	4	13	12	53	18
	My socio-economic class had a negative impact on my experience of college	39	36	16	8	2

# Some of the Findings: Family Support

## Support from Family and Friends (%)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My family members were supportive of me whilst I was at college	2	3	7	26	63
My non-college friends were supportive of me whilst I was at college	2	6	18	37	38
My family did not understand my reasons for going to college	47	34	10	7	2

# Family Support

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At the start it was difficult, not so much family but friends. You lost touch with friends a lot, you were in a different world move in different circles I suppose. . .the first year I was totally immersed in it. . .most of my friends would have been the same, they wouldn't have had second level education, but that's settled down now and I'm back with the same friends that I had. (*TCD participant*)

They [family and friends] were fed up listening to me grumble about work for years so by the time I jumped ship [become a student] it was 'finally he's stopped talking about it. . .they worried a bit about what will you do for money?, What will you do for work? (*TCD participant*)



# Some of the Findings: Family Support

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- Essential for completion of degree
- Comes in a variety of forms e.g.
  - Financial
  - Affective
  - Child support
  - Domestic tasks
  - Cultural & attitudinal

# Some of the findings: financing studying

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## Hours worked whilst studying

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Hours Worked	n	%
<10	45	25
11-20	77	43
21-30	20	11
31-40	25	14
>41	13	7
Total	180	

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# Some of the findings: financing studying

## Paid Employment by Social Welfare and Grant Status (%)

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	Yes	No	Total
Social Welfare	5	8	13
Grant	16	7	23
None	22	14	36
Social Welfare + Grant	13	52	99
Total (n)	(196)	(154)	

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# Some of the findings: financing studying

## Size of Debt Incurred whilst Studying

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<i>Debt (£k)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
0-10k	100	67
11-20k	33	22
21-30k	8	5
>31k	8	5
Total	149	

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# Some of the findings: financing studying

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You would have a really hard time surviving on the grant and on what your given and stuff. But yes, I feel so lucky with the grant and the scholarship and the County Council. But to be expected to live off those alone, your life would be very poor but the fact that you have them at all, you have a chance, without the grants I would not be able to do any of this stuff at all. But life would have been extremely miserable without these grants and scholarships.  
*(Maynooth participant)*

# Some of the Findings: Destinations, Outcomes & Incomes

**Selected Items about Students' Work & Employment Post-degree (%)**

	<i>Statement</i>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
	I think a degree will make a big difference to my long term career opportunities	2	5	13	37	43
	I think a degree is necessary for a good job	6	14	19	38	23
	My degree has opened up employment opportunities for me which I did not previously have	4	5	12	39	41
	The time I invested gaining a degree was worthwhile	1	1	3	35	59
	The financial investment I made in gaining a degree was worthwhile	2	3	11	42	42

# Some of the Findings: Destinations, Outcomes & Incomes

- 50% looked for work after graduation
- 50% did not

## Non-paid Work Destinations (%)

	n	%
Looking for another course	101	57
Traveling	4	2
Volunteer work	9	5
Doing unpaid work home	29	16
Other	35	20
Total	178	



# Destinations, Outcomes & Incomes

Social Class 'Then'	Social Class 'Now' (n)							Total
	Professional	Managerial & Technical	Non-Manual	Skilled Manual	Semi-skilled	Unskilled	Other	
Professional	9	8	0	0	0	0	4	21
Managerial & Technical	11	73	4	1	0	0	16	105
Non-Manual	8	44	12	2	0	1	13	80
Skilled Manual	8	10	1	1	1	0	2	23
Semi-skilled	6	23	4	2	2	0	6	43
Unskilled	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	43	160	21	6	3	1	41	275



# Some of the Findings: Destinations, Outcomes & Incomes

**Income by Gender (%)**

Income (£k)	Female	Male	Total
0-10	9	2	11
11-20	9	4	13
21-30	13	14	18
31-40	16	8	24
41-50	10	9	19
51-60	4	2	6
>61	3	6	9
<i>(Total n)</i>	<i>(201)</i>	<i>(111)</i>	<i>(312)</i>

**Income Post-degree by Actual Increase**

Income (£k)	Increase		
	Yes	No	Total
0-10	3	8	11
11-20	6	7	13
21-30	9	8	17
31-40	18	6	24
41-50	17	3	20
51-60	5	2	7
>61	8	1	9
<i>Total (n)</i>	<i>(197)</i>	<i>(104)</i>	<i>(301)</i>

# Themes for Groups

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- Group 1 – motivations
- Group 2 – family
- Group 3 – finance
- Group 4 – destinations

# Questions for groups to discuss

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- 1) Your experience of the main factors for entry & retention of mature students?
- 2) How does our data reflect (or not) your experiences?
- 3) What kind of mechanisms, supports etc would like to see provided?

# Thank you

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- Final note;
  - A detailed copy of the study will be made available after the peer review process is complete, provisional date December 2009.
- For further information contact
  - Dr Andrew Loxley [aloxley@tcd.ie](mailto:aloxley@tcd.ie)
  - Aidan Kenny [aidan.kenny@dit.ie](mailto:aidan.kenny@dit.ie)
- *The Study Team acknowledge the support received from the Combat Poverty Agency and our respective institutes.*