
FET in Ireland –Shaping an Identity

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This Generation's Challenge

- 4 planetary boundaries; biodiversity loss;(agro)chemical pollution; climate change; acidification of ocean-100 harvests left in UK
 - Artificial Intelligence and Deskillling
 - Collapse of wellbeing and the belief in progress
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Learning from the Pandemic

- First big crisis without God
 - The absence of community catharsis – mourning and celebration off the agenda
 - The price of inequality – Direct Provision; Travellers; Nursing Homes
 - The risks of concentration – a key foundation of organisational approaches in modernity
 - Failure of neo-liberalism and re-emergence of the State
 - The tension between personal responsibility and regulation
 - The outing of educational inequality
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Adult Learning and COVID

- Despite the significant effort made by providers and learners, and additional funding supports, since the onset of the pandemic, there has been a reduction in participation in adult learning by specific cohorts of society:
- A 25% reduction in certification at National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) levels 1-4
- A 24% reduction in participation in FET by Travellers and Roma
- A 15% reduction in participation by Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- A 15% reduction in participation by people over 50 years
- A 14% reduction in participation by people with disabilities

(Aontas 2021 What is Happening in Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in Ireland?)

Policy conversations

- Skill shortages –reskilling and upskilling requirements
 - Persistence of educational inequalities and intergenerational mobility patterns
 - FE/HE linkages and parity of esteem
 - Resilience and wellbeing
 - Individual learning accounts and part-time fees
 - Multiplicity of programmes and funding sources- especially for community groups
 - Apprenticeship-expansion beyond crafts
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Where to begin: A communal philosophy

- With people's concerns and dreams
 - With an eye to the limitations of schooling
 - Recognising that most discussions on education disadvantage are among the educationally advantaged
 - With relationships as the underpinning foundation of education
 - With solidarity with the learner and a commitment to social justice-and an eye on the economy
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What Doesn't Change-First Principles

The things we have to learn before we do them we
learn by doing them

(Aristotle)

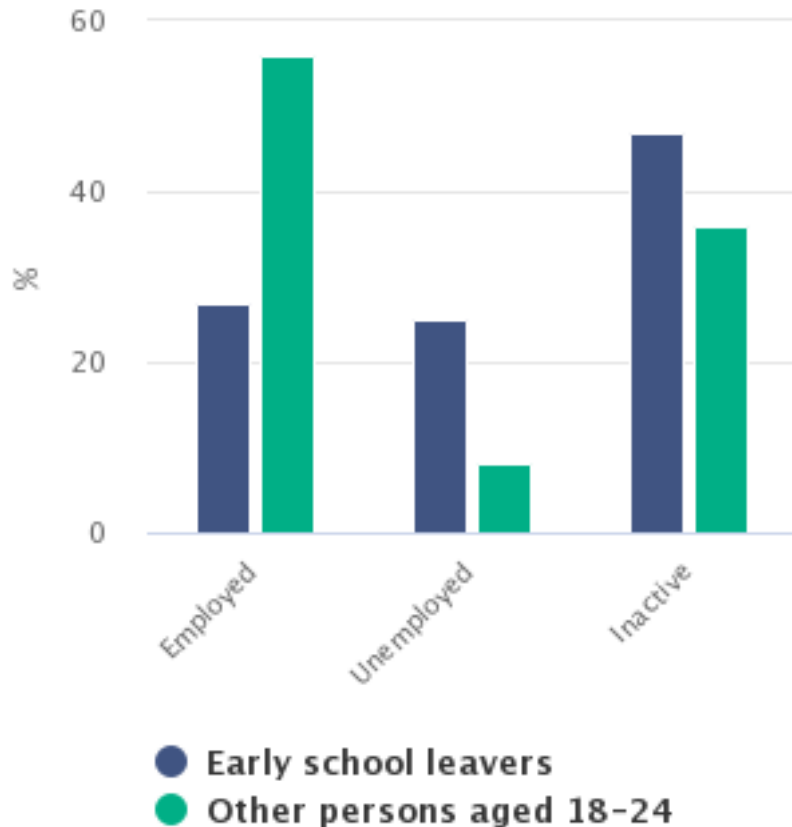
Limits of School and College

- Boredom and disaffection endemic in second level-students and staff
 - Too much expected of it-family resources still key
 - Difficult to bring about change
 - Over emphasis on cognitive knowledge
 - Teaching to the Test
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The Second Level Culture

- School a good place for most students but is...
 - Academic and Subject focused
 - Pre-occupied with two state examinations
 - Pre-occupied with third level entry
 - The perfect student is likely to progress to HE
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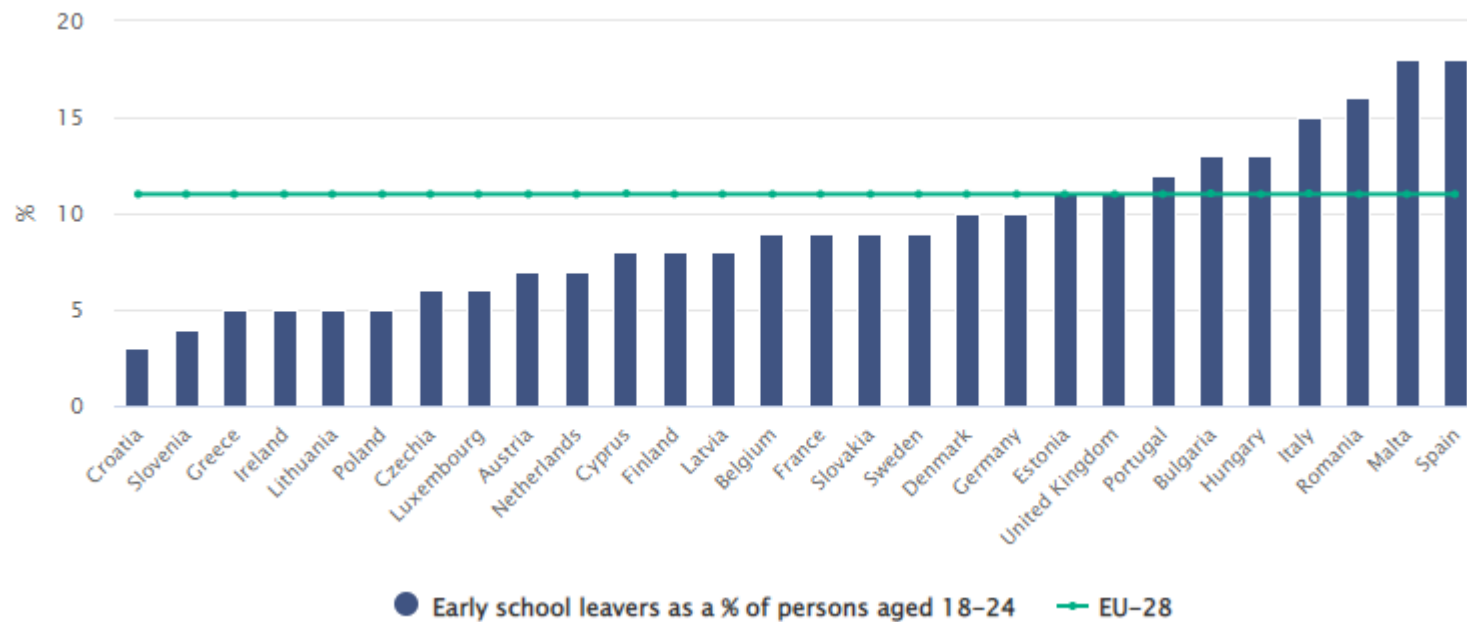
Early School Leavers – Q2 2019



Source: CSO Ireland

- Early school leavers were less likely to engage in the labour market.
- An early school leaver is three times as likely to be unemployed than another person aged 18-24 who is not an early school leaver.
- In Q2 2019, 25% of early school leavers were unemployed compared to 8% of other persons aged 18-24.
- Other persons aged 18-24 were twice as likely to be employed than early school leavers.

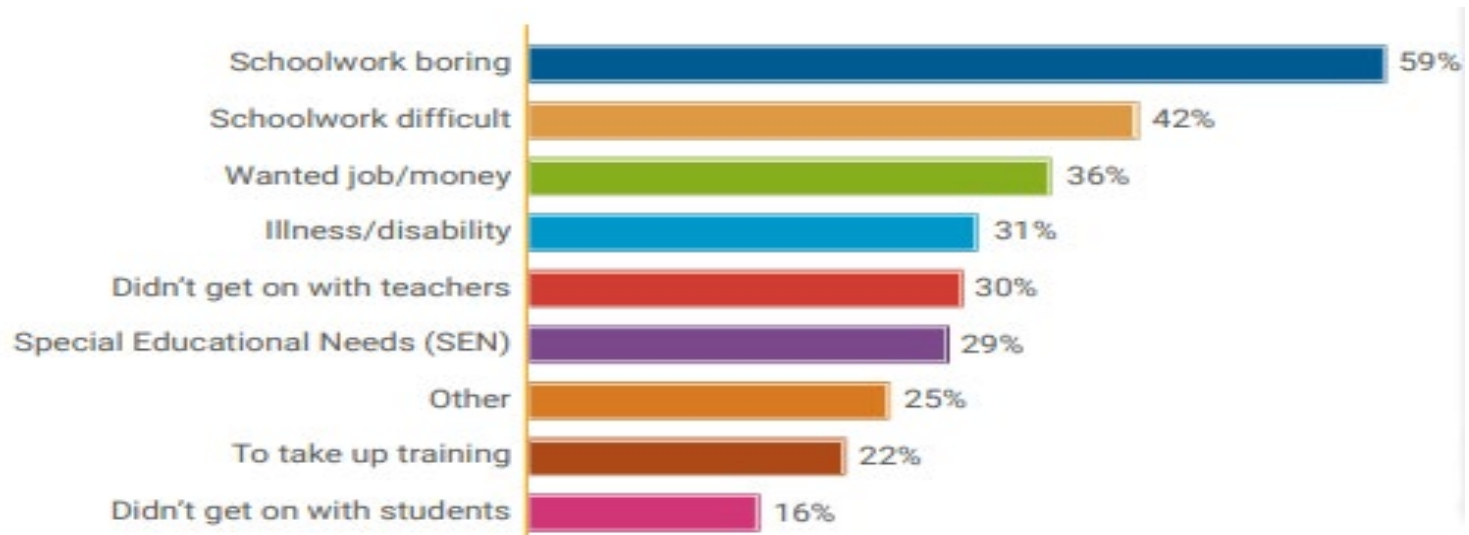
EU 28 Early School Leavers 2018



Source: Eurostat

- Ireland ranked 4th lowest with 5% Early School Leavers, compared to 11% in the EU-28 member states were classified as early school leavers.

Main Reasons for Leaving School among Early School Leavers

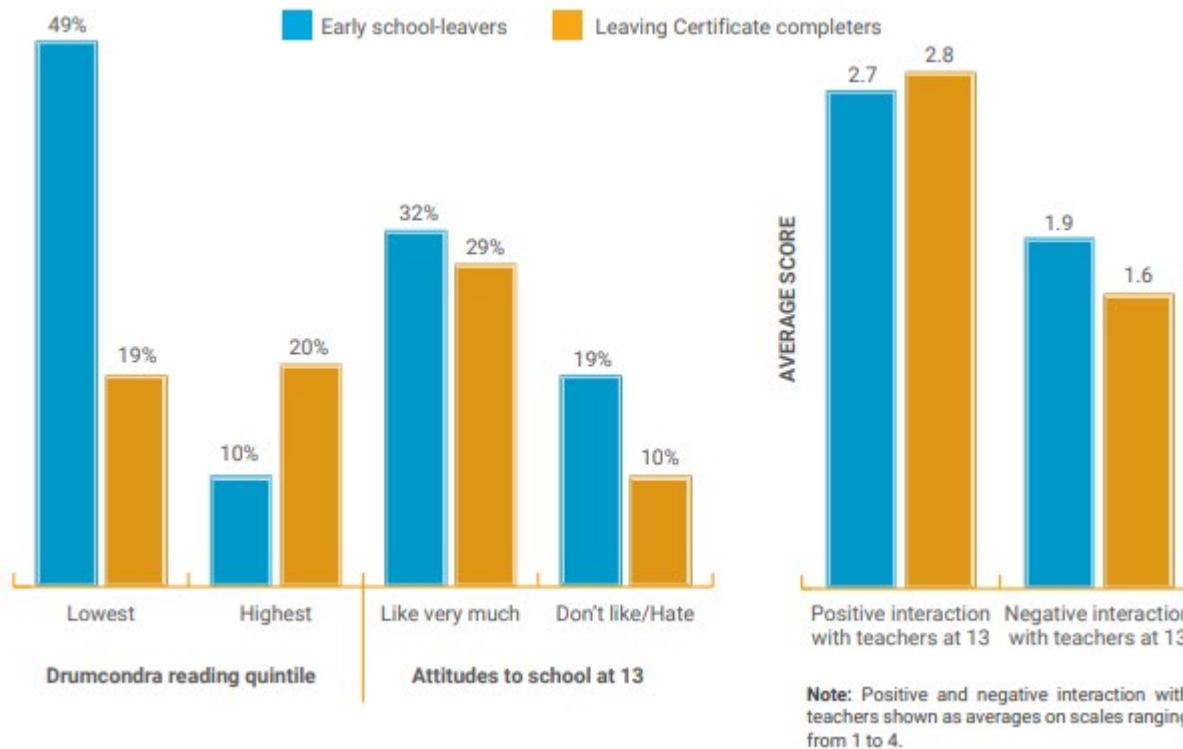


Source: Growing up in Ireland: Child Cohort November 2019

Early leaving was more common among less advantaged households:

- 11% for the lowest-skilled social classes compared with 3% for the professionals
- Many early leavers had friends or siblings who left school early; over half (57%) reported having friends who left school early and 34% had siblings who did so.

School experiences at ages 9 and 13 of 20-year-olds who were early school-leavers compared to Leaving Certificate completers



- Longitudinally, those who ultimately left school early had much lower reading scores at the age of 9; just under half (49%) had been in the lowest quintile compared with 19% of those who stayed in school
- Early leavers were also more likely to have said that they dislike or hate school at the age of 13

Source: Growing up in Ireland: Child Cohort November 2019

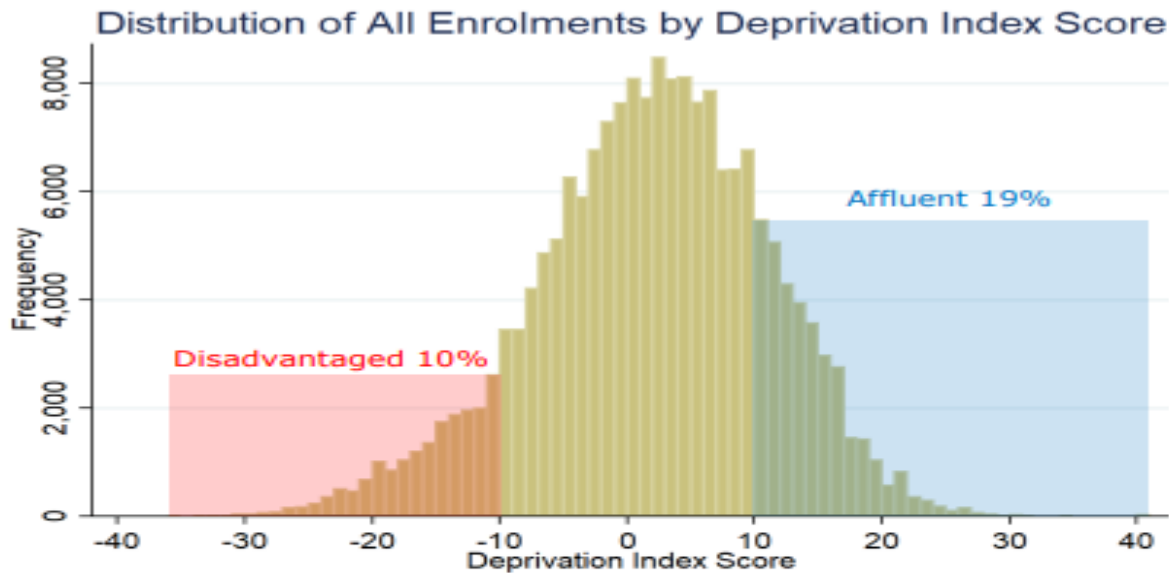
The Tyranny of Merit -Standel

- The appearance of fairness is paramount
 - The hubris of those who succeed
 - The humiliation of those who do not succeed
 - Education turns inherited status into achieved status –be it high or low
 - Meaningful access would be agnostic on prior education attainment
 - A moderate capability in Mathematics and English would underpin undergraduate survival
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Points and Social Mobility

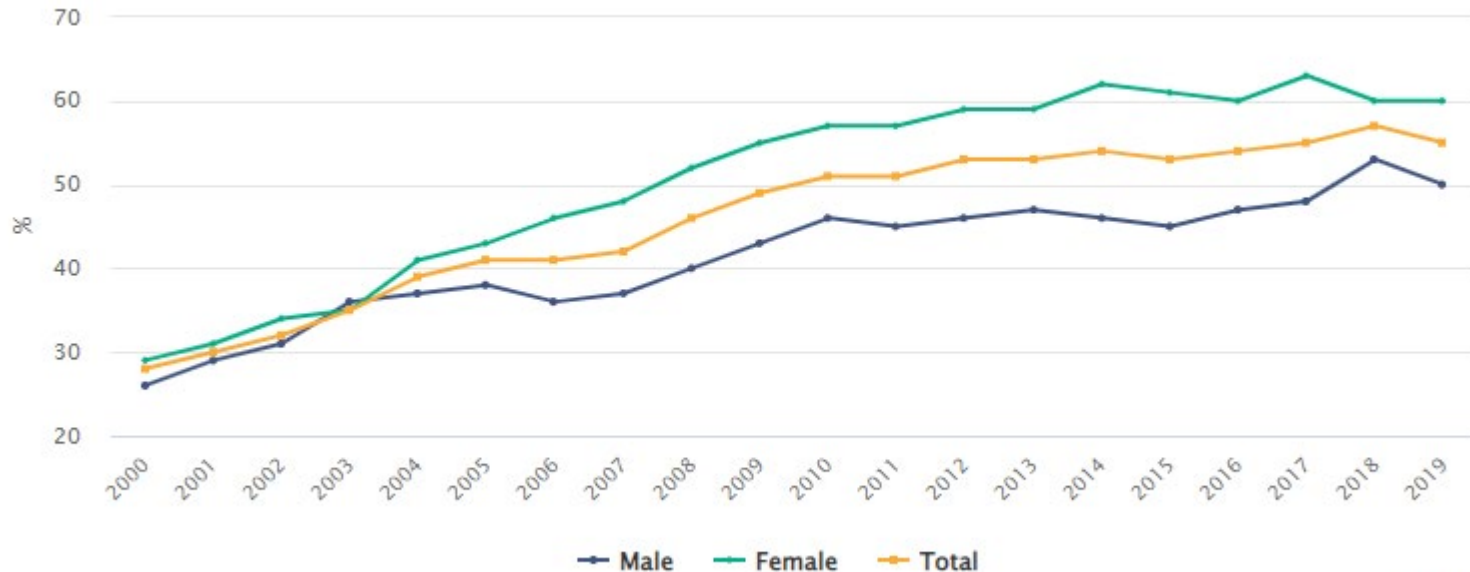
- Conflation of assessment/ certification and progression into the Leaving Cert exam is not necessary and limits reform options
 - The narrative of fairness is critical to the CAO ensuring generalised public acceptance of the distribution of opportunity to the next generation
 - Leaving cert outcomes are a proxy indicator of social class
 - The access debate will shift from getting into College to getting into –and through programmes- Medicine and Primary Teaching being very significant here
 - The persistence of problems of low educational attainment in some groups –working class boys; Travellers and Roma proving very challenging
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Socio-Economic Profile of Higher Education Institutions in Ireland – 2017-18



Score	Group
Below -30	Extremely disadvantaged
-20 to -30	Very disadvantaged
-10 to -20	Disadvantaged
0 to -10	Marginally below average
0 to 10	Marginally above average
10 to 20	Affluent
20 to 30	Very affluent
Over 30	Extremely affluent

30-34 year olds in Ireland with a third level qualification Q2 2000-Q2 2019



Source: CSO Ireland

- In Q2 2019, 55% of persons aged 30-34 years old had a third level qualification compared to 28% in Q2 2000.
- A gender gap has emerged since 2003 with more women than men with a third level qualification.

Participation in post-school education and training by stage of leaving school, senior cycle programme and Leaving Certificate Points in Quintiles



- Early school-leavers (ESL) were more likely to have taken part in other further education and training options)
- 96% of those who got the best grades/highest points in the Leaving Certificate went on to higher education
- PLC courses were more common among those who did the Leaving Certificate Applied programme or got lower points (43% and 38% respectively).

Let us assume that all learners :

- Need to connect learning to experience
 - Are autonomous and self directed
 - Are goal oriented
 - Relevancy oriented
 - Need to be shown respect- have a voice and are listened to
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And they

- Want to learn
 - Are capable of learning to the limits of their experience and environment
 - Learn by Imitation, doing, exploring, experimenting, interacting and investigating
 - Learn in being accompanied and in ritual
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Existential character for FET against this background

- Role of the Educator-remove obstacles to natural development: learning as construction rather than instruction
 - Provide opportunities for the learner to proceed to flourish and develop
 - Spontaneous Discipline-Learners, including children, will evolve order
 - First educate the senses-then the intellect
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FET Strategy

- Inclusion: Persistence of educational inequalities and under-represented groups
 - Pathways: An unimpeded routeway on a lifelong and lifewide continuum –especially transition from FE to HE
 - Integration: Better intersectoral and intrasectoral connectivity
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Pathways and toll gates

- Could FET imagine itself as an alternative , parallel routeway to educational achievement
 - A complementary HE routeway rather than a tributary
 - A practice based modality rather than a cognitive one –but with the same destination
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FET, Well Being and Resilience

- Funding decisions and allocations to the FET sector
 - the dividend of personal growth overtaken by focus on economic return, through a focus on work-readiness and up-skilling for employment?
 - Community education funding model?
 - Research undertaken by Aontas of funding streams, found nine government departments and 51 funding streams funded 76 respondent community education organisations that participated in the research
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Resilience, well being and the Guidance Debate

- The careers/wellbeing tension
 - If about well being is one-to-one work desirable or practicable
 - The second level focus on the CAO
 - Freeing guidance from schooling –self discovery; peer learning; learning as a co-operative undertaking; learning as a holistic endeavour
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SOLAS Strategy – Skills for Life

- “FET must be cognisant of the broader purpose of learning, which goes beyond meeting the skills needs of the economy. FET also facilitates personal development, vibrant and integrated communities, and a commitment to social justice that defines Ireland today. This must continue to remain a core part of its fabric”. (p 32)
 - “FET balances the needs of skills for work with the just as critical skills for life through provision that supports citizenship and prosperity across communities and develops social capital. FET ensures that supports are available to allow any individual, regardless of background or formal education level, an opportunity to learn and develop” (p45).
 - FET must ensure it has robust and consistent support mechanisms in place to help Level 1-3 FET learners transition through FET, drawing on national and international good practice. It is also important that all FET staff and all learners have an understanding of mental health and wellbeing, and this will be embedded within professional development for the former and within the FET curriculum for the latter” (p.47)
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Well Being, Resilience, Mental Health – Skills for LIFE

- The Central Statistics Office produced an initial examination at Irish wellbeing in 2018 - The Wellbeing of the Nation 2017
 - Resilience appears in the mission statement of the Department
 - The 2021 Programme for Government includes a commitment to develop new measures of wellbeing instruments including wellbeing indices and a balanced scorecard for different areas of public policy
 - DPER-Wellbeing ‘could become an entrenched consideration at all levels of public decision making’(2021)
 - Limitations of economic statistics alone to accurately reflect the wellbeing of a population
 - macroeconomic metrics fail to account *inter alia* for distributional outcomes, for the preservation of the environment and our natural resources, and for more subjective outcomes such as a population’s life satisfaction.
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A quality FET SYSTEM-Compelling vision

- Democratic
 - Engaged
 - Inclusive
 - Ecological
 - Creative
 - Relevant
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