

ANALYSIS OF IMPLEMENTATION STRANDS

Introduction

This paper presents the main areas of the White Paper which call for implementation. The Policy and Strategy Working Group (P&SWG) might wish to discuss, at this early stage and without commitment, the likely issues that will need to be addressed in each, and identify any strands which are of particular priority. Such a discussion will help to inform the working groups who will develop proposals for implementation for the P&SWG.

Assumptions

The MoES envisages producing a report on implementation of the White Paper in the autumn of this year. It is to be expected that this report will:

- contain further details of plans for the main strands of the White Paper, particularly in those areas where the White Paper was less specific about the actions needed;
- clarify which ministries, departments or agencies will be responsible for which actions;
- indicate the likely timescale for the production of the policies, guidelines, plans that will be involved.

Though it may not be detailed in the implementation report, the government will need to be clear about the likely financial resources necessary for each action and for the implementation plan as a whole.

The White Paper was wide-ranging and a statement of long-term policy. In taking it forward into implementation it will be quite reasonable to take the view that some items will need to be prioritized over others. The White Paper itself was clear that some areas would be gradually implemented over time, while others needed specific initiatives to get them started.

Does the P&SWG agree these assumptions?

Strands

The following are the main strands relevant to implementation in the White Paper, with some comments on each. They are replicated in roughly the same order as in the White Paper, though some have been brought together.

- The White Paper calls for modernized VET curricula, incorporating some specialized and some broad profiles based on occupational standards with the inclusion of key competences. It is clear that the process of revising existing profiles and developing new ones will be a continuous one, and should not await the revision of the *nomenclature*. The implementation plan, however, should:
 - state the mechanism whereby the social partners will identify the priorities for the modernization of individual profiles, in the light of resources available for this activity;
 - identify the extent to which there are to be common features shared by all profiles, and which organization is to determine these;
 - identify which organization, or organizations, are to initiate and lead the revision of profiles;
 - identify what procedures are to be followed in the approval of profiles once developed.
- The White Paper proposed a National Qualifications Framework which will give clarity of recognition for VET qualifications whether gained through the school system or adult training. The implementation plan might:

- specify the body (whether new or existing) which will be responsible for maintenance of the framework;
 - indicate the timescale for the production of the levels and essential quality criteria that will be necessary for the framework;
 - specify the proposed coverage of the framework (all VET programmes, only those outside higher education, inclusion of artistic activities *etc.*)
- The White Paper includes a short passage on adult education, and is not specific about actions beyond calling for 'joint actions by the key stakeholders' to increase the participation of the adult population in education, training and learning. The implementation plan should expand on this, if possible. Alternatively it might set a target for the publication of a more specific set of policies for adult education.
 - The White Paper makes a series of proposals for vocational secondary schools, including rationalization of the school network, widening the enrolment policy to include adults, short courses and combinations of general and vocational education, co-operation with employers and between schools to share modern equipment, and the development of more realistic vocational practice. There are a wide range of actions implied in this section, and it is likely that priorities will need to be selected for the immediate future, but the implementation plan could for example:
 - report progress on proposals for school rationalization (on which work is under way);
 - give timescales for the statement of enrolment policy and for the regulations on co-operation that are proposed;
 - state the expectations for municipalities in upgrading equipment;
 - announce arrangements for the pilot experiments in expanding work practice that the White Paper proposed.
 - On teacher training the White Paper calls for a revised syllabus for initial teacher training and for the introduction of a system of in-service training for existing teachers. The implementation plan might:
 - identify which organization is to revise the syllabus for initial training, together with consultation arrangements, timescale and piloting;
 - specify an indicative budget for in-service training, identify responsibility for expenditure of this budget (the White Paper implies that this will be decentralized) and responsibility for deciding which teachers should benefit.
 - The White Paper emphasizes the need for quality assurance of VET to ensure that individual schools are improving. It proposes school level self-evaluation, combined with national quantitative analysis. It is clear that these developments are dependant on the selection and production of reliable indicators on a comparative basis which will take some time. However the implementation plan might:
 - announce a consultation on the main statistical indicators to be used (*e.g.* drop-out, progression rates, examination results *etc.*)
 - nominate responsibility for the development of models of self-evaluation together with piloting arrangements.
 - The White Paper contains a passage is clear that the topic of assessment and examinations is one for gradual rather than radical reform. It does not propose any particular changes to existing arrangements, but says that examinations should evolve with the development of

individual curricula. It is unlikely therefore that this topic will feature prominently in the implementation plan. Associated certification arrangements will be dealt with by the work on a national qualifications framework.

- The White Paper promises a 'specific strategic document on Career Guidance and Counselling. If not produced by the time of the implementation plan, there should be an indicative timescale for its production.
- Much of the White Paper's statements on social partnership can be best covered by integrating social partnership arrangements into the themes mentioned earlier (e.g. arrangements for the development of VET curricula). However the White Paper proposes a new organization in a 'National Policy Body for VET'. The implementation plan should update ideas on this, and clarify the relationships between it, the National Socio-Economic Council, the ISOR committees and the VET Centre of the Institute for Educational Improvement.
- the White Paper makes particular and detailed proposals for the financing of VET, involving a mixture of input-based (student load), output-based (incentives for success) and co-financing. The White Paper advocates 'careful piloting' of this model. The implementation plan should at the least state what the current thinking is on this model, and indicate the timescale for any piloting.

As can be seen, this is a long list. No doubt it will be refined. But at this stage it would help if the P&SWG indicated:

- any areas which have been overtaken by developments since the White Paper;
- any areas which are unlikely to be sufficiently developed to include in a statement in the autumn;
- any areas of particular priority.