

Why invest in community education?

In the current economic climate it is imperative that adults, particularly those most marginalized, are able to obtain appropriate, accessible and professional community education opportunities that meet their personal, social, civic and economic needs. Community education is an effective, value-for-money education service that has many other beneficial outcomes for the learner in terms of: health benefits, social inclusion, active citizenship, personal development in addition to upskilling.

How is it funded?

Community education is funded through various streams which makes planning and delivering courses difficult and unsustainable. The funding is also inadequate.

In 2007, €10.4 million yearly = 0.1% of total education budget. There are approximately 300,000 adult learners in Ireland of which 10% are participating in community education but only receiving 5.7% of the adult and further education budget.

The Community Education Network call for...

A distinct multi-annual funding stream that is accessible for independent community education providers in a flexible manner.

The Community Education Network

The Community Education Network is a platform for community education groups within the AONTAS membership and it serves as a space for promoting community education and as a political platform for shaping policy. It is the only Network at national level dedicated to community education, with over 60 organisations and local networks it is dynamic and proactive space.

Who can join the Community Education Network?

Any local, self-managed, independent community education organisation that is committed to raising the profile of, and lobbying for, a community education sector that is committed to social change.

Mission Statement

To achieve a greater public understanding of the value of community education and have it recognised as a distinctly funded sector of the Irish Education system.

Join the Network Today

For more information or to join please contact Niamh O'Reilly or Jenny Gunning on 014068220 noreilly@aontas.com or jgunning@aontas.com

For More Information Visit:

www.aontas.com/commed/network.html

AONTAS (National Adult Learning Organisation)
2nd Floor, 83-87 Main Street, Ranelagh, D6
Ph: 01 4068220/1 Fax: 01 4068227
www.aontas.com



AONTAS Community Education Network

What is Community Education?

Community education is a process of **personal and community transformation, empowerment, challenge, social change and collective responsiveness**. It is **community-led** reflecting and valuing the lived experiences of individuals and their community. Through its ethos and **holistic** approach community education builds the capacity of groups to engage in developing a social teaching and learning process that is **creative, participative and needs-based**. Community education is grounded on principles of **justice, equality and inclusiveness**. It differs from general adult education provision due to its **political and radical methodologies**.

What does this mean for learners and their communities?

Community education enables participants to emerge with more than just new personal skills and knowledge; it leads to an increased ability to act as part of a united community for improved social justice.

It provides learning opportunities that address the needs of the community and the individual whilst ensuring that the learners' experiences are recognised, valued and used as part of the learning process.

The wellbeing of the participants and their community is nurtured during the learning process. This process also ensures that the tutor and participant are on an equal level as the learner identifies the knowledge which would be useful to them and the tutor responds by creating a collaborative, creative learning experience that facilitates and supports learner involvement.

The values of community education are put into practice by the group and are promoted locally and nationally: justice, equality and inclusiveness.

Community education supports the empowerment of people to identify action that is needed regarding their issues and also to understand why such collective action should be taken. It also supports the challenging of the existing social and economic structures.

Reflections from Community Education Participants

"It was a chance to meet new friends and learn from other members of my community"

"I have never felt such a sense of achievement and I'll never forget the support of the group"

"My personal satisfaction with engaging in education and thinking led me to gain employment in my local community"

"Now I am more confident, it has opened up a new world to me... Thanks to my involvement in community education I am having the time of my life."

Case Study: An Cosán

An Cosán is a community education centre in Jobstown Tallaght. The centre was established on the basis of the belief that education is the fast track out of poverty. An Cosán (the path) is so called because it offers local people a path to learning and leadership. The centre provides adult community education and early childhood education and care and social enterprise to an area of Dublin that is severely disadvantaged by poverty and high levels of unemployment.

The courses delivered within the centre are designed to address educational needs identified by the community. While all of the courses from basic education to their HETAC degrees support the personal and professional development of students this is allied with education and action for social change. An Cosáns' vision is for a community committed to a radical form of education, teaching and learning together how to re-order our society and economy so that we can shape our ways of being human together.

