An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta
Department of Education and Science

Green Paper:

Adult Education in an Era of Learning

November 1998

© Government of Ireland

Contents

Contents

This Green Paper marks the start of a wide-ranging consultation process and debate on the future of adult education in Ireland. It sets out the role of adult education as a vital component in a continuum of lifelong learning, and outlines the contribution the sector can make to promoting economic competitiveness and employment, addressing inter-generational poverty and disadvantage, supporting community advancement and helping to meet the challenges of change.

The Paper maps the development of adult education in Ireland to date, and proposes a framework and agenda for change and development as we enter the new millennium. Our education system must continue to evolve in order to maintain quality, relevance and responsiveness in a changing world.

Research throughout the world has demonstrated the central influence of education on life chances, and increasingly in recent years there is a realisation that education must be lifelong if we are to have an inclusive and democratic society which can adapt successfully to meet new challenges.

Lifelong learning marks a critical departure from the traditional understanding of the role of education in society. Providing learning opportunities over a life-span rather than only in the early years, widening recognition to embrace new forms of learning, recognising that learning takes places in a range of settings wider than schools and colleges, encouraging greater links with industry, and between the formal and informal sectors, and developing more flexible forms of provision are all key elements of the concept. Above all, it means ensuring that quality services are accessible and responsive to the needs of young and adult alike, and that education policy and practice is designed to meet the diverse range of needs this entails.

This Paper reflects the Government's commitment to promoting a framework for lifelong learning in Ireland.

Mícheál Martin

Foreword

This is the first Green Paper on Adult Education in the history of the State. As such it marks the Government's commitment to a sector which has received inadequate attention up to this point.

All of us recognise the scale and the rapidity of change. In such a context the best possible contribution of initial education is to teach the person how to learn through life. As Ireland faces the challenge of addressing persisting unemployment and disadvantage within a climate of rapid growth, job creation and an increasing concern with meeting labour shortages, the task of re-skilling and upskilling the workforce becomes an imperative, within the framework of a national lifelong learning agenda.

The Green Paper sets an agenda for a strategic and comprehensive approach to opening up this new sector. It suggests that this approach should be guided by an overall national commitment to lifelong learning. It makes its case on the contribution which education can make to tackling poverty and exclusion; to dealing with the increasing problem of skill shortages and skill obsolescence and to enhancing the quality of intellectual, social and cultural life of the individual and of the society at large.

For many years now, Government policy and procedures in Ireland have focused on developing the education provision for young people. The country is now reaping the rewards of this investment through its young, educated workforce. As the number of young people in full-time education drops in the coming years, it is important that the adult population, many of whom were not only denied educational opportunities in their youth but have themselves, through their sacrifices, made a major contribution to the education of the current young generation, should now also become a focal point for attention and investment. Additionally, the demands of the economy will require that the task of renewing the labour force will rely increasingly on those already within it rather than on new entrants to it.

Adult Education, however, will always be concerned with issues of personal and social enrichment, with improving the democratic process in society and with tackling issues of equity and inclusion as well as with economic considerations. This Green Paper draws attention to the increasingly necessary contribution which Adult Education can make in these areas also.

We are at the beginning of a new and exciting epoch in developing the Adult Education sector in Ireland. This Green Paper marks the beginning of this process. It will be used as a basis for discussion and consultation with a wide range of interests to enable the Government to define its priorities and to plan the development of the sector in a forthcoming White Paper.

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

This is the first Green Paper on Adult Education since the foundation of the State. The purpose of the Green Paper is to provide the consultative backdrop to the publication of a White Paper on Adult Education.

AIMS

The Paper aims to:

(i)   promote awareness and debate on the key role of Adult Education in meeting the challenges which confront this society as we enter the new millennium;

(ii) place Adult Education within the context of overall educational developments in Ireland and the EU and the changing economic, social and cultural environment;

(iii) outline current provision and participation and identify the main gaps or weaknesses in provision;

(iv) set out a basis for a National Policy on Adult Education and propose a series of priority actions in the field;

(v)   propose mechanisms for the co-ordination and mainstreaming of the sector, as a key component within an inclusive education system which promotes access, participation and benefit for all on a lifelong basis.

LIFELONG LEARNING

The Paper proposes an approach which recognises Adult Education

(1)   as a component of an overall lifelong education system with a fundamental objective of promoting the well-being of all citizens;

(2)   as a key contributor to social and economic cohesion through:

(i)   second chance education and training opportunities

and

(ii) addressing skill needs of adults in a range of disciplines, particularly in the areas of literacy, communications and Information Technology

and

     (iii) provision of reflective learning opportunities for particular disadvantaged sectors of the population, such as women, long-term unemployed, people with disabilities;

    (3) as a participative and empowering process which strengthens the democratic system.

This Paper recommends a balanced approach to Adult Education, incorporating economic considerations within a broader spectrum of issues, including personal, social, cultural and environmental concerns. Nonetheless, it is crucially important that, in an era of rapid economic growth and job creation, education and skill deficiencies must not pose a barrier to any person in accessing a livelihood.

CONTEXT

The Paper draws attention to issues of social exclusion, particularly in the context of generalised growth, to the need to address barriers to employment arising from inadequate education or skills, to the need to enhance the competitiveness of the workforce, to the changing nature of community as it moves increasingly towards participatory inclusive processes, to the challenges of globalisation, to the need for approaches that are informed by principles of sustainability and to the risks and the potential associated with information technology in the emergence of a knowledge based society.

EVOLUTION

With regard to the development of Adult Education in Ireland, the Paper identifies 3 distinct phases since the foundation of the State -- the period up to 1969, 1969-1988 and the post 1989 period. This latter period was marked by an increasing momentum in Adult Education with the introduction of the Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme (VTOS) and the subsequent establishment of local development programmes and the area partnerships, with significant EU Structural Fund support. The Paper also explores the role of two reasonably discrete sectors throughout this period -- the statutory governmental sector and the voluntary/community sector.

CONTRIBUTION

In making a case for Adult Education, the Paper draws particular attention to the role which it can play in addressing the economic and social needs of the society through enhancing the education and qualification base of Irish adults. The Paper shows that Ireland has lower levels of education and qualification amongst its adult population as compared with most other OECD countries, and lower levels of investment and participation in adult and second chance education.

The most urgent Adult Education task is that of confronting the literacy problem in Ireland. The Green Paper proposes a National Adult Literacy Programme targeted at redressing the major literacy problem as identified in the recent *International Adult Literacy Survey (OECD, 1997)*. In that context, any references to literacy should be interpreted as covering numeracy skills also. This is in keeping with the approach adopted in the IALS survey, and with the scope of existing services.

Recognising that upper second-level education is increasingly a pre-requisite for career and educational progression, it is proposed to introduce a national Back to Education Initiative aimed at widening the opportunities for adults to complete second level education.

The Green Paper supports the TEASTAS proposal for the establishment of a National Qualifications Framework, combined with more flexible forms of assessment.

It is recommended that, at third level, Universities and Institutes of Technology should introduce a system of mature student quotas in as many faculties as feasible and that they should be supported in doing so by funding to support the additional costs of outreach, access, guidance, and networking services.

A commitment to the ongoing development of Distance Education and Open Learning Opportunities is an essential component of a comprehensive Adult Education provision. While the universities and other third level institutions would be the main instruments of such a programme the Public Libraries, which have played such a notable and innovative role in outreach education over the years, have a major continuing contribution to make here also.

As provision increases and choice widens, the need for a comprehensive National Adult Guidance and Counselling Service is stressed.

Recognising the importance of a job to a person's livelihood, personal well-being and social inclusion, it is proposed to target directly the unemployed, particularly the older long-term unemployed, by:

–   a major initiative to improve the flexibility and responsiveness of the education system through the expansion of part-time further education options on VTOS, Youthreach and PLC courses, with a rolling year-round in take a move away from the dominance of full-time programmes with a once yearly intake in September only is vital if the education system is to play its part in responding to the needs of adults;

–   extending the training and education currently available to the unemployed to women in the home and others wishing to re-enter the workforce;

Regarding the task of upskilling the workforce, the Paper

- recognises the central importance attached to this issue by the Social Partners;

- recommends that the feasibility be explored of putting in place a programme of paid educational leave in association with employers and trade unions;

- recommends the continued promotion of active interaction between the workplace and institutions of further and third level eduction so as to create more flexible routeways between the world of work and education;

- recommends increased flexibility of the education and training system, to provide opportunities to address the skill needs of those at work, particularly in the indigenous Small and Medium Enterprise (S.M.E.) sector, through the establishment of customised education and training programmes and materials.

The Paper recognises the contribution of Adult Education to enriching the lives of the participants and society at large in the pursuit of a wide variety of educational interests for their own intrinsic appeal and in promoting an equitable and sustainable society. The Paper acknowledges the major role which the VECs, and more recently the Community and Comprehensive Schools, have played in this area.

The Paper also recognises the major contribution of the voluntary and community sector in mobilising resources for local economic development, as for instance in the Area Based Partnerships and in the LEADER companies, and in its capacity to mobilise and engage the most excluded groups. In particular, community-based women's education groups have played a major role in this area.

The task of resourcing the Community Education sector in a way which promotes rather than limits its innovation, and maintains its learner friendly quality is the essential dilemma here. Generally, the Community Education sector requires:

- resources of personnel and finance to enable it to continue and develop its mobilisation and education role, especially in disadvantaged communities;

- recognition of the importance of its role in disadvantaged communities;

- recognition by the formal sector through more flexible access and progression possibilities;

–   representation in the structures of adult and community education planning and decision-making;

–   support to the formal sector to increase access to adult learners and to adapt its programmes, administrative systems and buildings to meet the needs of adult learners;

–   a focus on the elimination of barriers between the "formal" and the "non formal" system;

–   a policy of positive discrimination in engaging with particular groups to support their access, participation and benefit from adult education opportunities and enabling them to overcome barriers of gender, ethnicity, class, age or disability;

–   a specific recognition of the importance of non-vocational, artistic and cultural programmes of daytime and night class Adult Education provision as part of the Back to Education initiative.

A commitment to lifelong learning is predicated on the assumption that a comprehensive and developmental programme of childcare and education is put in place. In this regard, the Green Paper notes the establishment of the Early Childhood Forum by the Department of Education and Science and the initiatives of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in this area.

QUALITY, STANDARDS AND PROGRESSION

The Paper supports the case for a National Qualifications Framework which would provide a vehicle for the accreditation of adult learning, for educational progression and qualification enhancement. It makes the case for an outcomes- based approach to assessment on the basis that such an approach can validate learning regardless of the course, programme or context in which this learning was gained.

TUTOR-TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

The Paper makes the case for a recognition of the role of the adult educator/ trainer as a professional, and for the development of a variety of systematic training routes through which the quality and professionalism of the sector can be recognised and supported. This should be an open and inclusive approach which facilitates the diversity of provision and engages tutors who lack formal qualifications, but who have a great deal of talent and commitment to contribute. Mechanisms for the accreditation of prior learning and work-based experience would be a key requirement in this process.

STRUCTURES

This Green Paper heralds a new era in Adult Education in Ireland and comes at a time when multi-agency co-operation and integrated area-based approaches to the provision of services are critically important. It is necessary to devise structures which can carry the challenge of this new era, which will facilitate the diversity of providers and participants in an inclusive and dynamic partnership which can celebrate the innovation and commitment of the sector.

At national level, the establishment of an Executive Agency is proposed the National Adult Learning Council- to promote co-ordination, liaison, policy development and staff development within the sector. This Council would be established by the Minister for Education and Science in consultation with the Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment, and include a wide range of representatives from the many stakeholders in Adult Education and training in the country.

At local level, the establishment is proposed of Local Adult Learning Boards to co ordinate and support the planning and provision of Adult Education within their respective hinterlands. The Paper does not propose specific mechanisms for the implementation of this proposal, but articulates the principles which should underpin the approach. How this should be achieved within the emerging developments in regard to local services reforms generally will be a key focal point for debate in the consultation process which will follow the publication of the Green Paper.

Introduction

The case for concerted investment and development of a long-term national policy on Adult Education in Ireland is based on:

1.   Addressing poverty and disadvantage.

National policies to target the persistence of disadvantage, and continuing high levels of poverty in both urban and rural Ireland, recognise the inter-relationship between educational performance and subsequent life chances both for the participants concerned and their children. Education plays a central role in intervening in this cycle in the context of a continuum of provision from childhood through to adulthood;

2.   Promoting equality, competitiveness and employment.

2.1   The recently published OECD International Adult Literacy Survey highlights the comparatively low literacy level amongst Irish adults, along with their comparatively low rate of participation in adult and continuing training. In addition, low levels of educational achievement of the unemployed, and of Irish adults over 25, are a cause for concern;

2.2   A persisting problem of unemployment, even in a context of labour shortages, suggests serious mismatch between the available skill pool and the demand;

2.3   Changing demographic trends will reduce the flow of highly qualified young entrants into the labour market, making it an imperative to invest heavily in upgrading the skills of older adults, particularly the unemployed and those returning to the workforce;

2.4   Increasing international investment in Adult Education, compared to the low level of investment in Ireland, will enhance the competitive advantage of those countries visa-vis Ireland;

3.   Supporting community advancement.

3.1.   There is a growing recognition of the importance of community and the need to provide a mechanism for public participation in decision making. This is a key element of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and the Strategic Management Initiative reforms in the public sector;

3.2 Growing concern is also evident centred on the importance of personal and social well-being, environmental issues and sustainability, and the key role which education can play in the cultural, artistic, social and economic lives both of individuals and their communities;

4.   Meeting the challenges of change.

The process of globalisation and increasingly rapid technological change creates an economic imperative to continually upgrade skills if competitiveness is to be maintained.

Adult Education is not synonymous with lifelong learning, but is a key component within an overarching system of education and training which addresses needs from childhood through to and throughout adulthood.

Chapter 1 in this Paper sets out the key issues which make concerted investment in adult education an imperative, and outlines some of the main themes which contribute to shaping an approach to policy development in this area.

A historical overview of the evolution of adult education in Ireland is set out in Chapter 2. The Paper attempts to profile existing provision in Chapter 3, and this is followed with a range of recommendations as to how major weaknesses might be addressed. The key transformational role of community education as an agent of change is set out in Chapter 4, and issues relating to certification, tutor training and the structures which might underpin future developments are set out in subsequent chapters.

As we enter the new millennium and the existing round of EU Structural Funds draws to a close, and as issues of marginalisation, poverty and unemployment fall to be dealt with against a changing backdrop of growth and prosperity for many, it is timely that the overall approach to the development of adult education in Ireland should be reviewed. This Paper attempts to take stock of the achievements and trends to date, and to set out a framework for the future development of the system against the background of a rapidly changing and evolving society.

It is intended that the Paper will be a focal point for a wide-ranging debate, and its publication will be followed by extensive consultations with key interests -- education and training professionals, students, community representatives, industry and all those who have a commitment to the promotion of a quality, accessible, relevant and responsive education system.

Green Paper – Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning

Chapter 1

Adult Education within a Changing Society:

A Rationale

CHAPTER 1
Adult Education within a Changing Society: A Rationale

1.   The State's role in education arises as part of its overall concern to achieve economic prosperity, social well-being and a good quality of life within a democratically structured society. Education can play a key role in the promotion of equality of opportunity or in the perpetuation of poverty. Educational qualifications, or the lack of them, determine to a large extent the life chances of people. The likelihood of obtaining educational qualifications has been found to be closely associated with social background, to the extent that it is the children of the poor who constitute a majority of those who do not benefit from the education system.

More than ever, underachievement at school begets social difficulties which can lead to a life of uncertainty, marginalisation, and dependence on the structures of social assistance. Lack of qualifications can combine with unemployment, dependence on social welfare, accommodation difficulties and health problems, and create a situation where various types of disadvantage become mutually reinforcing.

However, the rationale for investment in adult and community education is not based entirely on economic considerations and issues of disadvantage, but also on the role of learning in creating a more democratic and civilised society by promoting culture, identity and well-being and by strengthening individuals, families and communities.

1.2 Definition

For the purpose of this Paper, the definition used is that in the *Report of the Kenny Commission on Adult Education (1984)* Lifelong Learning:

> *"Adult Education includes all systematic learning by adults which contributes to their development as individuals and as members of the community and of society, apart from full-time instruction received by persons as part of their uninterrupted initial education and training. It may be formal education which takes place in institutions e.g training centres, schools, colleges, institutes and universities, or non-formal education which is any other systematic form of learning including self-directed learning. "*
> (1984, p9)

The definition embraces

- provision for adults in the further education sector e.g mature students on PLC courses, in VTOS and Senior Traveller Training Centres, in

literacy/numeracy, adult and community education programmes (further education being that which occurs between second level and third level);

- continuing education and training for adults (i.e. professional or vocational development regardless of the level);

- post-initial education and training for adults;

- other systematic and deliberate learning undertaken by adults in a wide variety of settings and contexts both formal and non-formal.

As such, Adult Education is not synonymous with lifelong learning, but is a key component within an overarching system of education and training which addresses needs from childhood through to and throughout adulthood. Neither is it confined to formal study, but can take place in a variety of settings -- going on a training course, taking an evening class, in the workplace, in youth groups, community associations, sports clubs, reading, television, on the Internet or through other distance learning systems.

1.3 This Chapter sets out the key issues which make concerted investment in adult education an imperative, and outlines some of the main themes which contribute to shaping an approach to policy development in this area.

1.4 Key Concepts Underpinning an Approach to Adult Education

1.4.1 International investment

The European Commission's White Paper on Education and Training, *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society*, identifies what it terms "three factors of upheaval" as particularly apparent in modern European society. These are:

> *the internationalisation of trade, the dawning of the information society and the relentless march of Science and Technology.*
> (1995, p.5)

These changes account for the ever growing emphasis internationally, within all sectors of education, on providing the skills needed to ensure employability and the capacity to adapt to the rapid and continuous change, and its social, cultural and economic impact.

A further and equally significant task facing Adult Education is to ensure that all members of the population can access opportunities to enhance their quality of life.

Adult Education embraces a wide range of pursuits, including those concerned with leisure, self-development and cultural enhancement, and involving all sectors of society. From the point of view of State policy, however, the priorities must be for Government to support the sector in enhancing economic growth and competitiveness and extending the benefits of social and economic development to disadvantaged people and groups.

Ireland's concerns in the area of Adult Education are also reflected in those of its European partners. The following recurrent themes have been identified in respect of European Adult Education:

- education has a most important role to play in economic development;

- a recognition that economic development can result in de-skilling, and there is a need for re-training, for learning new skills in order to maintain or regain employment/advancement;

- an emerging concept of lifelong education, albeit in a context of a persisting divide between school education and education for the remainder of the population;

- a generalised concern with providing adult basic education in almost every European country, in some places being equated with Adult Education.
  (Jarvis, 1995)

1.4.2 Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning has become an issue of major international significance, as is evidenced by a communique issued by the OECD Ministers for Education (1996) and by the major *OECD Report Lifelong Learning for All (1996).* The European Commission, particularly through the initiative of the Irish Presidency, adopted a Strategy for Lifelong Learning in 1996. This Green Paper is most timely in this context in analysing how a new policy on Adult Education can become part of a national programme of lifelong learning in Ireland. In recent months a number of Governments, for instance, the Dutch, Finish and British Governments have individually published Government Papers, all supporting the concept of lifelong learning.

Three fundamental attributes of lifelong learning have been identified (Rubenson, 1998). These are:

- lifelong

- lifewide

- motivation

Lifelong:

First, in lifelong learning, people continue a process of further learning and self-education throughout their lives. A concern with lifelong learning involves a concentration not only on post-compulsory education but also, and crucially, on the school experience. The need for a seamless interface between different levels of the education system, and for a focus on the transitions points within the system and between it and work, also emerge as important.

Lifewide:

Second, the notion of lifewide learning recognises the multiplicity of learning influences and sites outside the formal education system. An increasing engagement in non-formal education activities (both in the sense that they happen outside the formal system and that they happen in an informal way) poses challenges of providing accessible and flexible modes of accreditation and certification which maintain quality standards. The range and diversity of learning sites and providers can make also make co-ordination and integrated support difficult.

Motivation:

The third attribute concerns the motivation to learn and the capacity to do so. This raises questions of the quality of the school experience and also of the overall quality of the individual's environment and daily lived experience. At every level of the system, it is vital that learning opportunities offered are relevant to the cultural and community context and values of participants, and reflect their needs and interests. Issues of timing, access, environment, teaching methods and the quality of tutor : student relationship are an intrinsic part of this process.

Shifting the Adult Education debate into a lifelong learning framework raises issues of the relationship between the different levels of education, the transitions between these levels and the ease of transfer between work and education. As stated above, a concern with learning through the life cycle also raises questions concerning the quality of the school experience in learning how to learn, as well as raising the issue of increased expenditure on education through the lifecycle.

1.4.3 Adult Education and Participatory Democracy

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy recognises that poverty is not just a matter of the unequal distribution of wealth. Those who are economically poor tend also to be excluded from those decision-making fora which impact upon their lives in a multiplicity of ways. This tends to manifest itself in isolation from services, structures and planning processes, in having one's needs overlooked within a broader development agenda, and in exclusion from the overall prosperity of the local community or of the nation. Work with excluded groups towards building their capacity to participate more effectively in all aspects of society accords a distinctive political purpose and character to Adult Education.

Social cohesion, then, within an Adult Education perspective, should be viewed as a dynamic political process in which the excluded and marginalised are both individually and collectively supported and resourced towards securing a greater share of the national, collective wealth and well-being. A concern to enhance the competitive position of excluded people and groups through participatory approaches marks the point of convergence between Adult Education and Community Development into what is commonly referred to as Community Education.

Initiatives to combat exclusion have been afforded increasing prominence in the 1990s throughout the European Union. The need to engage actively all sectors of the population in the life of the nation has been recognised as vital to ensure social cohesion, economic prosperity and viable democratic systems.

A greater awareness of the factors and conditions that contribute to disadvantage arising from class, ethnicity and gender has led groups, individuals and communities to reflect on their particular circumstances and seek greater participation in decision-making processes at local, national and international fora.

Social inclusion requires a capacity to make, or at least influence, decisions that impact on one's current and future lifestyle. Acquiring this capacity involves access to information and an understanding of the nature of social and economic exclusion. Building the capacity of communities, groups and individuals to participate in this way has formed much of the Adult Education agenda in the past twenty years.

1.4.4 Community Development in Disadvantaged Areas

Many areas in Ireland continue to be characterised by multiple deprivations including

- extremely high unemployment rates;

- high levels of early school-leaving absenteeism and truancy amongst the the school going population;

- high rates of welfare dependency;

- high levels of crime, with a particular problem in the area of young people outside the formal education, training and employment systems;

- antagonistic relations with statutory bodies.

Whole communities have become excluded, not only from the labour market, but also from the establishment. As a result of generations of multiple disadvantage, and a sense of powerlessness to influence and change the conditions in which they and their children live, many have concluded that the State-run education, training and guidance programmes are not relevant to their needs. To tackle disadvantage effectively, education in a community setting is vitally important, working *with* people as opposed to *for* them.

A number of important initiatives have been undertaken in recent years in such areas including:

- out-of-school programmes involving local, voluntary youth bodies and statutory agencies, such as Youthreach and other youth initiatives,

- the Community Development Programme, the local Urban and Rural Development Programme and the local Drugs Task Force initiatives;

- the development of the home/school/community liaison service;

- projects providing integrated responses for young people at risk, including the 8-15 year old Early School Leavers Initiative funded by the Department of Education and Science, and the Family Support Projects introduced for children at risk aged 7-11 by the Department of Health and Children;

- a number of innovative community policing initiatives involving the Gardai and local communities;

- the introduction of a range of 'estate management' initiatives through which some responsibilities for the management of the area and the housing stock are devolved to the residents.

These areas have also witnessed a dramatic increase in community education activity, particularly amongst women's groups. Currently there are about 1,000 of these groups working throughout Ireland (Dolphin, 1996). While little formal research has been undertaken on the phenomenon, its "demonstration value" is

self-evident in a number of areas, particularly in successfully engaging people from disadvantaged communities, in creating a sense of community ownership and motivation, in contributing to local development, in re-kindling an interest in education, and in re-introducing people onto a progression ladder to qualifications and employment.

Community groups have not only utilised Adult Education processes to raise their levels of awareness of gender based discrimination but have begun to question institutional rigidities particularly in areas concerning access policies, recognition of prior and experiential learning and inflexible accreditation systems.

1.4.5 Civil Society

As will be shown in the next chapter dealing with the history of Irish Adult Education, Ireland has had throughout this century a reasonably comprehensive structure of voluntary organisations both rural and urban. These organisations have provided both an historical infrastructure and an historical precedent for voluntary collective action.

In more recent years, the voluntary and community sector has secured a growing acknowledgement by the State of its role and potential contribution in confronting area specific problems of social deprivation and economic underdevelopment. The various Area-Based Partnership companies, designed to address issues of disadvantage, as well as other local development programmes such as LEADER, have relied significantly on the participation of the voluntary/community sector. They have recognised its particular capacity for innovation and for targeting customised, tailor-made responses on specific local problems in an integrated, area-based way in partnership with the statutory sector and the other social partners.

1.4.6 Globalisation and technological change

From an Adult Education viewpoint, the process of globalisation raises a number of issues:

Mobility of Capital:

As capital becomes increasingly mobile, the task of attracting external investment and retaining it becomes ever more competitive. High levels of initial education, together with a commitment to ongoing education are clearly essential to Ireland's attractiveness as a location for such mobile investment. It is becoming increasingly evident that no society can afford not to invest in developing its own human capital as its primary economic resource.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Information and Communications Technology provides the means of overcoming distances. ICT implies ever-rapid change in skill requirements, involving new ways

of working, global networking and new ways of accessing information and multi-skilling. This requires not merely an investment in physical infrastructure, but equally an investment in people's capacity to utilise and engage with the burgeoning new technologies. Failure to provide access for adults to education and training in this area can reinforce exclusion from economic participation, and impact directly on competitiveness. The *Report of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy Working Group on Educational Disadvantage* highlighted the importance of access to ICT training for adults as well as concerted actions to address literacy and basic adult education needs. In the implementation of the Schools IT2000 Initiative, there is a specific focus on ensuring increased investment on ICT in schools in disadvantaged areas.

ICT and Distance Education:

Developing the social infrastructure to engage with and utilise such new technologies is only one aspect of the challenge posed by ICT. A second aspect concerns its application in the educational process itself. The development of Distance Education opportunities has been slower in Ireland than in many other European countries. This has been due to:

–   the high costs of the initial investment in Distance Education, especially in the context of a small population;

–   institutional barriers, particularly in areas of course modularisation, credit accumulation and credit transfer systems.

1.4.7 Sustainable personal, social and environmental well-being

A sustainable society is one that satisfies its needs without diminishing the prospects of future generations

(Brown, L.R. in Capra, 1996)

In espousing critical learning, Adult Education, has always had a concern to enrich the participants' lives, whether through exposure to new knowledge or to a wider range of cultural, artistic or social experience. This is a valued part of the Adult Education tradition both in Ireland and abroad.

1.5 Poverty and Educational Disadvantage

1.5.1 Problems of social exclusion are likely to be thrown into sharper relief by generalised economic growth. Recent EUROSTAT data concerning poverty in twelve Member States of the European Union (excluding Sweden, Austria and Finland) show that Ireland has

- 238,000 households (19%) below the poverty line#;

- 759,000 Individuals (20%) below the poverty line, of which 320,000 are children;

- the fourth highest proportion of poor households and of individuals living in poverty of the 12 Member States and the second highest proportion (28%) of children living in poverty.

(# i.e. 50% of the arithmetic mean of equalised net expenditure/income)

1.5.2 National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

The development of the *National Anti-Poverty Strategy "Sharing in Progress"* published in April 1997 was guided by principles of equality, partnership, empowerment, and prioritisation of investment towards those most at risk. The definition of poverty used in the Strategy, while focusing on income poverty also includes the concept of exclusion from participating in society. While economic and material deprivation and other material considerations remain a central element in defining poverty, it is increasingly accepted that policy responses to addressing poverty must be formulated in a broader context, which encompass not only the material conditions but also the extent to which a person is able to actively participate in the life of their communities. This process of empowerment is an essential concept within an overall approach to policy development for Adult Education

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy identifies education as central to addressing poverty and disadvantage, and proposes a range of actions and priorities set within a continuum of lifelong learning. In particular, the Strategy stresses the importance of

- preventing and addressing early school leaving;

- closer integration of the community dimension of provision, and the development of integrated area based links between schools, youth, community and welfare services, and out-of-school education and training;

- support for lifelong learning, second chance education and community based education and training, with specific emphasis on addressing unemployment, literacy/numeracy difficulties and provision of childcare;

- accessible and relevant employment services providing systematic guidance, counselling, referral to education and training and placement in employment as appropriate;

The priority recommendations include

"the development in all members of the population of basic education skills, including literacy, numeracy, communications and new technology skills. A systematic strategy should be developed to eliminate illiteracy on a phased basis over a 10 year period. The strategy should include investment in tutor provision, tutor training, guidance and certification" and

"......removal of the financial, childcare, structural and other barriers which impede participation" in second chance education.

1.5.3 Early school leaving and poverty

The key links between educational qualifications, unemployment and poverty have been well documented. A report by Brian Nolan and Tim Callan, of the Economic and Social Research Institute, published in December 1994 entitled *"Poverty and Policy in Ireland"* showed that *"three out of four poor households are headed by a person with no qualifications and a further 19% are headed by persons with only junior cycle qualifications."*

1.5.4 Educational qualifications and unemployment

A special tabulation from the 1997 Labour Force Survey shows the following:-

Table 1

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	UNEMPLOYED		
Primary	45,100	28.33%	63.32%
Lower Secondary	55,700	34.99%	
Upper secondary	40,500	25.44%	
Third Level	17,300	10.86%	
Other	600	0.38%	
	159,200	100.00%	

Source : Central Statistics Office Cork. 1997 Labour Force Survey (ILO basis)

It will be seen that 63% of the unemployed have not completed upper second-level education. 56% of the unemployed are unemployed for at least 1 year, and of these, over 40,000 have been unemployed for 3 years or more.

The *National Employment Action Plan for Ireland* published in April 1998 sets out the critical importance of providing a continuum of quality education and training from early childhood through to adulthood in order to promote employment and competitiveness. The strategic direction set out in the Plan includes policies and actions to

"promote a framework for lifelong learning which encourages individuals to access quality education and training on an ongoing basis, and enterprises to invest in human resource development, to meet new and rapidly changing needs. This requires new flexibilities within the education system in terms of the availability of a mix of full-time and part-time options, and more systematic provision for and funding of adult education"

While the net unemployment rate has declined from 17% in 1987 to 9.5%, and while annual per capita GDP growth between 1987 and 1997 has been almost three times the European norm, persistent problems remain for those with low educational levels.

In a context of current growth, it is imperative that the needs of marginalised groups are kept to the fore. Such growth presents a unique opportunity to undertake innovative and well-resourced educational, training and other interventions so as to build the capacity of the marginalised sectors to secure a greater proportion of the national wealth and well-being than they have attained to date.

In a period when labour supply exceeds demand, investment in education and training is undertaken with a view to long-term return. At a time of skill shortages in many sectors, as is currently the case, returns on this investment will be much more immediate than in the past, particularly if directed at those currently available for work. Both on economic grounds as well as social grounds, therefore, the case for a well targeted and well resourced education and training programme with the long-term unemployed is justified.

1.5.5 School Performance and parental educational attainment

The Table attached from the *1995 OECD Economic Survey of Ireland* shows that patterns of early school leaving and successful educational performance are clearly related to socio-economic status:-

Table 2

Educational Performance and Family Background: *(Source 1995 OECD Economic Survey of Ireland)*

			Senior cycle		
Family Background	**No Qualifications %**	**Junior Cycle %**	**Level 1 Pass LC %**	**Level 2 Up to 4 hons LC %**	**Level 3 5 hons or more LC %**
Unskilled manual	16.2	31.2	29.4	19.0	4.1
Other agricultural	12.3	24.7	27.9	22.2	10.7
Semi-skilled manual	9.9	28.4	33.9	22.4	7.1
Other non-manual	7.7	21.7	29.4	32.4	8.7
Skilled manual	5.9	18.1	30.6	35.9	9.4
Intermediate non-manual	3.5	11.9	20.2	46.2	17.9
Farmers	2.7	13.9	20.2	46.5	16.7
Self-employed, managers	1.8	7.8	17.0	46.7	27.2
Salaried employees	1.6	4.7	21.8	44.7	26.7
Lower professional	0.4	3.4	10.2	45.4	40.1
Higher professional	0.0	2.9	6.8	37.0	52.9
Low status	9.0	22.6	30.1	30.3	8.0
Average	5.7	16.3	24.0	37.4	16.7
High status	2.0	9.3	17.1	45.2	26.3

This shows, for example, that 31.2% of children from a manual unskilled background completed junior cycle only, while the corresponding figure for those from a higher professional background was 2.9%. Some 52.9% of students from a higher professional background gained 5 or more honours at Leaving Certificate level, compared with 4.1% of those from an unskilled background.

Parental levels of education, particularly those of mothers, exert a critical influence on their children's participation in education and on their school performance. A

focus on adult and second chance education, including special supports for lone parents, is therefore needed to break the inter-generational cycle of disadvantage.

There is also strong evidence to suggest that the children of early school leavers are at high risk of early school leaving themselves. Intervening in this cycle, to prevent an ever-widening circle of disadvantage, through actions with parents and enhanced education and training options for the older unemployed, is therefore an important aspect of any policy to combat unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, and improve retention rates of young people in education.

1.6   DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

CSO data on the number of births since 1980 indicate that the number of 18 year olds in the population is likely to fall from 74,338 in 1998 to 47,929 by 2012. While the size of the Irish labour force is still projected to grow until 2005, there will be a marked decline in the outflow of highly qualified young people to meet skill needs. This highlights the urgency of concerted investment in raising the skill levels of the unemployed, and of those seeking to re-enter the labour force, if competitiveness and growth are to be maintained.

It must be stressed that this Paper is not arguing for a shift in investment away from initial to second chance education, but rather for concerted additional spending to address the educational needs of adults, prioritising literacy, technology and basic education needs. This issue must be seen as of national strategic importance.

1.7   EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF THE POPULATION AGED 25-64 -- INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS.

Table 3

Percentage population aged 25-64 with upper secondary education, by age group

	25-35	35-44	45-54	55-64	25-64
Austria	54	54	47	41	50
Belgium	65	54	43	28	49
Canada	82	79	70	53	74
Germany	90	44	84	72	84
Ireland	*61*	*47*	*35*	*27*	*45*
Netherlands	69	64	54	44	60
New Zealand	62	60	54	45	57
Poland	88	82	68	47	74
Sweden	85	78	69	52	72
Switzerland	89	84	79	73	82
United Kingdom	86	78	69	57	74
United States	86	49	85	76	85

(Source: OECD Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 1996)

It will be seen that educational levels of the older population in Ireland are considerably lower than in other countries in the OECD. Many of the countries concerned have faced declines in the flow of young people onto the labour force for some years, and are engaging in systematic drives to invest in lifelong learning. In the United Kingdom, *The Learning Age - A Renaissance for a New Britain*, published by the Department for Education and Employment in February 1998, proposes

- an extra 500,000 places in further and higher education by 2002;

- a doubling of help for basic literacy and numeracy skills for adults to involve over 500,000 adults by 2002;

- the establishment of a University for Industry to promote access to basic and continuing education and training supported by a network of Learning Centres equipped with modern communications technologies in a variety of settings;

- the opening of learning accounts to support up to 1 million people to access further learning, under which their personal investment is topped up by contributions from the State, employers etc. £150m is being invested in this area.

1.8 ADULT PARTICIPATION IN THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION

UK statistics indicate that 54% of the first-year enrolments in third-level courses in 1995/96 were over 23 (33% of full-time students and 88% of part-time students), and 37.7% of all students in these institutions were pursuing part-time options. This contrasts with a position in Irish third-level colleges aided by the Department of Education and Science, where an estimated 4-5% of entrants to full-time courses are mature students, and where 18.5% of the total enrolment are pursuing part-time options.

The *OECD Report "Education at a Glance -- Policy Analysis 1997"* shows the following proportions of entrants to third level education by age:-

Table 4

Percentage distribution of first time new entrants into public and private third level institutions, by age group, 1995

Country	NON-UNIVERSITY			UNIVERSITY		
	age 25 and under	26-34	35 +	Under 25	26-34	35 +
Austria	-	-	-	89.2	8.0	2.8
Canada	60.4	19.4	18.1	79.2	10.4	9.0
Denmark	58.9	31.1	9.9	72.0	19.1	8.9
France	100	-	-	100	-	-
Germany	-	-	-	83.8	13.2	2.6
Greece	98.1	1.9	-	95.4	4.6	-
Hungary	-	-	-	71.1	15.3	-
Ireland	98.9	1.1	-	97.7	2.0	-
Netherlands	-	-	-	87.9	6.6	5.5
New Zealand	50.5	22.0	27.4	76.9	11.6	11.5
Norway	82.1	9.7	8.3	68.7	15.8	15.5
Sweden	-	-	-	72.4	16.1	11.5
Switzerland	50.9	49.1	-	89.3	10.7	-
Turkey	78.6	14.2	7.2	89.8	8.5	1.6
United Kingdom	52.0	23.7	24.3	77.5	12.4	10.1
United States	62.9	37.1	-	83.0	17.0	-
Average of above	72.1	20.9	15.9	83.4	11.4	7.9

Source: OECD Education at a Glance - Policy Analysis 1997

While the breakdown by age of third-level entrants is influenced by a range of factors, such as the average completion age of second-level education and demographic factors, it is clear that Ireland lags significantly behind a number of OECD countries in terms of participation of older adults in third level education.

1.9 OECD INTERNATIONAL ADULT LITERACY SURVEY 1995

The *International Adult Literacy Survey* provided a profile of the literacy skills of adults aged 16-64 in Canada, Germany, Ireland, The Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. Studies were subsequently carried out involving the United Kingdom, Belgium, Australia and New Zealand.

The aim of the survey was not to assess attainment in terms of literacy or illiteracy, but rather to identify five levels of literacy to cover demands at work, in the home and the community. The test materials, sampling procedures and test administration were agreed in consultation with each participant State, and the

same materials and processes were used in each country survey with the objective of having comparable results. In each country the tests were administered by a locally appointed agency. In Ireland, the Educational Research Centre administered the tests and assembled the results.

The survey found that about 25% of the Irish population were found to score at the lowest level (Level 1), performing at best tasks which required the reader to locate a simple piece of information in a text. This percentage is the highest in any of the countries surveyed, except for Poland. Only about 10% in the Netherlands scored at Level 1, while in Sweden, the figure was 6%. About 33% of the Swedish respondents scored at the highest levels (Levels 4 and 5) while the corresponding figure in Ireland was about 12%.

The survey showed

- substantially lower levels of literacy in the older age groups;

- close links between lower scores and low educational levels (more than 3/5ths of those who scored at Level 1 had left school without completing junior cycle);

- unemployed people scoring lower than those in employment -- the ratio of unemployed to employed people scoring at the lowest literacy level in the Irish survey is 2:1.

- lower literacy levels associated with low income;

- a lack of awareness of the need to improve skills among the employed, with only 5% indicating that this impeded their advancement;

- while 30% had participated in Adult Education or training in the previous year, this was strongly associated with prior literacy levels and educational attainment. In Ireland 10.7% of those with literacy Level 1 took part in Adult Education, compared with 55.3% at Levels 4 and 5. 91.1% of those with only primary education did not participate, compared with 45.8% of college graduates. This experience was mirrored in the other countries surveyed -- those with the lowest levels of education are least likely to participate in adult education and training. In Canada for instance, the likelihood of university educated adults participating in Adult Education was eight times higher than those with primary education or less. Such inequality is even more pronounced in the U.S.A. and Switzerland, though less so in Sweden and the Netherlands.

The results of the survey clearly point to

- the need for a comprehensive adult education strategy which is effectively targeted at those most in need;

- Ireland lagging significantly behind other countries (except Poland) in terms of literacy performance.

Low levels of literacy will have a marked impact on competitiveness. High levels of literacy and numeracy are a pre-requisite for participation in a modern knowledge-based economy. The importance of literacy skills for full participation in the economic, cultural and civic life of a society is self-evident. Literacy not only provides the tools for participation in a functional, instrumental sense; it is also central to self-image, self-esteem and personal confidence.

The relationship between low levels of initial education and low participation in Adult Education raises a number of issues. Firstly, it challenges any assumptions concerning the compensatory possibilities of Adult Education. Secondly, it raises the possibility of Adult Education as a force for further inequality, widening gaps rather than closing them. Lastly, it draws attention, in a lifelong learning context, to the quality of the early school experience and to the factors which underpin success and failure there.

On the basis of these findings, it is clear that simply extending Adult Education opportunities in a general way will not de facto contribute to equality. Carefully targeted programming is essential if those most in need are to gain optimum access and benefit.

1.10 RE-SKILLING THE WORKFORCE

Tapping the vast electronics and media-based resource for education purposes will undoubtedly pose a major challenge and provide a major asset to Adult Education policy makers and practitioners in the coming years. One of the key areas where this is likely to arise is in the area of the upgrading of the workforce and in creating more flexible pathways between work and education.

A context of ever more rapidly changing technology not only reduces the possibility of "a job for life" but, perhaps even more, reduces the likelihood of a "skill for life". The well educated and flexible workforce which has been a central part of Ireland's current economic growth is itself a wasting asset, unless renewed on an ongoing basis through a continuous drive to upgrade and reskill.

Demographic trends in recent years also imply that the task of renewing the economy's human capital will increasingly fall on those already within the workforce rather than on new entrants to it. This will require a strengthening of the interaction between education and training institutions and the world of work,

significantly increased flexibility of provision in terms of timing, access routes, progression pathways, and modularisation and flexible certification systems with mechanisms for accreditation of prior learning and work based experience. It is likely that, as the demand for ongoing or continuing education grows in the future, educational institutions will look to "accompanying" the student through their work life cycle rather than merely preparing them for it.

The task of building and renewing the human capital resources of the society is a task not merely of upgrading the technical skills of the workforce, but also of addressing its social skills. Modern work practices stress concepts of worker participation, teamwork, multi-skilling, flexibility and self-management.

The Irish adult population compares unfavourably in education terms not just with the younger population, but also with many other OECD countries. A low skill workforce will also be a low productivity workforce. Demands of national competitiveness require a systematic and proactive drive to upgrade the profile of qualifications across the adult population, if only with a view to attaining comparable standards with the other industrialised countries. Furthermore, as wage rates in the Irish economy continue to grow, it is reasonable to expect that companies in the low skill/manufacturing sector will be increasingly attracted to low wage economies. This persistent threat to the employment prospects of low skilled manufacturing workers is best addressed by increasing their skill levels.

The *White Paper on Human Resource Development (1997)* draws attention to these relatively low levels of educational attainment in the adult population in Ireland by comparison with many other OECD countries. It also points to the relationships between educational levels and employment opportunities at an individual level and the fact that the:

> *"knowledge and skills of the workforce will increasingly become the principal source of competitive advantage for firms ... (and) for countries which compete for internationally mobile investment -- both domestic and foreign sourced"*
> (p.111)

The White Paper identified a skill gap in three areas:

- Job specific skills

- Management skills

- General flexibility and communication skills

A 1996 FORFAS Survey showed that 30% of companies see skill deficiencies as a problem and 60% see a need for increasing skill levels in technology, quality and customer service. Skills are particularly required in the areas of computer software, electronics (especially at technician level) and teleservices.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This overview has attempted to set out the key issues which make concerted investment in adult education an imperative, and pinpoint and describe some of the dominant themes which contribute to shaping an approach to Adult Education in the new century in Ireland. Adult Education plays a key role as

– *a compensatory process* designed to provide second-chance access to the skills and qualifications necessary for full participation in an increasingly credentialist society;

– *an empowering process*, enabling participants to take a more active role in decision-making and other processes which impact upon them and to address the forces of exclusion in their lives;

– *an upgrading process*, designed to enable people to cope and manage the rapidly changing technology and the impact of international forces, and to contribute to the strengthening of individuals, families, communities and industries.

Chapter 2

Adult Education in Ireland:

Historical Evolution

CHAPTER 2
Adult Education in Ireland: Historical Evolution

2.1 This Chapter presents a brief review of the historical background of Adult Education in Ireland, and focuses on the major policy initiatives in Adult Education since the formation of the State in 1922. It identifies the main themes which have coloured the relationship between the Adult Education sector and the mainstream sectors of the formal education system and it provides a background to the current issues and concerns within Adult Education.

2.2 Charting the history and evolution of Adult Education is difficult due to

- its diversity and the multiplicity of providers with a wide range of objectives, developmental streams and emphases;

- the fact that several Government Departments have had an involvement in the sector, and

- the fact that large numbers of voluntary, non-governmental organisations have been highly active in the area.

However, it is possible to distinguish the evolution of Adult Education in Ireland since the foundation of the State in terms of three phases and two evolutionary streams. Phase 1 relates to the period from 1922 to the end of the 1960s; the beginning of the second phase is marked by the establishment of the first *Committee on Adult Education (1969-73)*, and the third phase begins in 1989 with the development of second chance education. With regard to evolutionary streams, Adult Education, much more than the other education sectors, has straddled two reasonably discrete sectors throughout these two periods, a statutory sector and a voluntary, nongovernmental sector.

2.3 PHASE ONE: 1922 – 1969

2.3.1 The statutory sector

The 1920s and 1930s saw a number of legislative developments in the statutory sphere concerning Adult Education that were to have long lasting effects on Irish education. Under the Ministers and Secretaries Act, 1924, the Government was organised into eleven Departments, including a new Department of Education. This legislation put in place the necessary administrative machinery for a more centralised approach to policy making in the sphere of education and training.

The Vocational Education Act, passed in July 1930, set up "vocational education areas", to establish, maintain and develop a suitable system of "continuation education" and to supply technical education. In setting up the VECs, the Vocational Education Act 1930 initiated the agencies which became the major statutory providers of education for adults in this period.

The County Committees of Agriculture (1931) and later ACOT (1980) provided a wide range of adult training for farmers and for rural women. This training is now provided by TEAGASC.

When a policy of major educational expansion began in the early 1960s, it was directed primarily at increasing and widening access to the school-going population rather than to the adult population. A seminal contribution to the process of expansion was the *Investment in Education Report (1965)*. Undertaken as part of an OECD survey, the Report drew attention to the barriers to access which the poor in particular encountered on trying to enter second level schools, as well as to the numbers who left school before reaching the primary certificate level.

The 1960s witnessed the beginning of a process of sustained and long-term investment in education which would continue up to the present. The proportion of children in classes of more than 45 pupils fell from 45% in 1963 to 13.5% in 1973. Free secondary education saw the numbers at secondary schools rise from 104,000 in 1966 to 144,000 in 1969, (Lee, 1989, p.361). ANCO, the State Training Council, was established in 1967 to provide vocational training. Following the submission of the *Report of the Commission on Higher Education 1967*, and the *Report of the Steering Committee on Technical Education 1967*, plans for significant expansion in third-level education began to be laid down. It was in the post 1970 period however, that major expansion got underway in Higher Education.

In summary then, the pressure of meeting the needs to expand the school system at post-primary level became the predominant concern of policy in the post 1960 period. This made the contribution of a vibrant non-governmental sector in the adult education field all the more important.

2.3.2 The non-Government sector

A variety of Adult Education initiatives in late nineteenth century Ireland could be seen to have played a major role in shaping the nature of the society which would emerge in Ireland after the foundation of the State. Nationalist organisations, such as the Gaelic Athletic Association (1884) and the Gaelic League (1893), played an important part in revitalising the cultural and intellectual climate in Ireland. Around the same time, Horace Plunkett formed the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (1894) and included Adult Education as one part of his twin-pillared strategy for revitalising rural life in Ireland. Plunkett's initiative at educating Irish males into devising strategies for improving rural life had its female counterpart in the establishment of the United Irishwomen (1910), the forerunner of the latter-day Irish Countrywomen's Association.

The objectives of economic, social and cultural regeneration espoused by movements such as these anticipated the core objectives of the rural community development sector in particular throughout the twentieth century. In their collective and self-reliant problem-solving ethos, these nineteenth century movements foreshadowed many elements of the twentieth century experience.

The economically and socially depressed 1930s and 1940s yielded a rich harvest of rural voluntary organisations, most notable of which were Muintir na TÍre, a growing Gaelic Athletic Association, Macra na Feirme, the National Irish Farmers' Association (now Irish Farmers' Association) and the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association. The Trade Union Movement was the main urban counterpart of these rural groups.

Many of these organisations were concerned with off-setting the constraints of farming and rural life for a population confronted generally with limited economic opportunities, seriously constrained by problems such as distance from and access to urban centres, and the psychological and social pressures resulting from rigid family structures and expectations, narrow gender specific roles and oppressive community structures.

Prior to the resurgence of an overt feminist movement in the late 1960s the two main women's organisations were the Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA) and the Irish Housewives' Association (IHA). Founded in 1910 and 1942 respectively, both were concerned with improving the standard of living and quality of life for women in an Ireland who faced major economic, health and social difficulties.

In addition to these rural agencies, a number of other initiatives and organisations closely linked with Adult Education provision came into being during these decades. For example, during the 1940s, University College Cork established outreach centres conducting Adult Education courses in most of the main urban centres in Munster. Similarly, other institutions with a direct, or indirect, interest in Adult Education provision were established, including the Dublin Institute of Catholic Sociology in 1940 (later renamed the Dublin Institute of Adult Education), University College Dublin's University Extension Board from the late 1940s, the establishment of the People's College (1948) by the Trade Union Movement, and the ICA's Residential College, An Grianán, in 1957. These and other similar developments are evidence of the vibrant state of Adult Education outside of the formal statutory sector during these decades.

2.4 PHASE TWO: 1969 – 1988

2.4.1 The statutory sector

The economic and cultural rejuvenation of Ireland in the 1960s was accompanied by a growing consensus on the links between economic growth and investment in education. This link was explicitly acknowledged in Ireland in the publication of the

Investment in Education Report (1965) and was re-inforced at international level by organisations such as the OECD, UNESCO and the Council of Europe's Council for Cultural Cooperation.

Again, however, the main concentration of investment in education was directed at sectors other than the Adult Education one. At second level, while the number of entrants has recently begun to decline, total enrolment continues to rise and retention rates have increased from 20% in 1960 to 81% currently. Participation at third level has increased from 4% of the age cohort in 1965 to nearly 50% currently.

There is now an increasing acceptance that, in developed countries Adult Education is the only element of a system of mass lifelong education which remains to be put in place. The growth in currency of concepts like "lifelong education", "recurrent education" and "permanent education", (associated with UNESCO, the OECD and the Council of Europe's Council for Cultural Co-operation respectively), is beginning to challenge the traditional tendency to separate Adult Education from mainstream education provision.

2.4.2 The Major Reports on Adult Education:

"Adult Education in Ireland" (1973), and "Lifelong Learning" (1984)

A significant State intervention in Adult Education policy was the appointment of two separate advisory bodies on Adult Education in 1969 and 1981, respectively. *The Committee on Adult Education (1969-1973)*, submitted its final report, Adult Education in Ireland, (known as the "*Murphy Report*") in November 1973. The Report dealt in some detail with a range of issues, including formulating a broad definition of Adult Education, and providing statistical details on the number and socio-economic background of participants. The Report expounded a student centred and integrationalist philosophy of education, outlined the need for closer co-operation between Adult Education agencies, and made suggestions for an improved structure for administering Adult Education provision.

It also identified many of the problems being faced by this sector of education, not least the fact that Government funding for Adult Education provision was unacceptably low. In addition to recognising the strong contribution of the voluntary and non-statutory sector in providing educational opportunities to adults at national and community level, and the need for additional funding, the *"Murphy Report"* put forward a recommendation for reform in the administration of Adult Education. In essence, the new administrative structure proposed was a three tiered framework consisting of thirty five County Education Committees, feeding into nine Regional Education Committees, with a "special section" within the Department of Education at the apex of the proposed structure.

The *Report of the Kenny Commission on Adult Education, "Lifelong Learning"* was published in May 1984. The Report was concerned primarily with the requirements of Adult Education and the development of administrative structures to deal with

these needs. It identified resources, assessed the current status and potential of the various agencies involved, and examined the feasibility of setting up a National Council for Adult Education. In addition, it reviewed the following aspects of Adult Education itself, the current state of provision, levels of participation and the educational backgrounds, interests and needs of participants, obstacles to participation and general attitudes to and awareness of Adult Education.

"Lifelong Learning" proposed an integrated structure to implement Adult Education, extending upwards from Adult Education Organisers operating at local level, through Adult Education Boards with their own separate budget at county level, to a National Council. This structure was not all that different from the proposals of the Murphy Committee over a decade earlier, and many of the proposals of the Kenny Commission reflected the earlier aspirations of the Murphy Committee.

By 1984, some steps had been taken towards implementing aspects of the earlier *"Murphy Report"*. For example, Adult Education Organisers were already in place since 1979 and the Department of Education had established its own Adult Education Section in 1980.

While some of the recommendations of this later Commission on Adult Education were acted upon, most notably the setting up by the VECs of Adult Education Boards in 1984 on an ad hoc basis, the proposal to establish a National Council for Adult Education was not implemented.

Economic problems emerging from the two oil crises of the 1970s, and from the pressure of modernising the Irish economy in the period after accession to the EEC in 1973, together with dramatic increases in the school going population meant that a concerted central programme in Adult Education in this period was never likely. The initiatives which were taken however, particularly in appointing the Adult Education Organisers as well as the central support to key voluntary bodies, meant that not only did provision increase through the 1980s, but also the beginnings of an identifiable professional base of Adult Education practitioners began to be laid down. These developments were further strengthened by the emergence of community and comprehensive schools with a specific remit to provide for adult and community education needs as well as for the young school-going population.

2.4.3 The non-Government sector

The changing profile of AONTAS members since its foundation in 1969 reflects the growth and diversification of the Adult Education sector as a whole during that period. In the 1970s membership was largely drawn from the statutory sector. Through the 1980s and 1990s the support base of the association has diversified to include a range of voluntary organisations. These now account for almost a third of the membership reflecting the broadening base of provision during this period.

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) was established in 1980 and received its first Government grant to establish a secretariat in 1984. The organisation was

established as an umbrella organisation to co-ordinate literacy activities at a national level including campaigning, training and publicity.

AONTAS and NALA have played, and continue to play, a critical role in heightening the visibility and priority of literacy and Adult Education issues in Ireland, and in the development of initiatives, materials and resources to supply a growing professional base and quality standards within the sector.

2.5 PHASE THREE: DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 1989

The nature of statutory involvement in Adult Education took a major new departure with the introduction of national programmes of second chance education for the first time in 1989.

An Educational Opportunities Scheme was introduced on a pilot basis in 1986 on a pilot basis in Dublin and Limerick and initially involved 50 participants. Experience of the pilot scheme led to the establishment of Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) in 1989 to provide a high quality second chance programme for unemployed people (21+) to enable them to compete with other groups in seeking employment and in gaining access to further education and training. The programme has expanded from some 260 places in 1989 to roughly 5,000 places currently. VTOS has been supported since 1990 by the European Social Fund, and represents the first attempt in Ireland to provide second chance education opportunities on a systematic basis.

The decision by the Department of Social Welfare in 1990 to enable long term unemployed people entering approved education courses to retain their primary and secondary welfare entitlements represented a further major landmark in promoting opportunities for adult learning. Further improvements were made in 1997 when a number of schemes for second and third level access were consolidated into a new integrated Back to Education Programme.

2.5.1 Other Adult Education Initiatives

Outside of these innovative out-of-school programmes, the other main Adult Education initiatives to emerge in this third phase include

- a rapid development of training opportunities through the FAS system, particularly those focused on the re-integration of the unemployed into the labour market. The strengthening of the Employment Services has been of particular importance in this context.

- the emergence of a wide range of innovative programmes in the area of training and development supported by the European Structural Funds. These include in particular the three European Anti-Poverty Programmes

(1975/79; 1985/89; 1989/94 respectively); in the 1990s, the LEADER programme in rural areas and Local Urban and Rural Development initiatives;

- the establishment of the Community Development programme by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, now involving more than 100 centres;

- funding for literacy provision and for some Community Education activity provided through the Adult Literacy Community Education Scheme (ALCES) by the Department of Education and Science through the ad hoc Adult Education Boards of the VECs.

2.5.2 Third Level

Under the Universities Act 1997, explicit recognition is given to the role of universities. Section 9(j) states that one of the objectives is to *"facilitate lifelong learning through the provision of adult and continuing education".*

Under the 1992 Regional Technical Colleges Act, and the Dublin Institute of Technology Act, all of the Institutes of Technology have a function to *"provide vocational and technical education for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the State."*

2.5.3 Developments in the non-government sector during this period were characterised by

– an increasing significance of community-based groups as distinct from the more formalised, voluntary sector;

– a shift in emphasis from rural to urban locales. Just as Ireland generally was becoming a more urban and "suburban" society from the 1960s onwards, Adult and Community Education also became more suburbanised, particularly in working class areas;

– the emergence of community based education groups, especially the greater participation by women in Adult Education, particularly in its community and/or nonvocational form;

– an increasing focus on issues of disadvantage;

– new models of partnership between the statutory and non-statutory sectors, as evidenced in the national Social Partnership Agreements; the

development of Area-Based Partnerships and the establishment of the National Economic and Social Forum.

2.6 CONCLUSION

A wide variety of sources, both national and international, moved in the 1990s towards recognition of a lifelong learning commitment and, within this framework, towards a growing consensus on the need to link Adult Education provision with formal school provision in a comprehensive, integrated manner throughout the life cycle. This becomes particularly evident in the more recent official publications concerning education in general and Adult Education specifically. The *Report on The National Education Convention* indicated agreement on the need to move Adult Education more "centre stage" and on the need to mainstream provision (1994, p.104).

The view of Adult Education as an integral and essential component of a lifelong learning commitment is most explicitly stated in the *Strategy for Lifelong Learning of the Irish EU Presidency:*

> *"European society now faces the historic challenge of moving to the learning society where education and training are seen to be integrated as a continuing feature of human experience from the cradle to the grave. The potential outcomes in terms of personal, social, economic, political and cultural values have much to offer European citizens and society.*
>
> (1996)

Green Paper – Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning

Chapter 3

A Profile of Adult Education and Training Provision

CHAPTER 3
A Profile of Adult Education and Training Provision

3.1 The provision of Adult Education and training services in Ireland has grown very rapidly and in very diverse ways, especially during the eighties and nineties. It is delivered under the auspices of a diversity of agencies which includes the formal institutions of second, further and third level education, as well as a variety of statutory, voluntary and community based groups. The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the current provision in terms of funding sources, the range of programmes available, levels of participation in different programmes, access, structures, and issues relating to accreditation and certification.

3.2 FUNDING

Adult education is mainly part-time. National policy is that, except for the most disadvantaged, part-time education provision should be self-financing. However,those undertaking part-time university undergraduate programmes are entitled to tax-relief on their fees. Part-time students spend £10m studying National Certificate, Diploma and Degree level courses. Individuals studying for professional examinations spend in excess of £1m per year. There is also an extensive range of self-financing courses - many of them catering for business and cultural pursuits- which are run usually in the form of evening classes by a variety of organisations, most notably VECs and community and comprehensive schools, and extra-mural courses in third level colleges.

There are no definitive figures available on the current level of investment by enterprise in training and development, but studies indicate that it is roughly 1.5% of total labour costs, and that best international practice is for industry as a whole to spend between 3% and 5% of payroll on training (Human Resource Development, 1997).

Explicit funding for Adult Education by the Department of Education and Science is provided for in five main components:

    (a) the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)

        This is a second chance education and training programme of one and 2 year full-time courses for adults of 21 years of age and older who are at least six months unemployed. The programme is provided by the VECs and offers a range of vocational options, from NCVA Foundation Level for those with no qualifications, to NCVA Level 2 (post Leaving Certificate). Participants may also pursue subjects in the Junior or Leaving Certificate or acquire a portfolio of qualifications in line with their needs and interests. They may follow programmes in discrete VTOS class groups or as individuals dispersed on a range of other programmes. The

1998 provision is £26.439m. A training allowance is paid in lieu of social welfare entitlements, and travel and meal allowances are also paid.

The programme has been aided by the European Social Fund since its inception in 1989 and has expanded from a pilot programme in 3 centres to a national programme offering 5000 places per annum. 73.3% of graduates in 1997 progressed to employment or further education or training.

Some 58% of VTOS participants in 1997 were unemployed for at least one year prior to entering the programme, and of these, 56% were unemployed for two years or more. However, in recognition of the need to ensure the systematic participation and benefit of those most affected by prolonged periods of unemployment, a study has been commissioned by the Department of Education and Science to identify and report on the outreach, recruitment, delivery and support strategies which are most effective in catering for those most in need.

A childcare measure for VTOS, Youthreach and Traveller programmes has been introduced in 1998, with support from the European Social Fund in collaboration with Area Development Management and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

(b) The Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme (ALCES)

Under this scheme funds are provided through the VECs to enable disadvantaged adults to pursue adult literacy and community education programmes free or at nominal costs. It is estimated that some 5,000 participants per annum benefit from the Literacy provision and a further 14,000 from Community Education. The 1998 provision is £4.065m and reflects a doubling of the 1997 budget, with the increase targeted exclusively at literacy/numeracy provision. The additional funds are being used to promote innovative approaches in critical areas which will inform the development of a National Literacy Strategy. Details are set out in Chapter 4.

(c) Special Initiatives for Disadvantaged Adults Scheme (SPIDAS)

This scheme supports second chance education provision for people who are disadvantaged by making funding available to the VECs towards the cost of fees, books, materials travel and meals. People who benefit from this scheme include participants in the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs Back to Education Allowance Scheme. Decisions as to who should benefit from the scheme are made by the Adult Education Organisers. The 1998 provision is £1.23m.

(d) Grants to Adult Education Organisations

The 1998 provision of grants-in-aid towards the running costs of adult education organisations is £500,000. The main beneficiaries are AONTAS and NALA, but grants are also paid to the People's College, the Dublin Adult Learning Centre and the Irish Country Women's Association.

(e) Women's Education Initiative

The Women's Education Initiative was established to assist projects which address gaps in provision for educationally disadvantaged women. Key themes of the projects are to build local capacity, develop support structures, accredit women's learning, encourage partnership between voluntary and statutory agencies, and facilitate progression. 13 projects are being supported for a two-year period beginning in 1998. The programme is aided as an Equality Measure by the European Social Fund as part of the *Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 1994-99*. The objective is to support the development of models of good practice, which will be capable of wider applications and which will impact on future policy. Provision in 1998 is £0.3m.

3.3 PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES TO PROMOTE ACCESS

3.3.1 In addition to the above, services are provided and funded which, while not targeted exclusively at adults or costed as a separate strand of provision, enable many to access and benefit from further education and training. A number of these are reviewed briefly below.

3.3.2 Mature Student Entry to Third Level Colleges

An estimated 5% of intake into full-time courses (approx 1,500 students) in third level colleges comprises mature students, and this proportion is scheduled to grow in the years ahead. The Steering Group on the Future Development of Higher Education recommended that this increase to 16% by 2010. This target excludes part-time courses. The limited data available suggest that approximately one third of mature students enter higher education through qualification under the points system, while the remainder are assessed locally by colleges on grounds of mature years through more flexible but rigorous criteria. The third level student grant schemes include specific provisions for mature students, and the Department of Education and Science produces an annual guide for mature students seeking entry to third level colleges.

The National Universities in Cork, Dublin, Galway and Maynooth have separate adult education or extra-mural departments serving the requirements not only of their immediate neighbourhoods but also of more remote areas. NUI Maynooth, offers diploma courses in Adult and Community Education. The Institutes of

Technology offer a range of early morning, daytime, and night-time programmes for adults leading to national certification from the National Council for Educational Awards or the Dublin Institute of Technology. Other colleges also offer extensive provision for adults.

As mature student participation increases, third level colleges are beginning to invest, largely with project or EU Community Initiative fixed term funding, in the development of innovative outreach strategies, access programmes, counselling and mentoring systems, flexible accreditation, and provision in community settings supported by childcare facilities. This has been accompanied by a greater emphasis on partnership in the learning process as a fundamental principle in community education.

Third level colleges also provide a wide range of extra mural courses on a self-financed basis.

3.3.3 Post Leaving Certificate Courses

PLC courses are full-time one and two year programmes of integrated education, and training and work experience provided in schools and colleges outside the third level sector. The courses are certified by the National Council for Vocational Awards. While the majority of participants enter the labour market on completion of the programme, PLC courses also provide an alternative route to higher education in the Institutes of Technology for holders on NCVA Level 2 awards. Means-tested maintenance grants along the lines of the third level grant schemes have been introduced for all participants with effect from September 1998.

Increasingly, PLC courses are being pursued by mature students, a trend which is influenced by the increased demand for lifelong learning in the context of higher skill levels required for employment, the pressures of increased labour market competition due to higher participation rates in education generally, participation by VTOS students in PLC courses, and the rapid expansion of the Back to Education Allowance Scheme administered by the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs. In 1997/98, 25.5% of participants (5,432 students from a total of 21,263) were over 21. A significant proportion of such students are likely to be

(a) VTOS students in dispersed mode (1,754),

and

(b) participants on the Back to Education Allowance Scheme.

3.3.4 Educational Provision under the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs Back to Education Allowance Scheme

While the cost of educational provision on this scheme is not tracked separately by the Department of Education and Science, the likely outlay on educational provision, based on average unit costs, is estimated at £22.534m per annum.

The Back to Education Allowance Scheme enables adults over 21 who are unemployed for at least six months to pursue approved full-time and part-time education courses at second, further and third level while retaining an allowance in lieu of social welfare entitlements. The allowances, together with a £150 grant towards the cost of education, are funded by the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs. Some 4,900 participants (500 second/further level, and 4,400 third level) benefit from the scheme at present. BTEA students are accommodated on existing courses.

3.3.5 Prison Education Service

The Prison Education Service consists of a partnership between the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, prison staff and a range of educational agencies. The Department of Education and Science provides an allocation of 165 whole-time teacher equivalents (over 200 individual teachers) to the prisons through nine VECs on the basis of recommendations from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

3.3.6 Education Co-ordinators in Area Based Partnerships

Under the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development 1994-99, 38 Area-Based Partnership companies involving a partnership of statutory and voluntary agencies provide a range of education, training and support services in designated areas of disadvantage. The objectives are to support community development and social inclusion actions based on an analysis of existing provision, an assessment of priority area needs and the formulation of an integrated area action plan. Funding for the EU-aided programme is co-ordinated by the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation. The Department of Education and Science funds a National Education Co-ordinator and 25 whole-time equivalent posts which enable a local education co-ordinator to be provided in each of the Partnership areas.

3.3.7 Home/School/Community Liaison Scheme

The Home/School/Community Liaison Scheme, provided in primary and post-primary schools in designated disadvantaged areas, is designed to establish a partnership between parents and teachers, and to promote a collaboration of their respective skills, knowledge and experience in the interests of their children's education. While the focus of the programme is on the promotion of a continuum of links which enhance children's learning, the scheme plays an important role in widening the range of community education programmes available to parents at

local level. 260 schools participate in the scheme and are served by 216 full-time co-ordinators.

3.3.8 Adult Education in Secondary Schools

A pilot project has been in place since 1992 under which a sum of money is provided annually to the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland, for distribution by it, in conjunction with the Joint Managerial Body, among selected secondary schools for the purpose of providing Adult Education. The money is used to provide initial grants for equipment and materials for Adult Education, to prepare accommodation, to cover administration costs and to allow fees to be waived in the case of students who cannot afford them. Approximately 20 schools are funded on a once-off basis each year under the scheme. The 1998 provision is £100,000.

3.3.9 Distance Education

Distance education at university level began in Ireland in 1982 with the establishment of OSCAIL, the National Distance Education Centre, located on the campus of Dublin City University. OSCAIL is funded by the Higher Education Authority to support its national role in the development and delivery of distance education of undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing and professional education programmes in co-operation with the universities and other third level institutions.

In 1997, over 3,500 students located throughout Ireland were enrolled on OSCAIL programmes. The degree programmes are accredited by DCU, NUI Cork, NUI Galway, NUI Maynooth, Trinity College Dublin and University of Limerick. In addition, a range of short continuing professional education and access courses are provided. OSCAIL is a founder member of the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities and an active participant in the EuroStudy Network.

University College Dublin's Faculty of Science has an enrolment of 200 in Europe's first satellite delivered course. Students are gathered in virtual classrooms all over the country but all EU citizens can enrol from their own countries, provided they have the appropriate technology.

Cork Institute of Technology has been involved in open learning programmes since 1993 and has developed an expertise in training by telematic delivery. A new department called DEIS (Opportunity) was set up in 1996. Many of the programmes it has developed and delivered have been EU funded through programmes such as Leonardo, Socrates and Adapt.

The Open University is a Europe-wide network of distance learning courses. Students build their degrees through a credit system. There are no entry requirements, one can begin with foundation courses and move onto higher levels. An estimated 3,400 Republic of Ireland students were enrolled in self-financed Open University courses in 1997.

3.4 PARTICIPATION RATES

3.4.1 To the extent that separate figures are readily available, the data on adult participation within the education sector are set out on the following page:

Table 5
Participation Rates in D/Education and Science Funded programmes

	FOR WHOM	DURATION	NUMBERS
Adult Literacy	Disadvantaged adults	Ranges from 1:1 voluntary tuition for approx 2 hours x 30 weeks, to tuition in small groups	5,000
Community Education	Disadvantaged communities	Varied	14,000
VTOS	Adults over 21, 6 months unemployed	Full-time, 1 - 2 years	5,000
Back to Education Allowance Schemes	Adults over 21, 6 months unemployed	Part-time and full-time, second, further and third level courses	4,900
Total			28,900

Table 6
Self-Financed Part-Time Education -- Second and Further Level 1996/97

Provider	No of males (day-time)	No of females (day-time)	No of males (night time)	No of females (night time)	TOTAL
Vocational Education Committees	5,971	21,208	16,354	43,766	87,299 (65%)
Community & Comprehensive Schools	229	1,271	14,093	31,081	46,674 (35%)
Totals	6,200	22,479	30,447	74,847	133,973

(Source:Department of Education and Science, Draft Statistical Report 1996/97)

Table 7

Third level part-time enrolments in 1996/97 in institutions funded by Department of Education and Science

PROVIDER	PART-TIME
University	8,426
Institutes of Technology	12,561
Other Colleges*	1,808
Totals	22,795

*includes the National College of Ireland which has 1,808 part-time students.

3.4.2 It will be seen that, while some 28,900 participants avail of programmes which are funded specifically for the disadvantaged in the VEC sector, the vast majority of adults pursue education part-time and on a self-financed basis. Of those on part-time courses in the second and further education sector, 72.5% are females.

An estimated 50% of literacy students and 80% of community education participants are women, and it is evident that there is a need for new strategies if more male participants are to be attracted into the system.

Overall, a total of 156,768 adults avail of self-financed part-time education programmes. The proportion of part-time students in the Institutes of Technology (23.4%) is double that in the university sector (12.7%). Dublin, Cork and Tallaght Institutes of Technology have played a particularly important role in this development, providing for a part-time enrolment of 34%, 34% and 44% respectively. Upwards of 76% of enrolment in the National College of Ireland is part-time. The VECs are the largest provider of Adult Education in the education sector, catering for some 115,250 participants annually. (These figures are under-stated to the extent that they exclude participation in third level extra-mural courses, for which data are not available)

Further valuable insights into the nature and extent of participation in Adult Education and training may be gleaned from the recent OECD study which, while primarily focused on literacy, also produced general data on participation in Adult Education and training for Ireland and for the other OECD countries.

3.4.3 The main findings of this study in regard to Ireland are as follows:

- 29.5% of all respondents (28.5% males and 30.5% females) had participated in Adult Education or training in the previous 12 months;

- of this, 42.5% was self-financed, 27.3% was employer funded, 19.6% was State funded, and the remainder was funded by trade unions or other agencies or provided free;

- 29.2% was provided in a publicly funded third level college, 18.5% in a second level school, 12.8% in a private college, 12.2% at work, and 8.3% in a training centre;

- 31.4% of participants were employed, 14.8% were unemployed, 10.9% were in the home, and 3.3% were retired;

- 47.9% of participants were in the 1624 year age group, whereas only 9.1% were aged 5564;

- 55.3% of participants were graded at Literacy Levels 4 and 5 (the highest), compared with 10.7% and 22.5% respectively at Literacy Levels 1 and 2;

- participation was strongly linked to prior educational attainment, with 54.2% of college graduates having taken part in Adult Education and training in the previous 12 months compared with only 8.9% and 17.7% of respondents with primary or junior cycle qualifications respectively.

The findings regarding literacy levels and prior educational qualifications and their impact on participation in Adult Education and training are mirrored in other countries surveyed. However, the OECD publication *Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society - Further Results from the International Adult Literacy Survey (1997)* shows that participation in Adult Education and training in Ireland is the third lowest in the countries surveyed {Belgium (Flanders) and Poland being the lowest at 21% and 14% respectively} but with a "majority of countries having participation rates of around 40%" and Sweden highest at 53%. In general, the report found that the duration of Adult Education and training in Canada and Ireland was longer than in the other countries surveyed.

3.5 VEC STRUCTURES

As noted earlier, under the Vocational Education Act 1930, 38 Vocational Education Committees (now reduced to 33) were set up "to establish and maintain a suitable system of continuation education" and "to supply or aid the supply of technical education" in their respective regions.

In 1979, 49 Adult Education Organisers were appointed to newly-created posts by VECs to develop Adult Education services at local level. These Organisers are

responsible for organising and co-ordinating Adult Education in VEC areas. Their specific functions include identifying the educational needs of adults, co-ordinating existing activities and liaising with schools and colleges, and with community/ economic interests in promoting adult education activity.

Adult Education Boards were established on an ad hoc basis by VECs in 1984. Their purpose is to draw up and administer a programme of Adult Education for the VEC areas. The Boards receive a separate allocation of funds for the specific purpose of establishing courses in literacy and community education. The Adult Education Organisers act as secretaries to the boards.

There are 78 Literacy Organisers of whom 2/3rds are employed on a part-time temporary basis. Their role is to organise the provision of literacy/numeracy services, co-ordinate the work of voluntary and paid tutors, and match trainees with tutors. Overall, an estimated 85% of tuition is provided by volunteers.

The VECs operate projects in co-operation with other government departments and local bodies, and participate actively in the work of Area Based Partnerships. They are responsible for delivery of the Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme, the Special Initiatives for Disadvantaged Adults Scheme, VTOS, the education components of the Prison Education Service, Youthreach, an out-of-school programme for unqualified early school leavers, and the network of Junior Traveller Education Centres and Senior Traveller Training Centres. In addition, 92% of all PLC provision is located in the VEC sector. As part of this work, VECs engage in joint programmes and extensive interaction with such agencies as FAS, Area Partnerships, youth services, probation, health and welfare services, the Juvenile Liaison Service, schools and a range of community and voluntary organisations.

3.6 EDUCATION ACCESS SUPPORT SERVICE

In the past decade, there has been a dramatic growth in further education provision, with the establishment of VTOS second chance education and the rapid expansion of PLC courses. In the light of these developments, and against the backdrop of a growing international consensus on the need for a more integrated and comprehensive approach to the development of adult education as part of a broadly based strategy on lifelong learning, the Department of Education and Science has taken two important initiatives:

(a) the Adult Education Section of the Department has recently been integrated into a Further Education Section embracing the co-ordination and development of adult and continuing education, PLC programmes and second chance programmes such as VTOS, Youthreach and Traveller programmes;

(b) funds have been provided for the establishment of an Education Access Support Service for the Further Education Sector.

This Support Service, for which funding under the EU INTEGRA initiative has been received for 1998 and 1999 will be a critical development to put in place a system support to improve co-ordination of quality assurance for further education, especially for disadvantaged groups, through

- systematic programme support;

- improved liaison with a wide range of community actors;

- improved research and monitoring.

Essentially, the project will integrate the staff development and programme support activities already under way via the existing co-ordinators for Youthreach, VTOS and Travellers, with additional co-ordinators to support the PLC and adult and community education areas, and integrate thematic support for a range of actions such as quality, access, progression, guidance, IT, arts etc. It will help promote a coherent Further Education sector, and ensure a consistency and sharing of best practice across the spectrum of provision. The project will be overseen by a management committee of Department of Education and Science staff and expert practitioners in the FE field and will be advised by a Further Education Forum representing a very wide range of interests.

Transnational partnerships have been established with providers in France, Belgium, Italy and the UK's Further Education Development Agency. The Support Service will play an important role in the evolution of a coherent Further Education sector, and will be an important resource in promoting access to lifelong learning. In addition, the project has the potential to play a key role in informing the establishment of the National Adult Learning Council proposed in Chapter 8. In the longer term, the work programmes and structures of the Support Service could be integrated into the National Adult Learning Council.

3.7 SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE BY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE ON ADULT EDUCATION

Much of the provision in the education sector which benefits adult participants is not tracked separately, and it is not therefore possible to give an exhaustive summary of expenditure in this area. The breakdown below is an indicator, but excludes critical areas such as mature student participation in third level, tax relief for third level part-time and private college fees, the prison service, the cost of posts of responsibility generated in second level schools as a consequence of participation of adults etc.

Table 8

Summary of Expenditure by Department of Education and Science on Adult Education

(# Note: This table excludes costs of mature student participation in third level, tax relief for third level and private college fees, the prison service, posts of responsibility generated by adult education in second level schools)

Measure	Cost 1998
Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme*	£26.439m
Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme	£4.065m
Special Initiatives for Disadvantaged Adults	£1.230m
Women's Education Initiative	£0.300m
Grants to Adult Education Organisations	£0.500m
Back to Education Allowance schemes -- estimated educational costs*	£22.534m estimate
Over 21s on PLC courses, not included at* above	£7.654m
Employment of Adult Education Organisers	£1.230m estimate
Education Co-ordinators -- Area Partnerships	£0.520m estimate
Childcare Initiative	£0.730m
	£65.202m #

3.8 PROVISION BY OTHER AGENCIES

3.8.1 A distinctive feature of adult education provision in Ireland is the diversity and breadth of provision. A wide range of Government Departments, statutory agencies, and voluntary and community organisations provide services in this field, and it is not possible in this Paper to document the full extent of such provision. Accordingly, only a brief outline of key providers is included below.

3.8.2 FAS, the Industrial Training Authority, provides a wide range of training programmes, work experience programmes and employment supports to ensure the supply of a highly skilled workforce to meet industry needs, and to facilitate the re-integration of those who are socially excluded into the labour market. A breakdown of the range of activities and services provided is set out hereunder.

Table 9

FAS Adult Provision	Direct cost 1997	Trainee Throughput
TRAINING		
Industry Training	£27.3m	13,372
Enterprise	£4.5m	1,011
Community Training	£17.9m	4,469
Return to Work	£1.6m	1,219
Traveller Training Centres	£2.4m	463
Equal Opportunities	£1.1m	204
Sub-total	£54.8m	20738
WORK EXPERIENCE SCHEMES		
Community Employment	£300.7m	56090
Jobstart	£5.5m	973
Sub-total	£306.2m	57063
OTHER SUPPORTS		
FAS Guidance and Placement#	£6.6m	
European Initiatives	£1.8m	
Sub-total	£8.4m#	
Total	£369.4m#	77801

The figures exclude expenditure under the Local Employment Service which has been established in 18 areas, funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The provision for 1998 is £10.7m.

3.8.3 Area Based Partnerships

Under the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development 1994-99, 38 Area Based Partnership companies involving a partnership of statutory and voluntary agencies provide a range of education, training and support services in

designated areas of disadvantage. The objectives are to support community development and social inclusion actions based on an analysis of existing provision, an assessment of priority area needs and the formulation of an integrated area action plan. Funding for the EU aided programme is co-ordinated by the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation.

Sub-Programme 2 of the Operational Programme provides for an investment of £107m over the period 1994-99 on integrated measures to combat exclusion in designated areas of disadvantage. Of this, some £23.78m was spent in 1997, and spending of £29m and £36m respectively is planned for 1998 and 1999.

3.8.4 Sectoral Providers

Other training bodies providing sectoral training for adults include:

Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation

In addition to being the lead Department for the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development, the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation also funds CERT, the State Tourism Training Agency. The role of CERT is to identify manpower and training needs, develop structures and programmes for the Tourism sector, provide national assessment and certification in partnership with education interests and industry through the National Tourism Certification Board, and provide direct training programmes at foundation, craft and management level and advisory services to the industry.

Department of Agriculture and Food

TEAGASC provides a wide range of courses for new entrants and adults in agriculture and rural development. The new entrant courses are, for the most part, full-time and attract significant numbers of adults as well as school leavers. The adult training courses are aimed at improving skills in farming, development of alternative land-based enterprises and rural community initiatives e.g rural tourism. TEAGASC operates five colleges -- four of them residential -- and fifty training centres. In addition, it provides substantial funding to eight private residential colleges which offer similar courses to the TEAGASC colleges, and to the Farm Apprenticeship Board which runs an apprenticeship scheme for training young farmer managers. A number of the colleges run National Certificate and National Diploma courses jointly with adjacent Institutes of Technology. These courses benefit from the combined strengths of both institutions.

Department of Health and Children

The National Rehabilitation Board (NRB) is the designated state agency for co-ordinating training and rehabilitation services for people with disabilities. The NRB is soon to be disbanded and a new statutory National Disability Authority

established under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law reform. The National Training and Development Institute is a private not-for-profit organisation which provides assessment, guidance, training and education programmes, particularly for those with disabilities. It is intended that the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and FAS will assume national responsibility for the provision of vocational training for people with disabilities, but it not intended that this should obviate the need for all education and training providers to take specific steps to ensure integrated access as a right for people with disabilities into mainstream programmes.

The Health Boards also provide for a range of health and parenting oriented programmes at local level.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

In addition to funding FAS training, employment and research services and being the lead Department responsible for European Social Fund programmes, training and employment policy, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment funds FORBAIRT. This agency provides support services to Irish industry across a wide range of commercial activities, including management development, innovation, research & development, finance and technology transfer. A key part of the Forbairt mission is to bring science, technology and innovation into the mainstream of economic development in Ireland. The Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment is also responsible for the co-ordination and development of the Local Employment Service, and for the work of the County Enterprise Boards.

Department of the Marine and Natural Resources

An Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) - the Irish Sea Fisheries Board -- is the authority responsible for the industrial training and education of those entering and those already working in the fishing industry. It aims to provide a higher level of professional competence for existing sea-going personnel as set out under the Merchant Shipping Acts, a career structure for new entrants and practical training for fish farmers. The National Fisheries Training Centre at Greencastle, Co. Donegal provides facilities for full residential programmes. Courses are also provided at fishery venues around the coast, including the use of two specialised mobile training units which bring practical skills instruction to the more remote coastal stretches.

Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

The Prison Education Service incorporates important partnership between the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the VECs, the Open University, Public Library Service, the Arts Council, several thirdlevel colleges and a number of other bodies. Overall management of the services (i.e. development, monitoring, administration, etc.) is provided by the Co-ordinator of Education located in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Policy is drawn largely from the

Department's *Policy Document on Prison Education (1984)*, the *Council of Europe Report, Education in Prison (1990)* and *The Management of Offenders (1994)*.

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform is also playing an expanding role in the delivery of childcare services which, inter alia, facilitate access to Adult Education and training. The Department has convened an inter-Departmental Childcare Synergy Group, which includes representation from FAS, Department of Education and Science, and Area Development Management Ltd, to co-ordinate services in this area. Additional childcare funding has been provided to supplement the EU aided childcare activity under the Operational Programmes for Human Resources Development and Local Urban and Rural Development.

Department of Social Community and Family Affairs

The Back to Education Allowance Scheme (BTEA) enables some 4,900 unemployed adults to pursue full-time and part-time education programmes at second, further and third level while retaining social welfare benefits. A broad range of courses is approved under this option - including literacy schemes, adult basic education, PLC courses, Junior and Leaving Certificate courses and third level programmes.

As well as their social welfare payment, BTEA participants retain entitlement to secondary benefits for the duration of their course e.g. Christmas Bonus, Fuel Allowance, Butter Vouchers or Rent or Mortgage Supplement. An annual Cost of Education Allowance is also paid at the start of each academic year. The cost of the allowances, excluding secondary benefits, is of order of £20.5m per annum.

In addition, the Department provides extensive funds for local groups and community development initiatives. The emphasis in these schemes is on support of local self-help and community development initiatives to tackle poverty. The activities funded range from courses in arts and crafts, skills training, personal development, women's health, community leadership, and preparation/foundation for back-to-work or second chance education initiatives. Creche facilities may be funded for people participating in the funded groups' activities.

The estimated outlay by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs is £27.584m (£17m for BTEA and approx £10.584m on support for community groups and community development projects).

3.8.5 Other organisations which include an education and training role in their remit include the Irish Business and Employer's Confederation, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the Irish Management Institute, the Institute of Public Administration, the Irish Country Women's Association, Bord na Gaeilge, the Department of Arts, Culture, Gaeltacht and the Islands, the Arts Council, trade unions, private colleges, and a range of professional, commercial, sport, language and leisure associations.

3.8.6 Public Library Service

An Chomhairle Leabharlanna (The Library Council) is an advisory body established in 1947 which advises both the Minister for the Environment and Local Government and 32 individual library authorities on the provision and development of library services. In 1998 local authorities will spend approximately £36m on public library services, while the Department of the Environment and Local Government will spend about £3m from National Lottery Funds on library infrastructure.

An established public library network of over 1,100 centres throughout the country, static and mobile, provides access to information for everyone in the community, without precondition. It also provides services to hospitals, schools, prisons, day care centres, parish centres and other access points in the local community.

The public library service plays a highly significant role in the support of lifelong learning and Adult Education in Ireland. It provides a gateway to information on courses, grants and accreditation; access to resources, in-house and world-wide, printed and digitised, access to over 11 million books and almost 250,000 non-book items. It is also backed up by an international network for inter-library loans and document supply.

3.8.7 RTE Educational Television

A division of the national public service broadcaster Radio Telefis Eireann, offers over 400 hours of educational programmes on television, including a weekly hour long live programme. LearnNet RTE also produces a number of educational programmes on radio each week. Numbers for educational programmes on television vary between about 12,000 to 50,000 viewers. The language courses broadcast on Sunday mornings consistently have viewing figures of 35,000. The major components of all programme series are television programmes supported with course texts. Delivery is by open learning and the study mode is independent self-directed learning. Funding for educational programmes on radio and television is provided by RTE.

3.9 GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

The range of guidance and counselling services available to adult learners is both limited and fragmented and includes:

- initial contact, assessment, guidance and counselling and referral services provided by

    – Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs Employment Information Services;

    – FAS Employment Services;

    – the Local Employment Service.

- Access to existing "on-site" guidance and counselling support for participants on programmes in a school or college setting. Such services are generally focused on the needs of young participants in initial education, and are not specifically targeted or resourced to meet adult/second chance needs;

- peer support and mentoring schemes operated generally by the youth service, by EU-funded Community Initiatives or by Area Based Partnerships.

However, the service is by no means comprehensive, and there is no national programme of targeted adult guidance for participants in the education sector.

The National Centre for Guidance in Education has recently published a study on Guidance in Adult and Continuing Education (1998). This report points out that in many countries, including Ireland, the developments in relation to provision have not been accompanied by a strategic and systematic approach to developing an adult guidance service. The need to cater for adults both at the point of referral, and to provide supports for those already enrolled on courses is also highlighted. The Report advocates that development of services in this area should be underpinned by key principles of flexibility, access, independence, integration and networking, and quality assurance.

The publication of the Report is complemented by an Adult Guidance Training of Trainers Leonardo project in conjunction with universities in Glasgow and Reykjavik, and NCGE, NUI Maynooth and Marino Institute of Education. This project, allied with the major developments under way in regard to the Employment Services, will serve to strengthen the professionalism and quality of the emerging service for adults participating in education and training.

3.10 ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATION:

3.10.1 A wide range of bodies is at present involved in certification of Adult Education and training including:

- Universities
- the National Council for Educational Awards
- the Dublin Institute of Technology
- the National Council for Vocational Awards
- The Department of Education and Science
- FAS
- the National Tourism Certification Board

- TEAGASC
- An Bord Iascaigh Mhara

3.10.2 TEASTAS

The Irish National Certification Authority (TEASTAS), was established on an interim basis in September 1995 to make recommendations on the development of a national system for the certification and assessment of all non-university vocational education and training programmes in both the education and training sectors. Key objectives of the system will be to

- provide a national framework of levels of qualification;

- develop formal progression pathways which give access to higher levels of education and training;

- provide mechanisms for the accreditation of prior learning and work-based experience, and for the accumulation of credits towards awards;

- ensure a framework for the active involvement of industry and social partners with education and training interests in setting national quality standards and assessment criteria in order to support a high quality system which maintains ongoing relevance to industry needs.

3.10.3 NCVA FOUNDATION AND LEVEL 1 CERTIFICATION

The National Council for Vocational Awards was established in 1991 to develop a framework for national certification and assessment within the further education sector. The initial focus of the Council was on the development of Level 2 certification for courses in the Post Leaving Certificate sector.

A key development, in facilitating national certification for adult literacy and basic education programmes, provided in a range of settings, was the introduction of NCVA Foundation Certification on a national basis as from September 1997. This level of certification is aimed at early school leavers and adults who had no qualifications prior to re-entering education or training.

NCVA Level 1 Certification (progression from Foundation Level) will be available nationally in 1999, and registration of centres and information briefings are underway. The availability of Level 1 awards will complete a continuous route of progression for young people or adults who have left school early, enabling them to progress from Foundation programmes, through Level 1, to Post Leaving Certificate courses at Level 2, and from there to third level.

3.10.4 NCEA FOUNDATION LEVEL AND ACCS SCHEMES

The National Council for Educational Awards launched a Foundation Certificate in July 1998 to provide an effective foundation course leading to certification for adult learners embarking on a course of third level education after a break in their education. NCEA Foundation courses feature a core programme in mathematics, communications, information technology and study skills, and a basic understanding of particular vocational subjects in science, engineering, business studies or humanities. The Foundation Certificate is a recognised entry requirement which facilitates progression to NCEA courses at National Certificate, and ab initio Diploma or Degree level programmes. Students may be granted exemptions from up to half of the subjects of the Foundation course based on previously certificated learning or prior experiential learning.

The NCEA ACCS (Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects) Scheme was introduced in 1989. This enables participants to pursue the achievement of one or more third level subjects at their own pace, and receive Subject Certificates, and to accumulate credits towards a full award at National Certificate, Diploma or Degree level. The scheme uses the European Credit Transfer System and facilitates mobility in Ireland and within the EU.

3.11 KEY ISSUES WHICH IMPACT ON FUTURE POLICY

An overview of this provision leads to the following observations in terms of the policy priorities in Adult Education. Key issues, highlighted in this chapter and Chapter 1, which impact on the future development of policy in Adult Education are

- Ireland's standing as having the second lowest levels of literacy in the OECD International Adult Literacy Survey, and the third lowest rate of participation in adult education and training;

- the lack of structures for systematic investment to date in adult education;

- the inflexibility of provision to date, with a low level of provision of part -time options. In addition, although NCVA Foundation Level and Level 1 certification options will be available twice yearly, certification systems have been designed for the most part centred on the needs of full-year students participating in assessment at the end of the academic year. This raises fundamental issues regarding the accessibility of the system to adult learners, and to those in the workplace;

- the fact that, notwithstanding the ongoing development of alternative vocational awards, progression to third level education is still largely predicated on attainment within the Leaving Certificate. Therefore, attainment of national certification via FAS, NCVA etc does not carry with it an entitlement to access further and higher levels of education. In addition, there is considerable room for streamlining of exemptions and credits in the progression arrangements from Institutes of Technology to

the university sector, and to some degree from PLC courses to Institutes of Technology;

- the need to prioritise systematic investment in adult literacy as a key economic objective;

- the need for an increase in provision in adult and second chance education with a significant expansion of part-time flexible and affordable options, particularly at second and further education levels;

- the case for development of more successful outreach strategies which target those most in need;

- the need for greater investment in infrastructure, and in supporting services such as childcare and adult guidance and counselling, so that those who come forward for help will remain and gain optimum benefit from renewed participation in the system

- the need to promote articulation and coherence between the range of education and training providers so as to optimise the effectiveness of resources for the benefit of adult learners.

These issues, particularly when combined with other contextual factors concerning Ireland's changing demography, the growing international investment in lifelong learning and the imperative for ensuring quality and coherence in a diverse and developing field, set the agenda for the future of this expanding sector.

Chapter 4

Addressing Social and Economic Needs

CHAPTER 4
Addressing Social and Economic Needs

4.1 Chapter 1 set out the importance of Adult Education in addressing the educational, social and economic needs of the population. This Chapter makes a range of specific recommendations as to how developments in addressing adult literacy, poverty, employment and competitiveness issues, and access to third level education, can be progressed.

One of the tasks of Adult Education is to compensate for under-achievement at school, by providing a second chance to adults to gain the educational base and qualifications necessary for a full and active engagement in the society at large, and also in personal, family and community settings. The case for a comprehensive compensatory approach lies in arguments concerning:

- issues of equity;

- the loss of talent to the society and the economy;

- changing demographic patterns which make an urgent investment in skill levels of older adults a necessity;

- empowerment of disadvantaged communities;

- the inter-generational nature of disadvantage, and the influence investment in education of adults exerts on the well-being of children and of future generations.

4.2 ADULT LITERACY

In keeping with existing practice in the delivery of literacy services and the scope of the International Adult Literacy Survey, any references to literacy in this paper should be interpreted as covering numeracy skills also. Low literacy levels are the most persuasive indicator of negative early school experience. It is unlikely that any other aspect of educational under-achievement can have more profound or long-term implications for a person's life chances than literacy problems.

Practitioners and agencies in the field of literacy training draw attention to the need to address not only the skills of reading, writing and numeracy, but also to promote self-esteem, self-confidence and positive self-image amongst the learners. This is to view literacy training as being more then merely the acquisition of a competence but also the development of the learner in many other ways.

As shown in a previous chapter, the *IALS Survey Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society (1997)* draws attention to the persistence of alarming levels of literacy problems in the Irish population.

In terms of formulating a response to this problem, the survey stressed the:

> *"need for a comprehensive strategy for developing literacy that requires support from Government, employers and social partners, local communities and families. The first step is to create a framework of understanding that literacy is important to economic productivity, to health and well being and to social cohesion in a modern society; that literacy is everyone's concern; and that reducing inequalities in opportunity is the key to achieving high literacy scores."*

(1997, p.85)

Tackling low literacy/numeracy levels must rank as the primary Adult Education priority in Ireland. Failure to do so will not only seriously constrain the individual life chances of those affected, but it will also limit overall economic and social progress. In a technological society in which almost every aspect of life increasingly rests on implicit assumptions concerning literacy competence, low literacy levels of the scale prevalent in Ireland will serve to disengage an ever larger proportion of the national population from the daily life of the society.

There is a need, therefore, to embark on a multi-faceted national Adult Literacy Programme in Ireland. Such a programme should recognise:

- that while voluntary provision has many desirable attributes, particularly in its responsiveness to local conditions, the issue is much too important in terms of national policy to warrant anything less than a comprehensive framework of statutory policy, programming and funding;

- the gap between provision (currently about 5,000 participants annually) and need as documented in the IALS Survey;

- the student-centred, developmental approach to literacy training already well developed in Ireland by organisations such as the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA);

- the scarcity of trained literacy tutors, the absence of a recognised qualification to work in the area and the unstable conditions of employment and lack of a career structure for literacy tutors;

- the desirability of supporting literacy rich environments, especially through the use of the public library system;

- that literacy training provision must be flexible and varied enough to meet learner needs in a multiplicity of settings, especially the workplace, and at different lifecycle stages;

- the need for a system of guidance and the removal of barriers to access.

Adult Literacy work will always need to occur at the level of redressing underachievement at school. Working with adults will undoubtedly enhance the overall educational environment of the family and contribute indirectly to the educational progress of children. However a comprehensive literacy programme must also locate itself at the preventative level. The school experience will always be of central importance in the acquisition of literacy skills. While literacy skills are generally higher at the younger end of the 16-65 age range than at the older, the elimination of early school under-achievement is also a priority. A national Literacy Programme cannot be confined to the adult, out of school population alone. It must be part of a more broadly based and sectorally integrated programme which spans a continuum from early childhood to adulthood, embracing both the formal and non-formal sectors. In that context, an integrated approach which effectively harnesses the expertise of the community sector and which forges close links between in-school and out-of-school provision is needed. In addition, family literacy programmes can play an important role in advancing the literacy skills of both parents and children.

4.3 PROMOTING EMPLOYMENT AND UPSKILLING THE WORKFORCE

Chapter 1 set out the key links between educational levels and employment experience, and the relatively poor position of Ireland vis- a vis- other countries in terms of adult literacy performance, the education levels of adults in the 25-64 age group, and the participation of older adults in third level education. It also highlighted the fall in birth rates in the 1980s and 1990s and the impact this will have on labour supply. Increasingly, maintaining growth and competitiveness will rest on the education and training system's capacity to systematically upgrade the skills of the unemployed, of adults seeking to re-enter the labour force, and of those already in the workforce.

Table 10

Labour Force by Educational levels.

A special tabulation from the 1997 Labour Force Survey shows the following:-

Educational Level	Employed		Unemployed		Total	
Primary	201,800	14.62%	45,100	28.33%	246,900	16.04%
Lower Secondary	335,100	24.29%	55,700	34.99%	390,800	25.39%
Upper secondary	443,000	32.11%	40,500	25.44%	483,500	31.42%
Third Level	396,400	28.73%	17,300	10.86%	413,700	26.88%
Other	3,500	0.25%	600	0.38%	4,100	0.27%
Total	1,379,800	100.00%	159,200	100.00%	1,539,000	100.0%

Source : Central Statistics Office Cork. 1997 Labour Force Survey (ILO basis)

It will be seen that just under 39% of those employed, and 63% of the unemployed, have not completed upper second level education.

The National Employment Action Plan (1998) draws attention to the critical importance of providing a continuum of quality education and training from early childhood through to adulthood in order to promote employment and competitiveness. It refers to the need to promote a framework for lifelong learning which encourages individuals to access quality education and training on an ongoing basis, and looks to enterprises to invest in human capital development to meet new and rapidly changing needs.

As economies become increasingly globalised and knowledge-based, the quality of a society's human capital becomes central in enhancing the competitive capability of the economy. The rapidity of technological change poses an increasing challenge of renewal, not only of school leavers, but of those in the workforce.

The task of building and renewing the human capital resources of the society is a task not merely of upgrading the technical skills of the workforce, but also of addressing its social skills. Modern work practices stress concepts of worker participation, teamwork, multi-skilling, flexibility and self-management.

Without investment in continuing education and training, the skills of the existing workforce will become obsolete as the pace of change in skill requirements continues to accelerate. Changes in initial education and training on their own will not resolve this. Approximately 80% of those now working will still be under 65 by the year 2010. (McIver, 1996)

To date, apart from programmes specifically targeted at early school leavers and the unemployed, the task of Irish educational planning and resource allocation has been heavily directed to meeting the needs of the school-going population. National educational objectives tend to be set with regard to the school-going population only, rather than with regard to the society as a whole. While there is now an

increasing emphasis in policy statements on lifelong learning, Adult Education has tended in the past to be seen as incidental, possibly incremental, but rarely central to educational objectives.

Educational institutions per se have taken little active role in upgrading the workforce, either in terms of course provision or in accreditation. It is unlikely that this separation of the spheres of work and education can continue. The *European White Paper, Teaching and Learning : Towards the Learning Society (1996)*, makes this absolutely clear. The task of bringing schools and the business community closer together is a "priority" involving three conditions:

- opening up education to the world of work;

- involving companies in Education and Training "not only as regards workers but also school-going people and adults";

- developing cooperation between schools and firms.
  (1996, p.57)

Employment growth in Ireland in recent years has placed considerable stress on the supply of skills to some sectors of the economy, supported by developments such as the FORFAS Skills Group, the Business Education Partnership Forum and the £250m Education Technology Investment Fund. Skill shortages not only constrain growth but also contribute to wage inflation.

A policy focused on upgrading of the workforce must take as its starting position the need for new institutional arrangements between the world of education and the world of work. Such re-arrangements imply:

- a view of expenditure on education as investment rather than as cost;

- more flexible pathways between work and education;

- more **flexibility** in the timing of provision (The 1998 ESRI Report *"Trading Qualifications for Jobs -- Over-education and the Irish Labour Youth Market"* highlights that *"Irish institutional arrangements for education, which structure young people's gradual and cumulative acquisition of educational qualifications, appear to be both more rigid and more hierarchically organised than other European countries. Educational provision is almost completely full-time, with little part-time provision leading to marketable qualifications.")*

- a widening of access routes to third level to embrace alternatives to the traditional Leaving Certificate on a systematic basis;

- a view of training as covering both technical and social upgrading;

- an exploration of tax-based and other incentives to companies to engage in continuous upgrading of their workforce;

- a greater readiness to look at the accreditation of on-the-job learning;

- a greater investment in the preparation of distance learning, modular based materials, and in the application of Information and Communication Technologies in recurrent education.

Arguments for a comprehensive second chance approach are based not solely on the need to invest in human capital and to underachievement at the early school stage, but also on the need to provide opportunities for older age groups for whom educational opportunities in their youth were significantly more limited than is currently the case.

4.4 EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

In addition to the stock in the adult population with low educational attainment, there is an additional problem with regard to the ongoing flow of early school leavers out of the system. Of the 67,500 school leavers in 1995, 12,200 left school, either with no qualifications or just a Junior Certificate. The 1996 Labour Force Survey showed 87,000 people in the 14-24 age group who had entered the labour force without completing senior cycle. It also showed that unemployment rates of 28% resulted for those educated to Junior Certificate and 46% for those with no second level qualifications.

4.5 THIRD LEVEL ADULT PARTICIPATION

While there has been a dramatic increase in the rates of participation in higher education, there has not been a comparable rise in the participation rates of full-time mature students, who now account for 5.4% of the full-time entrants into higher education. About 75% of all third level mature students are part-time and about 68% of them are outside the university sector. As shown in Chapter 1, Ireland lags significantly behind a number of OECD countries in terms of participation of older adults in third level education. The proportion of students over the age of 25 in Irish universities, for instance, is more than five times less than the average for all the countries. It is more than nine times less than the country with the highest proportion of university students aged over 25 -- Denmark. Participation rates in non-university third level institutions are even poorer comparatively than is the case with university participation. Ireland's relatively low level of investment in third level education for adults is likely over time to weaken its competitive position vis-a-vis those countries who are continuously extending university and other third-level access to older age groups.

Even in a context of increasing participation of mature students, full-time or part-time, the low participation rates of the economically or socially disadvantaged tend to be largely unaffected. The Technical Working Group of the Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education (1995) found that while full-time mature student provision catered principally for relatively disadvantaged lower middle-class people, those from the

lowest socio-economic groups are only minimally represented among mature students
(p.138)

There are a number of issues for colleges regarding mature student participation, amongst which are:

- supporting "user friendly" approaches which meet the needs of adult learners;

- supporting and developing discipline specific and general access courses;

- developing systems for the accreditation of prior experiential learning;

- a proactive policy for the admission of socially and economically disadvantaged mature students;

- changes in the mode of delivery of courses including modularisation and the use of alternative pedagogies;

- flexibility in assessment, especially moving away from written examinations.

    (Lynch, 1997)

In addition to the need to take on board these issues at institutional level, there is a need for government policy to direct itself towards proactive approaches in favour of poorer adults in funding them to access third level education through supports for access and outreach programmes, flexibility in entry criteria, strengthening of guidance and counselling services, and provision of financial supports as needed for acutely disadvantaged students through such mechanisms as the Special Initiative for Disadvantaged Adults Scheme.

While 75% of all mature students in third level are part-time, this Paper does not advocate free third level participation for such courses, but welcomes the introduction of tax relief towards the cost of participation. It is recommended that the priority State investment be directed at addressing literacy and basic education needs.

4.6 DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance Education has many attractions in providing access to third level education for mature students. The fact that it

- is usually part-time and modular;

- can accommodate different learning paces;

Green Paper – Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning

- can be offered in any variety of situations most particularly in the home and workplace;

all enhance its attractiveness to adults.

There have been significant recent developments in distance education in Ireland. The National Distance Education Centre at DCU has pioneered a number of distance degree programmes with the other universities. There has also been some noteworthy collaborative work between the universities within the NUI structure in developing distance education programmes in Rural Development and in some in-service training provision. This kind of collaboration is particularly welcome in that it optimises the collective resources of the universities and prevents duplication. It is desirable that the universities and the Institutes of Technology are further supported to work in this way in the development of their distance education provision.

The Irish universities have a long tradition of off-campus provision. Additionally, the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) has for a long period provided degree study access to local government employees in several locations. Extra-mural departments in the universities provide a wide range of programmes throughout the country and within their respective institutions. These courses are increasingly being drawn into the quality control and assessment procedures of the providing institutions and can, in their revamped format, offer an important access and progression route for mature students. Developments in IT, especially in areas such as video-conferencing and general interactive media greatly enhance the scope for off-campus provision for mature students and should be supported accordingly.

4.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Four main sets of recommendations arise from this overview:-

1. implementation of a National Adult Literacy Programme;

2. introduction of a Back to Education Initiative;

3. enhancement of a Third Level Mature Student Access Programme;

4. proposals for Upskilling the Workforce.

4.8 NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMME

High levels of literacy and numeracy are a pre-requisite for participation in a modern knowledge based economy. In addition, access of adults to technology training has been identified in the NAPS as another important aspect of literacy.

Arising from an increase of £2m provided in 1998, a range of initiatives for adults whose literacy and numeracy skills are inadequate for functional participation in economic and social life is being piloted. Key elements of these initiatives are:

- promotion of public **awareness** using a variety of printed and oral media;

- **outreach strategies** to target those most in need;

- the establishment of **referral networks** on an area basis involving key actors such as FAS, the Local Employment Service, the Area Partnerships, Welfare and Health interests, the Garda and probation services, schools, youth services, etc. The purpose of the networks is to promote awareness of the service, to provide a structured mechanism for the identification of area needs and the referral of those in need to the service;

- **flexibility** – ensuring the service is provided in accessible locations at a range of times – mornings, night time, week-ends, including summer;

- a **continuum** from one to one voluntary tuition, to tuition in small groups, with the option of national certification;

- **innovation** – new approaches to basic literacy provision, including family based literacy programmes targeting parents and their children, new outreach strategies, intensive programmes targeted at those most in need, a small number of demonstration open learning centres and distance learning;

- a systematic strategy to support the training of volunteers, of paid literacy tutors, and of literacy organisers;

- standardised reporting including qualitative data and quantitative performance indicators.

A key goal in this approach is to inform future practice, to identify and share the most successful strategies, and systematically enhance the capacity of the system to address literacy needs. It is clear that it will be essential to increase investment in this critical area on a phased basis in the years to come.

It is recommended, therefore, that following completion of the projects undertaken and analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data gathered in the process, a systematic expansion of the adult literacy programme should be undertaken. This programme would be informed by the analysis and the evaluation of the pilot project. It is proposed that a Working Group be established to make recommendations on the following in the light of such an expanded programme:

- a framework for the development of the overall literacy service;

- the development of national quality standards;

- standardised funding mechanisms;

- administrative support.

At present, an estimated 5,000 adults annually participate in existing adult literacy programmes. Expanding the capacity of the system to respond to increased demand will require a significantly greater outlay in training of organisers, tutors and volunteers, and the development of appropriate career structures which encourage those with expertise in this critical area to remain in the system. It is estimated that investment in adult literacy will need to increase on a phased basis over the period ahead to a level of £10m annually in the education sector to cater for some 15,300 participants per annum.

Given the scale of need highlighted in the IALS survey, it is important that agencies in the training sector, such as FAS, CERT and TEAGASC should also target resources to this area. Up to 10% of those targeted in the 18/19 year old FAS Youth Progression Initiative are estimated to have severe literacy/numeracy or homelessness or drug addiction problems, which render them unable to access mainstream programmes. A national literacy strategy will require the implementation of special programmes to address these needs.

Arising from a recommendation of the Minister for Social Community and Family Affairs in the context of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, an inter-departmental group has been established to examine issues on literacy levels among unemployed adults, and to progress integrated actions in this area. The work of this group will further strengthen the development of a National Adult Literacy Programme.

4.9 BACK TO EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The case for public investment in Adult Education has been repeatedly stated in this Paper. Issues of equity, social cohesion, enhancing national competitiveness, addressing unemployment, breaking the cycle of inter-generational poverty and enhancing the quality of individual and collective life make for significant returns on a relatively small per capita investment.

Significant progress has been made in the promotion of second chance opportunities in Ireland in recent years. At second level, VTOS marked a major new departure in providing second chance opportunities to unemployed adults. At third level, from a situation in the late 1980s where it was prohibited to participate in education while receiving social welfare benefits, there are currently more than 4,400 social welfare recipients availing of the Back to Education Allowance.

Despite such progress, however, some problems remain and gaps persist. Complex

procedures in accessing such supports and the exclusion of significant sectors – most notably women in the home -- pose an ongoing challenge to refine and enhance these supports.

This can best be done by the adoption of a Back to Education Initiative as Government policy. This Initiative would

- extend the option of State supported education to adults who have not completed second level;

- be supported by a comprehensive adult guidance programme described later in the Paper;

- positively discriminate in favour of individuals drawn from excluded sectors particularly those who for reasons of class, ethnicity, disability or gender have underachieved in early school education.

As the following table shows, the numbers in the labour force who have not completed upper secondary education are very large, and it is clear that the uniform application of a cost-free back to education initiative would not be affordable within the parameters of public expenditure policy.

TABLE 11

Age and Economic Status of those who have not completed Upper Secondary Education

	Totals			Of whom unemployed		
Age group	Primary only	Junior cycle only	Total	Primary only	Junior cycle only	Total
15-24	16,500	74,400	90,900	6,700	17,800	24,500
25-39	47,200	160,400	207,600	15,000	24,000	39,000
40-54	109,200	124,300	233,500	18,700	12,200	30,900
55-64	52,500	27,400	79,900	4,100	1,600	5,700
65+	21,500	4,400	25,900	500	100	600
Total	246,900	390,900	637,800	45,000	55,700	100,700

(Source: Central Statistics Office, 1997. Labour Force Survey.)

Accordingly, the following order of priority is proposed:

- those in the 15-54 age group who have only primary education (172,900 of whom 40,400 are unemployed)

- those in the 15-39 age group who have only junior certificate qualifications (234,800 of whom 41,800 are unemployed)

It is recommended that every effort be made to offer second chance education to these groups through a major expansion of part-time options under VTOS, Youthreach and PLC courses as appropriate, under the umbrella of a Back to Education Initiative.

VTOS already provides a flexible model which enables programme content to be provided in line with the interests and needs of participants. Those following the programme are offered a range of vocational options from Foundation Level to Level 2 PLC programmes, or they may choose from Junior or Leaving Certificate options, or a combination of these options. At present the programme is full-time, is confined to those unemployed for at least six months, and who are over 21 years of age.

It is recommended that:

- VTOS, Youthreach and PLC courses be expanded in part-time form, offering flexible modular blocks, which range in duration from single modules of 80 hours annually, to multiple modules to half-time courses for those who wish to pursue them, in a range of forms - mornings, night time, weekends, summer courses etc.;

- priority free access continue to be granted for those unemployed for at least six months who are over 21, accompanied by payment of a Back to Education Allowance;

- free access be given to other unemployed categories, and other disadvantaged groups including medical card holders; in this process, priority access should go to those most in need -- older participants with longer periods spent unemployed, those with no qualifications etc;

- barriers to participation in education of those aged 18-20 who left school with no qualifications (i.e Youthreach eligible students) should be removed, and they should be allowed retain training allowances. This is the only category for which a reduction in the threshold for BTEA/VTOS allowance payments is recommended;

- fees should be levied for other participants (i.e those who are not registered unemployed or do not hold medical cards) wishing to avail of the programmes. It is not envisaged that these fees would ensure self-financing, but would make a significant contribution to the expansion of education and training opportunities for adults.

The flexibility of provision proposed would also play an important part in ensuring the responsiveness of the education system to increased demands for continuing training of the employed in line with changing demographic and economic needs.

Where fees are payable, tax relief is recommended at the marginal rate.

Not all of those who would wish to participate in the Back to Education Initiative would be seeking to re-enter education or training at the same time, and the gradual expansion of a range of part-time options could be sufficient to meet needs initially. In subsequent years, changing patterns in full-time enrolments within second level schools could free up additional capacity in this area.

It is recommended also that, where training allowances are payable to unemployed participants, they should be paid by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs under its Back to Education Allowance Schemes, and the Department of Education and Science should confine its role in this area to the provision of education options.

4.10 THIRD LEVEL MATURE STUDENT ACCESS PROGRAMME

With a view to increasing access of adult students to third level, it is desirable that universities and other institutions work towards:

- establishing mature student quotas in disciplines with low mature student representation;

- ensuring that the lower socio-economic groups achieve at least a proportionate representation in the allocation of such quotas;

- appraising current teaching practices and assessment procedures from an "adult-friendly" perspective;

- widening the range of provision, especially through modularisation, workplace delivery, part-time provision, distance education and more open approaches to credit accumulation and transfer;

- building in mature student supports through widening the recognition given to routes other than the traditional Leaving Certificate, provision of access courses and tutorial and mentoring systems and off-campus provision;

- expanding their distance education provision in a collaborative, cost-effective way.

In order to implement these initiatives, and recognising that some of them will place an extra burden of costs on the third level sector, it is recommended to allocate a fund of £1m per annum to support institutions embarking on initiatives in this field. The funds will be provided for innovations in areas such as:

- a co-ordinating network of participating colleges which reports on the delivery of the initiative, documents and disseminates good practice,

identifies barriers to access and recruitment, monitors the destinations of participants, and works to achieve a standardisation of non-Leaving Certificate entry routes to third level colleges which are flexible and responsive to adult needs;

- short term access and orientation programmes;

- counselling, childcare and mentoring supports;

- demonstration programmes related to modularisation and distance learning;

- innovations in access and in new arrangements between third level institutions, the workplace, the home and the community.

4.11 UPSKILLING THE WORKFORCE

In successive Partnership agreements, the Government and the Social Partners have attached central importance to the task of re-training the workforce. Key elements of the strategic framework adopted by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in this area include

- the integration of State support to business for training and human resource development with other company development strategy supports

- a significantly strengthened investment in employment services, offering guidance, counselling, referral to work or training for the unemployed, allied with enhanced activation and brokerage strategies between unemployed individuals and employers

- the establishment of Enterprise Ireland to accelerate the growth of sales, exports and employment of Irish industry. This brings together in one agency the strengths of the State's company development and export marketing services to give Irish suppliers an integrated support package of enterprise development, marketing, technology, R & D, business training, and science and innovation initiatives to help them develop as world class manufacturers and global suppliers.

- the emphasis on support for the development of business-led training networks where groups of firms work collectively to develop and implement best practice in training. The approach is underpinned by a strategic plan which links the firms' development and training strategy with other functional areas such as production, finance and marketing.

Developments in this area could be furthered by

- exploring the feasibility of putting in place a programme of paid educational leave in association with employers and trade unions;

- continued development of closer links between education and industry as for instance the Business/Education Partnership Forum, recently established by the Government, or the U.K. University for Industry;

- new pathways between work and education, with a particular emphasis on a flexible mix of full-time and part-time options;

- new funding mechanisms, as for instance the proposed Savings and Loans Fund for Education* or the Learning Accounts system in the U.K. where up to 1million people will access further learning in a situation where personal investment is topped up by the State, employers and others.

(* Following receipt of the report of the Committee on Funding Mechanisms for Adult and Continuing Education in August 1998, Mr Willie O Dea, T.D, Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science, directed that a feasibility study be undertaken on the establishment of a Savings and Loans Fund as a means of increasing participation in adult education. This study is now under way, and will examine the practicality and operation of such a fund in consultation with key interests.)

Barriers to women's participation in the labour market, particularly registration procedures which restrict their access to education and training, need to be removed. The provision of childcare to facilitate access to employment, as well as to education and training, will assume increasing importance as the fall in the birth rate reduces the supply of young people onto the labour market.

The availability of part-time options leading to national certification, albeit on a fee-paying basis, as proposed under the Back to Education Initiative, for those in employment with less than upper secondary education, should play a major role in promoting access to further education and training for those in the workforce.

4.12 COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT

Community Employment (CE) is the main State-funded work experience programme for unemployed people. Over forty thousand people participate on the programme annually. The recent Deloitte & Touche review of the Scheme recommended a significantly enhanced education and training component within the programme. Action is being taken by FAS in this area based on a personal progression path for each participant to improve their employability.

4.13 OUTREACH

The IALS Survey, the data in Chapter 3, and various evaluation reports point to the specific difficulties in ensuring that those who are most in need avail of adult education and training services. It has been shown that increasing availability of programmes does not address the needs of these target groups unless it is accompanied by specific supports, clear targeting and effective outreach strategies. It is clear also that men, particularly older men, tend to be under-represented on adult education programmes, programmes for the unemployed and programmes for Travellers. In addition, groups such as early school leavers, older unemployed and those unemployed for long periods, Travellers, lone parents, ex-offenders and those with disabilities face specific problems in accessing relevant services. Within programmes such as VTOS there is also evidence of an increase in the number of entrants with prior qualifications, which is a cause for concern. In that context, a study has been commissioned of the strategies and approaches which are most effective in reaching those who are hardest to reach. The results of this report, allied with data from the Women's Education Initiative, and feedback from the successes of the Community Education model and the work of EU Community Initiatives and Area Based Partnerships will play a vital role in informing future practice in this area. It is crucially important that outreach programmes be well targeted and critically and regularly evaluated to see if they are meeting their objectives.

Chapter **8** in this Paper recommends the establishment of structures to promote a co-ordinated framework for policy and delivery of adult education programmes. A critical concern for the new national structure will be the drawing up of quality standards and guidelines on best practice in the key area of outreach, recruitment and targeting. This will be a priority in the expansion of literacy services, and in the implementation of a Back to Education Initiative.

It is recommended that

- the national structures recommended in Chapter **8** place a priority emphasis on the development of national standards and guidelines of good practice in outreach, recruitment and targeting strategies, in order to ensure priority access to services for those most at risk;

- supporting services, such as childcare, guidance and counselling must be seen as an integral part of the provision of education and training if access is to be supported effectively;

- data on prior educational attainment, along with the duration of unemployment, should be gathered systematically as performance indicators on all programmes;

- data on access of travellers and those with disabilities to mainstream programmes should also be monitored;

- all providers should develop integrated links with (a) literacy services (b) guidance counselling and employment services and (c) employers as an intrinsic part of their programme delivery arrangements. This recommendation is predicated on an expansion of these services in line with needs.

The referral networks being developed under the pilot literacy initiatives (see paragraph 4.8) have a key role to play in this context, not only in forging strategic links with the employment services regarding provision for disadvantaged adults, but also in working closely with schools and the proposed Educational Welfare Service to support those in educationally disadvantaged households. These linkages, allied with the proposals for national and local structural co-ordination recommended in Chapter 8 will be vital in ensuring the development of an integrated area-based response to disadvantage.

4.14 PROVISION FOR THOSE WITH DISABILITIES

The transfer of responsibility for training of people with disabilities to FAS is not intended to obviate the need for all education and training providers to make specific provision to ensure that people with disabilities can access mainstream services.

The *National Anti-Poverty Strategy Working Group Report on Educational Disadvantage* recommended that strategies be adopted which ensure that *"there is continuum of provision for special educational needs, with students being enabled to move as necessary and practicable from one type of provision to another."*

A number of initiatives are already in place in this area, such as an equipment scheme to enable grants of up to £3,000 to be provided for schools for pupils with serious physical and/or communicative disabilities, and a third level special fund which supports equipment, materials, technological aids, targeted transport and sign language assistance/interpreters. Some £518,000 is provided annually under these schemes. In addition, capital funding for adaptation of premises is given priority consideration, and all new buildings include provision for access for those with disabilities. Following a *Report on Access and Participation of Students with Disabilities*, an extra £567,000 was allocated for special third level initiatives in this area, covering access programmes, student liaison projects, counselling services, and braille and sign language services.

It is recommended that

- the flexibility of the third level special funds be extended to cover the other levels of the system, including provision for adults;

- priority should be given to the physical adaptation of premises where this is needed;

- best practice in this area be documented and disseminated widely

- positive action be taken to encourage the training and employment of people with disabilities as teachers and trainers.

4.15 CAPITAL

For the most part, capital investment on buildings in the education system is confined to first, second and third level institutions. The earmarking of £20m for PLCs and Apprenticeship within the Education Technology Investment Fund was the first time a specific capital provision was made for accommodation and infrastructure needs in the further education sector. VTOS and adult and community education programmes are provided either in emerging spare accommodation in schools, or in rented premises and are equipped on an ongoing basis via their non-pay budget.

Within the constraints of available resources, and with a decline forecast in mainstream enrolments within the school system, it is not considered feasible or cost- effective to advocate the development of a separate infrastructure for adult education, and the bulk of adult education will therefore continue to be provided on the same basis as heretofore, either within existing schools or in rented premises. However, the absence of a capital budget gives rise to specific difficulties where

(a) a major adaptation of premises is needed;

(b) building is necessary to provide services in an area where no rented premises are available. While bussing would be explored as a first option in these situations, it is not always an effective solution in promoting access to services in disadvantaged areas;

(c) facilities are inadequate to support the work of the literacy service in terms of office accommodation, and one to one counselling;

It is recommended, therefore, that a small capital provision for second chance and adult education services should be included in future capital education provision to ensure that these contingencies are met.

4.16 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The evolution of adult education services should be underpinned by principles of equality in terms of

- providing for the needs of males and females on programmes and exposing participants to a broader range of occupational choices than those traditionally offered;

- removal of entry criteria which impose barriers for particular groups – particularly women, lone parents, Travellers, those with disabilities, those with literacy needs, ex-offenders etc;

- providing specific supports as needed, such as guidance, childcare etc;

- ensuring an inclusive approach and teaching materials and classroom practices which are appropriate and relevant to the target group;

- providing staff development strategies which promote awareness of the difficulties experienced by specific groups in accessing and benefiting from services, and the strategies to overcome them;

- removing financial barriers;

- providing family-friendly services in terms of timing and duration

- ensuring the promotion of equality in both urban and rural areas in a way which recognises the particular characteristics of rural poverty and the vital role of education in promoting rural development.

4.17 IRISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Provision which recognises the constitutional position of Irish as the first language, along with opportunities for adults to access courses in Irish language and culture should be a feature of the evolving adult education service.

CONCLUSION

In this Chapter the priorities for State investment are:-

- addressing literacy needs

- providing second chance education for adults with less than upper second level education

- and putting in place the necessary supports, such as guidance, childcare, and certification arrangements to facilitate access and progression in the context of a seamless transition between the different levels of the system.

Chapter 5

Community Education

CHAPTER 5
Community Education

5.1 A particular emphasis is placed in this Paper on presenting an outline of the features of Community Education as it has evolved in Ireland, because of the potential of this model to influence mainstream practice, particularly in reaching and engaging with those who are most excluded.

The concern in Ireland, and within the European Union, about social exclusion in our societies, has prompted much more sophisticated thinking and action as to how marginalised groups can be reached and become active agents of their own education. The Strategy for Lifelong Learning adopted by the EU Council of Education Ministers in 1996 highlighted the issue of Community Education as one of the nine principles for a lifelong education strategy. It went on to state:

> *"Empowering local communities to assume more responsibility for their education and learning should enable them to become learning communities. This is important for the continuing political, social, cultural and economic development of the individual and the local community. It is also important to enable local communities to cope more effectively with the rapid changes occurring in society. Finally, it is important in promoting active participation in the political and democratic process by all citizens."*
> (1996, p.11)

Here in Ireland, a significant range of Community Education initiatives has been taking place. They have received little attention within the traditional mainstream education system, but they hold great promise in relation to social change and in their success in engaging disadvantaged communities.

This chapter will explore the nature of Community Education as it has evolved in Ireland in recent years. It will begin by examining the concept of Community Education, its broad social purpose and levels of current activity in Ireland, and conclude with how the State can support the future development of the sector.

5.2 CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The literature tends to see Community Education in one or more of the following ways:

- as any off-campus provision as traditionally provided by university extra-mural departments or by other outreach providers in the education, community and voluntary sectors;

- the availability of the resources of local schools and other educational

institutions to the entire local community for learning purposes -- not merely to the daytime student population;

- as depicting an approach and a particular kind of relationship as opposed to a system of provision. This latter view is likely to see Community Education as

  - being firmly community-based, with local groups taking responsibility for and playing a key role in organising courses, deciding on programme content and recruiting tutors;

  - an empowering process, working as an equal partner with the knowledge, skills and experience a learner can offer, and taking account of the cultural and other needs of participants;

  - an agent of social change and community advancement, which helps communities and individuals to develop strategies to take a more active role in decision-making on issues which affect their lives and those of their families and communities;

  - a process built on models of active participation, and inclusive discourse and decision-making.

It is mainly in relation to the third of the above categories that Community Education is addressed here. This is a view which essentially equates Community Education with community development, i.e. as a process of working in solidarity with marginalised groups towards objectives of empowerment.

5.3 SOCIAL PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The importance of Community Education lies in the way it extends and deepens the democratic process and can successfully engage those who are most excluded in our society. Community Education at its best is concerned to overcome the constraints that limit the potential to participate. It aims to develop the capacity of the more marginalised sectors in the community to participate both in decision making and in the general social and cultural life of the society.

5.4 A PROFILE OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION ACTIVITY

The focus on marginalisation has tended to underpin the changing character of Community Education practice in Ireland. While this activity has been primarily of a voluntary nature, it has had a significant statutory involvement, notwithstanding its essential "bottom-up" character. Three European Anti-Poverty Programmes and the active role played by Government in funding and supporting this activity have been of key significance in its development.

The *Government Green Paper "Supporting Voluntary Activity" (1997)* lists no fewer than 16 statutory funding sources to the Voluntary and Community Sector. The Paper points to the special significance of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, noting that while

> *"It is not a significant funder in overall terms, its importance lies in the fact that it is taking a leading role in relation to developing a support framework for the voluntary and community sector. Also, it has a special Voluntary and Community Service Section within the Department."*
> (1997, p.85)

The impact of a variety of European driven programmes on the development of Community Education in recent years has been significant. In particular, Community Initiatives such as

- EMPLOYMENT [incorporating NOW (New Opportunities for Women); Horizon (addressing Disability and Disadvantage); Youthstart (Social Inclusion of Young People) and Integra (Educational/Training Innovations for Excluded Groups)];

- INTERREG -- Border Areas;

- LEADER (Rural Development), URBAN (for Urban Areas) and the Local Urban and Rural Development Programme

have brought unprecedented levels of funding and creative activity in this field.

The Community Development Programme was established by the Department of Social Welfare in 1990, with the purpose of assisting in the staffing of locally based community development resource centres in communities affected by high unemployment, poverty and disadvantage. The emphasis of the Programme was broadened in 1993 to include groups which acted as a resource for community development work with specific interest groups, for example Travellers, people with disabilities and women. 15 projects were funded under the Programme in 1990. This had risen to more than 50 in 1995 and almost 90 by 1998. Projects are based in inner city areas, rural areas, small towns and housing estates in suburban areas.

The significance of these programmes, whether rural or urban based, is in their definitive focus on excluded groups and on issues of exclusion as they are manifested locally. This approach views poverty as exclusion as well as a lack of resources and wealth, and has informed almost all poverty action programmes in the 1990s, in particular a variety of area based initiatives in locations of multiple disadvantage, both rural and urban. In this context, strategies to address poverty focus on supporting participation and empowerment rather than simply supporting passive welfare measures. The importance of Community Education within this approach lies in the role it can play in promoting critical reflection, in successfully engaging those from disadvantaged communities, in creating a sense of ownership and motivation, and in local capacity building.

5.5 PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Traditionally, Adult Education for personal and social development has had a high profile in Ireland. A great variety of agencies have offered a vast range of programmes with very varied subject content. Providers range from universities and other educational institutions through a multitude of arts and cultural associations to community and special interest groups. Many people have benefited greatly from the plentitude and diversity of courses provided which enabled them to develop their interests, talents and skills. People participated in such courses with varied motivations, such as seeking deeper knowledge and understanding of issues, development of leisure interests, improving employment prospects, learning crafts, nurturing artistic and cultural skills and appreciation, and developing skills in interpersonal relationships.

The dynamism of Irish society is reflected in a wide range of areas other than the purely economic. The area of the creative arts in Ireland is particularly striking in this regard. The quality of a society's cultural life and its capacity for creative and artistic expression may in the long run be more fundamental to the long-term sustainability of that society than any other aspect of the society's life. The current vibrancy in Ireland of artistic forms such as film, theatre, literature, music and dance not only enhances the daily life of Irish people but enables the society to achieve a stronger sense of cultural identity and defines a unique Irish contribution globally. As a medium of Adult Education, areas such as Community Arts have emerged in recent years as amongst the most innovative and invigorating approaches to personal and community development.

There is a tradition in Adult Education of course provision in a wide array of subjects, usually encompassing a comprehensive range of pursuits in the cultural, artistic or craft areas. This is a valued tradition in terms of its contribution to general personal, social and overall cultural well-being.

There is evidence of a widespread public interest in these features of Adult Education provision. This is something to be celebrated and sustained. In the era of lifelong learning, it is a tradition which is likely to develop in new ways. However, as is evident from the International Adult Literacy Survey results, a limitation of this tradition is that the majority of participants involved tend to be those who achieved success within the initial education system.

However, there have been encouraging developments in a number of community education initiatives engaged in by specific groups who have experienced high levels of disadvantage. This is particularly evident in the dynamic role played by organisations within the Travelling Community in supporting personal, social and community development, and in collectively and individually challenging discrimination and asserting their rights. Promotion of group solidarity and co-operation, a strong focus on empowerment and support for education, and an awareness of the importance of participation in decision-making are key features of the approach.

Women's groups are the most visible example of education for personal and social development aimed at achieving a greater sense of personal identity and social and personal rights. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s there has been unprecedented growth in community-based women's education. This has largely taken the form of locally based initiatives organised and implemented by and for women. As with other community education approaches, participative and partnership models with a high degree of local autonomy are key features of these programmes.

Participants in women's groups invariably describe significant difficulties they have overcome in order to become involved, such as low self-esteem and fear of engaging in the learning process. They also describe how joining others whose experiences are largely similar heightens their sense of well-being and enables them to re-engage with the broader community.

While Adult Education responses such as those discussed have been innovative and successful in engaging vulnerable sectors of the population, they have found it difficult to influence mainstream practice. In particular, acquiring formal qualifications or accreditation for the learning undertaken within these initiatives remains difficult.

Key needs are for

- mechanisms to provide accreditation and certification for achievements in this area, where needed and

- improved dialogue and opportunities for the learning in this area, particularly in regard to outreach strategies, course design and teaching styles, to influence mainstream policy and practice.

5.6 AREA-BASED PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

In implementing the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development 1994-99 described in Chapter 3, the Area-Based Partnerships have relied heavily on community capacity building to enhance the ability of local people to tackle local problems.

Significant attributes have been identified regarding the contribution of the area-based, integrated partnership approach to local development:-

- it contributes to a recognition of concentrations of poverty in urban and rural areas;

- it presents an opportunity to better integrate and target the programmes of mainline Government Departments in tackling poverty;

- it gives specific recognition to the importance of community involvement and development;

- it mainstreams ideas that had been tried in previous pilot programmes. (Frazer, 1996, pp.4041)

5.7 COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS

While rural areas have traditionally had a well-developed voluntary sector, latter - day Community Education has found it more difficult to put down roots in rural settings than in urban ones. The multi-class character of rural communities has tended to limit the participation of excluded sectors in locally based community activity. Issues of economic or infrastructural or amenity development tend to surface for priority attention in rural community activity with greater ease than issues of exclusion. The dispersed and less visible nature of rural exclusion has also tended to relegate it in local development activities.

Notwithstanding these problems, rural Community Education has also begun to thrive recently. Its attention has focused particularly on issues concerned with

- the problems of exclusion encountered by rural women -- isolation, lack of access to services, especially child care, and low levels of participation in decision making structures locally;

- the growing problems of rural elderly, especially their vulnerability arising from social and physical isolation;

- the economic and other disadvantages experienced by smallholders;

- protecting the legacy of local culture and heritage.

5.8 STRUCTURING AND MAINSTREAMING THE SECTOR

While statutory support has been provided to the voluntary and community sector, key weaknesses have been that

- funding has been short-term, with commitment to its continuation uncertain;

- the education sector has been a relatively minor player in funding, and as a result, there has been inadequate interconnection between Community Education and other aspects of education provision;

- innovation in provision has not been accompanied by a corresponding level of research or policy formulation. This is critical for effective evaluation.

The fundamental challenge to the statutory system posed by Community Education is one of providing a facilitative, integrated and secure framework which can support the ongoing development of the sector while retaining its spontaneity,

creativity and local relevance. The sector's contribution to fora such as the NESC and NESF and to the National Partnership Agreements (e.g. PCW and P2000) suggest that the sector has been strengthened by such involvement.

A structure for Community Education must recognise the central principle of the current provision, namely, that it is a participative process. The formal system for its part must be prepared to enter a new kind of relationship with participants in this sector.

The responsiveness and creativity of the sector need to be continually matched by the integration of the resulting lessons into mainstream provision. Failure to mainstream best practice results in

- a continuous need to "re-invent the wheel" when approaching discrete local issues, and a failure to transfer the lessons derived from a successful local initiative to other potential beneficiaries;

- a risk of isolated, project-based initiatives, poorly integrated with mainstream activities;

- a dissipation of effort and resources arising out of the lack of investment in coordinated support structures;

- ongoing short-term, insecure funding arrangements, diverting the attention of those involved to funding issues and making the sector unattractive in career terms.

5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

The task of mainstreaming best practice from Community Education within a framework of lifelong learning should be informed by the following requirements:

- the development of effective outreach strategies and supporting services which systematically target the participation of those most in need. The role of activists with local knowledge and networks extending deep into the community is critically important here;

- a comprehensive system of research and data collection pertaining to the Adult Education sector;

- an inclusive approach, where the needs of the learner and his/her cultural and community context are central;

- a multiplicity of providers and modes of learning;

- an equal partnership between participants and providers;

- a higher level of flexibility by the formal system in its modes and range of provision;

- systematic mechanisms of national certification and accreditation options predicated on a diversity of programme pathways;

- appropriate structures for partnership between the different levels and sectors of the system;

- a rigorous approach to evaluating effectiveness in achieving objectives, and identifying and disseminating best practice.

Chapter 6

Accreditation, Certification and Guidance

CHAPTER 6
Accreditation, Certification and Guidance

6.1 This chapter will address the accreditation and certification of adult learning, and the development of an adult guidance service.

Accreditation refers to the process of setting standards, assuring quality and specifying the credit to be applied to a learning event within a comprehensive framework. Certification refers to the process of making awards on the successful completion of a designated body of accredited learning. Assessment refers to the process whereby it is established if a candidate has attained a particular standard on a set of objective learning criteria.

6.2 ADULT LEARNING ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATION

A feature of many adult learners' experience is that they have received little formal affirmation of their learning achievements. This is particularly the case in community-based education and most especially for those whom the formal education system has failed (Kelly, 1994).

Society at large attaches an increasing significance to the attainment of certified qualifications, as a passport to employment and further education, as public recognition of achievement, and as a major motivating influence. These possibilities, as well as the psychological and emotional returns on gaining a formal qualification, are denied many adults.

Much of adult education activity is of a 'non-standard' form, leaving the participants outside the boundaries not only of mainstream provision but of mainstream accreditation. The institutional resistance to accrediting learning which occurs in contexts and locations other than in second and third level institutions is a major difficulty here. This difficulty emerges in a number of spheres:

- despite the pioneering work of the NCVA, NCEA and FAS, a number of recent innovations within the university sector, there are generally poorly developed mechanisms for the accreditation or certification of prior learning, particularly of prior experiential learning. The dominance of assessment through written examinations, the focus on a narrow range of intelligences, and a reluctance to recognise new areas of learning and new modes of assessment pose barriers to access and progression;

- systems for accreditation and certification of learning in the workplace are, as yet, relatively undeveloped;

- Community Education has been largely unaccredited until recently.

6.3 WIDENING ACCESS WHILE ENSURING QUALITY

As the formal education system, particularly the university system, comes face to face with the emerging reality of mass lifelong learning, it is confronted in an unique way with the challenge of engaging and assisting in the process while simultaneously guaranteeing the academic quality of its work and qualifications. The historical tradition of European universities makes it particularly difficult for them to come to terms with the mass participation, egalitarian ideology of lifelong learning. In particular the universities are concerned to ensure that in broadening the routes of accreditation to embrace new kinds and ways of learning, they must also protect the legitimacy and the integrity of their qualifications. As is stated in the *European White Paper, Teaching and Learning : Towards the Learning Society, (1996)*, this is a major difficulty confronting educational institutions across Europe.

The case for the accreditation of prior and experiential learning must rely on its academic justification rather than its social desirability. To do otherwise, would be to risk the denigration of standards, to undermine the quality of the qualification and diminish its value both in career and ongoing education terms.

The learner centred and sometimes collective or communal aspect of much of Adult Education raises particular issues concerning the appropriateness of current dominant accreditation and certification practices. There is concern in the field, especially perhaps in the area of Community Education, that the adoption of current dominant approaches to student assessment and the accreditation and certification of their learning may:

- shift the focus of the process from the learner to the syllabus;

- increase the likelihood of 'second chance failure' (Fleming,1997);

- damage the collective, co-operative dimension of the process by a focus on competition;

- damage the innovation of the sector;

- make the sector less attractive to those with a negative early school experience.

A key concern is to achieve an appropriate balance between

- recognising the significance of certification to the personal and career development of the adult and to the quality of the provision and

- ensuring that the potential requirements of an accreditation and certification system do not rigidify the sector and make it less responsive to learners' needs, particularly those of excluded groups.

Given the influence of assessment and accreditation systems on curriculum content and teaching methodologies in education generally, the future character of Adult Education will depend heavily on whether the emerging certification framework is responsive to the needs of learners rather than the needs of institutions.

In Ireland, a number of efforts are being made to resolve this dilemma. Of particular note are the developments in recent years in moving towards a single national framework for accreditation and certification of vocational qualifications.

The NCVA has developed a pioneering model of outcomes based assessment and accreditation for the further education sector. Key features of the system are

- that it is **modular**, allowing participants to receive Records of Achievement for individual modules, and to accumulate credits towards full awards. This makes the approach suitable for full-time or part-time courses and enables learners to progress at their own pace;

- **transparency** – the NCVA publishes Guides and module descriptors which set out the aims, expected learning outcomes, and assessment criteria for each module;

- that it is **criterion-based** and outcomes-focused, and is designed to recognise achievement in the development of personal, social and communicative skills as well as vocational skills;

- that it uses a **variety of modes of assessment**, moving away from the dominance of written examinations as the sole assessment tool;

- that is now **available to a variety of providers** outside the formal education system -- in adult literacy programmes, community education, the prison service, EU Community Initiative programmes etc. This is a recent development, in that Foundation Level certification was made available nationally with effect September 1997, and the first national implementation of Level 1 certification will occur in March 1999. Over 400 centres have registered for this and participated in inservice training.

The introduction of Level 1 NCVA certification will complete a continuous route where young people and adults who left school with no qualifications can progress from Foundation Level through to Level 2 (generally provided through PLC courses) and from there to third-level. Foundation Level and Level 1 awards play a significant role in making alternative forms of national certification available for the first time to adult learners seeking a return to basic education.

At third level, the NCEA Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects System (ACCS), and the recent introduction of the NCEA Foundation Certificate, also represent a significant advance in supporting flexible learning and delivery. Within the university system, the emergence of modular degrees, attained through credit accumulation, is a noteworthy development in the field. Many of the universities also now offer access or foundation courses for mature students and have embarked on a range of innovations to accommodate greater numbers from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Despite these welcome initiatives, there is a continued persistence of many gaps in the accreditation and certification of adult learning. As mentioned earlier, these gaps are particularly evident in the lack of recognition, until very recently, afforded to community-based Adult Education, and the lack of systems to accredit experiential learning and employment based training. The difficulties arise not only in accreditation and certification, but also in the currency accorded to awards in terms of guaranteeing progression to higher levels of education and training within the formal sector. This is compounded by a lack of co-ordination, where the flexibility of individual institutions in recognising alternative awards is not replicated across sister colleges. While the development of a range of new foundation/access programmes at third level is playing an important role in providing access to third level education for many excluded groups, it raises serious questions as to why this has not been accompanied by a systematic widening of the recognition accorded for entry purposes to other types of national award.

Furthermore, the present multiplicity of accrediting or certifying bodies creates a system which is highly complex and is still far away from a structure which is seamless and coherent and which enables recognition, transfer and progression within the overall system from childhood through to adulthood.

TEASTAS, the Irish National Certification Authority, was established by the Government in 1995 on a non-statutory basis. The principal function of TEASTAS is to advise the Minister for Education and Science on actions to be undertaken and, where appropriate, to undertake any such actions which it considers necessary to assist in putting in place a single, nationally and internationally accepted, certification structure covering all extra-university third level and further and continuing education and training programmes. TEASTAS published an initial report in January, 1996, on how it envisaged a new national framework would operate. TEASTAS continued to work closely and in consultation with the partners in the education and training sectors and issued its second report in January 1998.

The Minister for Education and Science has also consulted widely and held a consultative Forum on the Development of a National Qualifications Framework in February 1998, at which the relevant agencies, institutions and social partners played a full role.

On 9 June 1998, the Government authorised the drafting of the Education and Training (Qualifications) Bill. Drafting is now continuing in the Office of the Parliamentary Draftsman and the aim is to publish the Bill within the next two

months. The Bill will set up the appropriate organisational framework to underpin the development of a national framework of qualifications.

The Government is now committed to putting in place a national framework of qualifications. Learners will be central to the new arrangements, which will ensure that there is a single national basis for co-ordinating and comparing all education and training awards. This will involve setting out in the legislation how such a framework can be set up and how it can be continually revised and updated. Within such a new legislative arrangement, there will also be mechanisms to ensure that the front-line users, i.e., the learners, employers and trade unions, are confident that awards are only made where satisfactory standards have been attained. Arising from this, progression arrangements and improved mobility for learners will be developed between and within levels of qualifications throughout education and training.

The enactment of the new legislation, which is planned for mid-1999, will be a major development for adult education. It will be essential that the new arrangements to be put in place will ensure that the certification of adult education

- relies on a set of transparent and multi-faceted standards;

- recognises and awards achievement based on multiple intelligences;

- is capable, through a set of objective and broadly-based criteria, of assessing a wide range of learning;

- embodies a variety of assessment modes, including portfolios, oral, aural, project-based etc;

- enables learners to join programmes at different points on the route, depending on their other learning and qualifications, or to arrive at the same qualification from a multiplicity of backgrounds;

- is designed to reward achievement rather than reinforce failure;

- allows for what the OECD terms the "postponement of differentiation" i.e. that the selection of particular kinds of education or routes should happen later rather than earlier in life, and should indeed remain open through life;

- provides for criterion referenced assessment by placing a focus on learning outcomes as well as on learning processes;

- is suitable for implementation in a wide variety of settings, including formal and informal education and training, and work-based training;

- is available flexibly and frequently, in line with learners' needs.

6.4 LEARNING OUTCOMES

The range of providers and settings involved in Adult Education greatly increases the attractiveness of a focus on learning outcomes in assessment. A focus on outcomes represents a fundamental challenge to traditional forms of assessment, based on competitive examinations following on lengthy and designated courses of study.

There is a tendency to confuse a focus on learning outcomes with a focus on competence. Competence-based approaches can sometimes be excessively narrow in the range of criteria they choose to employ in assessment. A more generic outcomes focus lends itself to much wider behavioural, attitudinal and interpersonal criteria than the more traditional forms of assessment. An outcomes approach must continuously guard against the atomised, skill tests, knowledge "assessments" which Adult Education can be so critical of with regard to the traditional system.

Rather than focusing on a narrowly prescribed course or programme of courses en route to a final examination, an outcomes based approach would

- begin with agreement on what a member of a particular profession or occupation must know and/or be able to do, i.e., a system of objective standards;

- agree on the mechanisms for assessing a learner's ability to meet these standards;

- be concerned, not with the routeway through which the learner arrives at the standards, but with the appropriateness of the assessment criteria and mechanisms used, and the rigour and breadth of the standards themselves. This must be done in a way which supports the quality of the learning process, which effectively motivates the learner and rewards his/her achievements.

The attractions of an outcomes based assessment approach are that it can

- provide a mechanism for the validation of prior learning, regardless of the source or the provider;

- resolve the risk associated with traditional competitive systems of assessment where widening access can diminish the value of the qualification;

- introduce much greater flexibility within the education sector and between it and other locales for learning such as the home and the workplace, in (theoretically) breaking the links between the provider and the assessment;

- allow for the modularisation of assessment, and for the development of transparent and comprehensive mechanisms for credit accumulation and transfer.

6.5 GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES

There is no system of guidance or counselling in the education sector to cater for adult needs. Specific learning supports are needed to enable disadvantaged adults with low self--esteem and/or literacy difficulties to gain optimum advantage from a return to education.

For unemployed adults who have left initial education with minimal qualifications and literacy/numeracy skills, whose school experience was a negative one, there are particular challenges to be faced in exposure to the risks of learning, in forging new relationships, in participation in group work, and in juggling the demands of family and course work. While the investment in upgrading the FAS Employment Service and the Local Employment Service will play an important part in initial contact, information and referral to education and training of those who are unemployed, this is "first point of contact" guidance, and does not obviate the need for continued support of those who have already embarked on programmes.

The Back to Education Initiative, allied with the growth in provision in adult literacy will require the provision of supporting guidance, counselling and psychological services.

Such needs will cover a spectrum ranging from

- initial outreach, particularly in the literacy, basic education and VTOS areas;

- vocational information and guidance;

- support in identifying an education/training plan in line with interests and abilities;

- advice in dealing with learning fears, low self-esteem, motivation etc;

- counselling for participants with health, welfare, relationships and family stresses, lone parenthood etc.;

- expert services for those with acute needs e.g homeless men participating on literacy and VTOS programmes, provision for adults with special needs, participants with substance abuse problems;

- brokerage and mentor services to assist in progression to employment, and where needed, to provide certification options in a work-based setting;

Attention will also need to be directed towards the development of an improved information base on education and training options.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Issues of assessment, accreditation and certification go to the heart of education provision in terms of its quality; the public perception of its value, and its role in the broad social system in allocating people to different functions and positions in the society. For these reasons, it is an area in which change is almost always slow and incremental. However, changes in this area along the lines suggested are critical to promoting access, participation and benefit, and equality of outcomes for adults re-entering the system.

If the persistence of class-based under achievement in education is to be overcome, it is essential to move away from the dominance of written competitive examinations designed to test only a narrow range of skills and intelligences, and to establish progression pathways which provide for a variety of learning routes within and between the formal and informal education and training sectors.

Criteria-referenced, outcomes-based assessment appears to offer a solution to this problem.

This chapter recommends

- the speedy development of a national framework of qualifications. This will play a key role in putting a progressive learning continuum in place from childhood through adulthood. It is recommended that the assessment system underpinning this development should be criterion-referenced and outcomes based;

- the development of transparent mechanisms for the accreditation and assessment of prior learning and work based experience as a priority in Adult Education. It will also be a key requirement in promoting the flexibility of the education and training system to respond to industry needs in the years ahead, as part of a systematic approach to upgrading the skills of the workforce on an ongoing basis;

- the establishment of a national comprehensive system of Adult Guidance and Counselling to meet the needs outlined in Paragraph 6.5.

Chapter 7

Training of Adult Educators

CHAPTER 7
Training of Adult Educators

7.1 This chapter looks at the distinctiveness of Adult Education; explores the role of professional associations in the development of education systems and proposes a system for the recognition of professional adult educators.

7.2 DISTINCTIVENESS OF ADULT EDUCATION

The literature on Adult Education continuously refers to the differences between Adult Education and other forms of education. Adults are considered to learn differently from children for the following reasons:-

- the adult learner is usually a voluntary learner who has opted into the process on the basis of a clear personal motive;

- the relationship between the student and tutor should be one of equals;

- with adults, learning needs are related principally to life experiences whereas, with younger students, learning needs are concerned with developing organised patterns for understanding future experiences;

- adults learn best in a problem solving, needs-based way and draw their learning from a variety of different sources and disciplines;

- Adult Education is also likely to engage a wider range of intelligences in the learning process than the purely, or principally, cognitive. For this reason, issues of self-awareness, interpersonal skills and different modes of creative expression are deemed to be particularly relevant to the adult learning process.

In adult learning, the learner replaces the tutor at the centre of the process. The greater body of experience which the adult learner brings to the process provides the context in which all the learning takes place. Principles of teaching or working with adults in an educational context are as follows:

- the tutor attempts to expose the learner to the possibilities for continuous self-development and self-fulfilment;

- the teaching process relies on a relationship of mutual respect and trust, both between the tutor and students and amongst the students themselves. The tutor becomes a co-learner;

- students are involved with the tutor in formulating needs-based learning objectives;

- the tutor works with the students in designing accessible curricula, and in designing and implementing methods of self or peer appraisal;

- empowerment, and the capacity for critical analysis are key objectives in the process;

- ensuring motivation, relevance, and taking account of the cultural and community context of participants are central tasks in the process.

7.3 PROFESSIONALISING THE SECTOR

In common with many other aspects of Adult Education, the sector compares poorly with the other education sectors in terms of the stability of employment, career options and structures for ongoing development of practitioners. If the developmental energy of Adult Education is to be effectively channelled and expertise retained within the system, the sector requires:-

- the development of recognised qualifications for the teaching and practice of Adult Education;

- structures for ongoing inservice training and career progression for practitioners;

- a Forum for Practitioners of Adult and Community Education.

This is not an attempt to segregate the provision of adult education from other forms of provision, or to exclude practitioners in other areas of education from practising in the Adult Education field. Rather, it is a question of widening the existing mechanisms for recognition of qualifications in education and training to embrace a variety of new qualifications in this field, and of providing mechanisms for accreditation of the learning of many practitioners in the sector who have considerable expertise and experience, but who lack formal qualifications. It is also a question of promoting teaching strategies appropriate to adults as a key element in the evolution of a framework for lifelong learning.

A growing number of employment opportunities have arisen in the adult and further education and training sector in recent years. Organisations such as FAS, NRB and associated agencies, VECs, CERT, Teagasc, the burgeoning community sector, the Prison Service, Employers, Trade Unions and voluntary bodies are involved in adult education and provide employment for adult educators.

Many of those employed have been recruited on the basis of a second level teaching qualification or a trade or business qualification. While a number of people in situations such as this will have taken a variety of orientation and other programmes relating to working with adults, they will not in most cases have been accorded professional recognition for this. Many with an Adult Education qualification, but who lack a "teaching" qualification, may find it impossible to secure stable employment in their chosen field. There are also many in the community and voluntary sector with expertise and experience in this area but who lack the professional recognition of a formal qualification.

While it is essential that Adult Education retains the flexibility and freedom to draw from a wide range of sources and expertise, it is vital that, over time, qualifications for the teaching and practice of Adult Education be accorded formal recognition. This process would need to recognise the diversity of the sector and provide for the multiplicity of actors and providers in the field.

People working in the field who currently lack a qualification should be enabled to attain certification through in-work education, block release and inservice opportunities. Those who are active as volunteers in their own communities should be provided with the opportunity to upgrade their knowledge, attitude and skills and to gain certification through flexible procedures.

These considerations are reflected in the strategy document *"Strategy for Lifelong Learning" (1996)* which proposes that qualifications for adult educators should

- ultimately apply only to third level qualifications;

- allow for professional movement between the sectors, through inservice provision;

- allow for a variety of entry points to the profession reflecting the diversity of those who currently work in the area;

- address the learning and education possibilities offered by new, multi-media technologies and distance learning;

An inter-agency Working Group is recommended to progress the issue of formal recognition of qualifications for Adult Education practitioners. This working group would need to

- represent the wide range of agencies in the field;

- examine the range of qualifications currently available in relation to the needs of the sector;

- make recommendations on the future recognition of qualifications in the Adult Education and training sector.

7.4   STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The role played by professional bodies and associations in affirming the professional status of the members, in enhancing their members' individual and collective capacity and in contributing to debate and policy making of their sector is widely recognised. Such associations are highly significant in securing and enhancing the distinct identity of the sector with which they are associated. The fact that there is no forum in which adult and community educators can come together as a distinct and recognised professional group is a major deficit in laying down solid foundations for the ongoing development of the field.

A forum for Adult Education practitioners would

- provide an opportunity for the exchange of ideas and the sharing of good practice;

- provide a mechanism for new thinking and innovation in the field;

- enable practitioners to inform policy development;

- contribute to the development of solidarity and peer support amongst practitioners.

This needs to be accompanied by systematic investment in inservice training, and by the development of career structures and conditions of employment which reward excellence and professionalism, and which ensure the retention of expertise in the system for the future benefit of the sector and its participants.

7.5   RECOMMENDATIONS

This Chapter recommends

- the establishment of an inter-agency working group to make recommendations on the formal recognition of professional qualifications for adult education practitioners;

- the establishment of a Forum for Practitioners of Adult and Community Education;

- and the development of organised and well recognised mechanisms for inservice training and career progression.

Developments in this area should be seen as an essential part of the strategy to promote quality assurance within Adult Education, and as a critical strand in supporting the evolution of a national qualifications framework. As the outflow of highly qualified young people onto the labour market in the years ahead reduces, the competitiveness of the Irish economy will depend to a greater extent than ever on the capacity of the education and training system to successfully engage with adult learners.

Chapter 8

Structures for Adult Education

CHAPTER 8
Structures for Adult Education

8.1   Previous chapters in this Paper have set out the key role of Adult Education. Weaknesses which must be addressed when putting new structural arrangements in place, include

- lack of a core identity at national level;

- low levels of articulation and communication between the sector and the other education and training sectors;

- high levels of fragmentation leading to the duplication of effort and the failure to share good practice;

- low levels of investment and a heavy reliance on short term EU funding;

- inadequate attention to adult needs within the overall education system and poor access and progression opportunities, particularly for those seeking to re-enter the system with literacy and basic education needs;

- Ireland comparing poorly with other countries in terms of performance in adult literacy, educational levels of those over 25, and access to continuing education and training;

- rigidities in the system which are ill-suited to adult needs.

These weaknesses can only be addressed by systematic investment on a phased basis. While not on the scale of the challenges which faced the education system in the 1960s with the expansion of second level education provision and the subsequent rapid increase in participation rates at third level, Adult Education is the last area of mass education to be developed in Ireland. The rationale for investment in adult education does not rest on purely economic issues, but also on the central role of learning in creating a democratic society, in promoting culture and identity, and in enriching and strengthening individuals, families and communities.

8.2   MAINSTREAMING THE SECTOR

The challenge of coming up with an Adult Education structure is one of creating a framework for the sector which accords it a higher level of priority in mainstream provision while ensuring innovation, flexibility, responsiveness and learner centred commitment.

The possible gains and risks are as follows:-

Table 12

Possible Gains and Risks of Mainstreaming

GAINS	RISKS
Recognition of learning for ongoing progression purposes	Capacity for innovation may be undermined
Secure long term and better funding and other resources	May become less responsive to learner needs
More transparent mechanisms for policy making and decision-making	Loss of autonomy for practitioners and participants
Career structure for participants	May become exclusionary
Quality assurance and guarantee of standards	May become curriculum driven
Greater potential for coherent national policy	May become less accessible to marginalised groups

The search for a win-win solution in generating a structure for Adult Education would aim to maximise the gains while minimising the risks. It is likely therefore to:

- seek integration while celebrating diversity and innovation;

- be locally responsive within a national framework of objectives;

- focus on Adult Education with reference to Lifelong Learning objectives;

- model ways of decision making which include the participant and the provider;

- seek complementarity rather than uniformity;

- ensure a focus on targeted and effective programmes.

8.3 THE STAKEHOLDERS

There are a number of key stakeholders in the Adult Education sector. A structure for Adult Education must aim to include all of them if it is to succeed in developing a comprehensive and integrated approach.

The main stakeholders include:

Participants – Adult Education is probably more likely to be "customer" driven than most other sectors. The voluntary nature of the participation, the fact that it frequently involves a direct financial cost to the participant, its immediacy in terms of its goal directed, problem-solving nature as well as its ideological commitment to participation and empowerment both at individual and community level, all suggest a central role for the participant as a stakeholder.

Providers – These include not only those with a direct involvement in Adult Education per se, but the entirety of providers with a Lifelong Learning remit.

Funders –- Adult Education draws its funds from a wide range of public sources. The main Government Departments and other statutory bodies involved include the Departments of Education and Science; Enterprise, Trade and Employment; Social, Community and Family Affairs; Tourism, Sport and Recreation; Justice, Equality and Law Reform; Department of the Environment and Local Government, Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, the Department of Arts, Culture, Gaeltacht and the Islands; and agencies such as third level colleges, FAS, Teagasc, Area Based Partnerships, ADM, the public library service, An Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), the Arts Council and the VECs.

Social Partners – Adult Education is attaining a growing significance as a central plank of society's economic strategy. It is important therefore that employers and trade unions are enabled to contribute to shaping the national Adult Education agenda, as well as the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.

Accrediting Bodies – Earlier chapters have drawn attention to the crucial role which the recognition, validation and certification of learning can play in mainstreaming and generally enhancing the overall value of Adult Education.

Practitioners – The expertise of those with long experience in the field is vital to the development of a quality system. This Green Paper has placed some considerable emphasis on the role which the professionalisation of the sector can play in further securing its development.

Policy Makers – A growing, responsive and relevant Adult Education sector requires an ongoing process of policy appraisal and development. No strategy for the future development of the sector can ignore the necessity for a mechanism and a capacity for policy generation.

8.4 NATIONAL STRUCTURE

A NATIONAL ADULT LEARNING COUNCIL

The absence of a coherent, adequately funded and proactive body at central level has been an important factor in the under-development of the Adult Education

sector up to now. Historically, both the *"Murphy Report" (1973)* and the *"Kenny Report" (1984)* proposed the establishment of a national body for this purpose.

Currently, the Department of Education and Science is developing a support service for the further education sector as part of the European Integra Programme. Recognising that this initiative has yet to crystallise fully, and that in its final shape, it is likely to have a bearing on national structures for Adult and Community Education, it is now recommended that a National Adult Learning Council be established as an Executive Agency of the Department of Education and Science. The Council should be established on an administrative basis in the first instance, and later as an executive agency of the Department under the statutory framework of the Education (No 2) Bill when enacted. The powers of the Minister under the Bill to establish executive agencies to carry out support services will enable the establishment of the Council as a statutory corporation separate from the Department of Education and Science, but accountable to the Minister.

8.5   TERMS OF REFERENCE

Subject to the approval of the Minister for Education and Science in consultation with other Ministers, the functions of the National Adult Learning Council would be:-

- to promote the development of the adult education sector in line with national social and economic needs;

- to promote co-ordination of the work of participating bodies within an agreed national strategy and policy framework, and to liaise with the wide variety of stakeholders in the field;

- to advise on Adult Education priorities;

- to monitor the implementation of an agreed strategy;

- to advise Government on policy and related matters in the field of Adult Education;

- to liaise with the other education sectors in facilitating the achievement of lifelong learning objectives;

- to fund, co-ordinate and monitor the delivery of programme and staff development initiatives for designated adult education programmes within the further education sector of the Department of Education and Science;

- to advise on quality standards in adult education provision in consultation with the National Qualifications Authority, and to facilitate the dissemination of good practice;

- to engage in research and evaluation in the field of adult education and training.

It is recommended that as a priority task, in consultation with key interests, the National Council should develop national quality standards and guidelines of good practice in regard to effective strategies for outreach, targeting and recruitment of those most at risk.

8.6 STRUCTURE

The Council would be structured as shown in the following figure:

Table 13
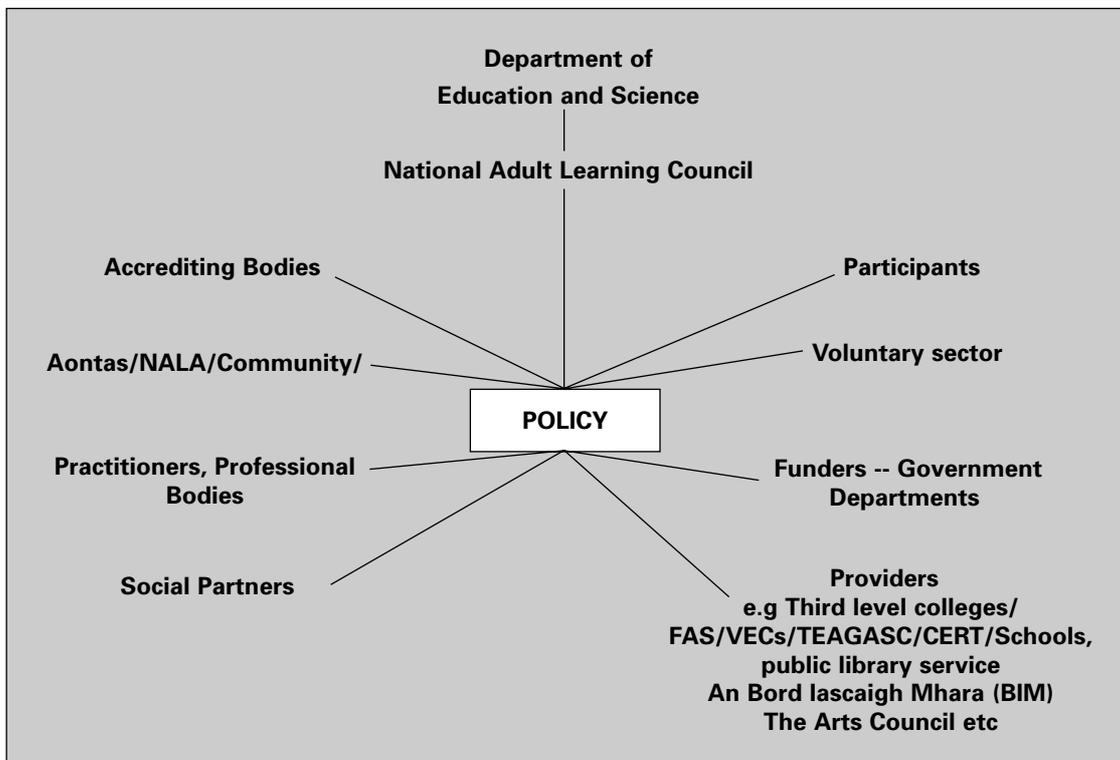
8.7 LOCAL STRUCTURES

A wide number of agencies is involved in the provision of Adult Education and training at local level (third level colleges, VECs, secondary, community and comprehensive schools, FAS, CERT, TEAGASC, Area Partnerships, the public library service, community groups, health and welfare initiatives, youth services, private providers, in-company training etc). It is clear that there needs to be

- an awareness of the full range of services on offer, which is readily accessible to local clients and employment services;

- an area-based strategy to address key literacy/numeracy and basic education needs, as well as education and training to meet the emerging sectoral needs of local economies;

- an integrated area-based approach, i.e. one which ensures that:

  - resources are targeted at critical areas;

  - policies and provision of services are underpinned by an agreed strategy;

  - services are client-focused, complementary and cost effective;

  - the expertise of the full range of statutory and voluntary actors in the field is harnessed to provide a quality integrated and area-based service,

  - based on principles of partnership and shared responsibility.

While ad hoc Adult Education Boards have been convened by VECs at local level, there have been criticisms of the effectiveness of this approach to date. The criticisms relate to the degree to which the Boards are representative of providers, the inadequacy of the funding made available nationally for the Adult Education service, and the degree of decision-making which can be exercised by the boards regarding the deployment of resources.

Effective local structures for co-ordination of adult education should recognise the need for a multiplicity of providers, and allow statutory and voluntary providers to work in harmony and partnership to meet local needs. This should involve the operation of Local Adult Learning Boards on a broad partnership basis, charged with responsibility for co-ordinating the provision of adult education in their respective regions.

The Paper does not propose specific mechanisms for the implementation of this proposal, but aims to set out the functions of the Boards and the principles which should underpin their operation. How the implementation of these recommendations should best be achieved within emerging developments in regard to local services reforms generally will be a key focal point for debate in the consultation process which follows the publication of the Green Paper.

8.8 FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL ADULT LEARNING BOARDS

It is suggested that the Local Adult Learning Boards would

- establish the level of adult education and training needs in their region;

- develop an integrated action plan at local level to meet these needs;

- promote and develop a comprehensive information service regarding the full range of services available locally. The co-ordination and complementarity of developments in regard to the Employment Services and the evolution of Adult Guidance and Counselling supports for those enrolled on programmes would also be a key concern of the Boards;

- be responsible for the coordination of the work of participating bodies at local level;

- facilitate the targeting of adult education and training resources on area priorities in the context of an agreed lifelong learning strategy;

- decide on the deployment of adult education resources within the education sector on the basis of agreed national criteria;

- provide organisational, administrative, professional and financial support to adult education services in the area;

- report annually to the National Adult Learning Council on the delivery of services in the region.

Members of the boards would be chosen for their expertise and involvement in the field of Adult Education and training, their knowledge of area needs and their capacity to influence and report on decision-making and delivery in their respective agencies. The agencies represented should include the VEC, FAS, Area Partnerships, third level colleges, nominees of other education and training providers in the region, the public library service, the health and welfare sectors, employers and social partners, the voluntary and community sector and employment services.

It is critical that these structures should not involve disproportionate outlays on administration.

8.9 PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE OPERATION OF LOCAL ADULT LEARNING BOARDS

It is recommended that the Local Adult Learning Boards should operate in accordance with the following key principles:-

Area-based planning

Action plans in each region should start with an assessment of existing provision relative to needs, and develop an action plan to respond to identified priorities.

Social Inclusion and Community Development

Resources should be prioritised on ensuring

(a) that the needs of adults with literacy/numeracy difficulties are addressed;

(b) that all areas have access to basic education services targeted at adults who have not completed upper second level education;

(c) that outreach strategies in use take account of the successes of the community education model in engaging disadvantaged groups and individuals in adult learning, and that youth, community and neighbourhood workers are used to optimum effect in this process;

(d) a strong focus on capacity building to support local development needs;

(e) that there are fora for consultation with community groups as part of the development of area action plans, and that feedback from participants is an intrinsic part of ongoing appraisal and review processes;

(f) that there is accountability for the use of public funds.

Access, Quality, Relevance and Progression

In the overall co-ordination of services in each region, the Boards will be required to ensure

- **access** – provision of a range of programmes at a variety of levels to meet the needs of different target groups;

- adherence to national **quality** standards prescribed by the National

Qualifications Authority and the National Adult Learning Council, allied with an active staff development strategy and a proactive role in recording and sharing good practice;

- **relevance** to local needs, particularly those of excluded groups, in the spheres of social inclusion, community development, industry needs, and social, cultural and artistic pursuits;

- systematic **progression** opportunities for participants in liaison with the range of providers in the region, which ensure a ladder of progression from basic education and literacy levels through to third level.

Partnership

It will be important for boards to function in a manner which ensures that the different actors locally co-operate on the basis of equal partnership, and have a meaningful involvement in the decision-making process.

Integration

An effective integration of services, the avoidance of duplication, and agreement on the distinct roles and functions of the respective agencies in implementing an area plan are vital.

Information

The fragmentation of provision across a wide range of bodies makes it very difficult for members of the public to access services and make choices. A key task of the Boards will be to produce and update comprehensive integrated information on the services available locally.

Flexibility

Increasing the flexibility and responsiveness of adult education services through the provision of part-time options -- mornings, night time, week-ends, with a maximum of one month's summer closure -- should be a key goal of the boards. This is also part of the process to ensure that the system can respond flexibly to the needs of those in the work-place.

Voluntary effort

The unpaid voluntary effort of those involved in community development and literacy services is a particular strength of provision, and should be supported, harnessed and developed as a key component within any new structures.

Devolved authority

The Boards should have authority to make decisions on the deployment of resources within each region in regard to designated programmes within the further education sector accordance with

- the national standards prescribed by the National Qualifications Authority;

- the standards and guidelines for good practice and the national policies prescribed by the National Adult Learning Council;

- the framework for accountability and resources set out by the Department of Education and Science.

8.10 CONCLUSION

Given the challenges which face our society in entering the new millennium, it is vital that services for adult learners expand and evolve within an overall framework which ensures that lifelong learning becomes a reality.

This Paper shows that the literacy and education levels of adults, and their levels of access to adult education and training compare poorly with other countries in the OECD. Adult education is the last area of mass education which remains to be developed, and it will require significantly increased investment on a phased basis if we are to reach a stage where adult learning opportunities in Ireland are on a par with those in other States. It will also require change, flexibility and responsiveness within existing institutions. Many of the initial steps have already been taken -- in relation to literacy, second chance education, certification and assessment and programme support. We need to build on this progress and increase incrementally.

It must be stressed that while changing population patterns will make investment in adult learning an imperative, the Paper is not advocating a reduction in expenditure on initial education and training. As Chapter 1 clearly shows, key challenges remain to be met if the persistence of the class divide is to be overcome, and if poverty and disadvantage is to be addressed.

While the challenges facing adult education are not on the scale of that which faced the education system in the 1960s with the expansion of second level education, it is clear that commitment is required to invest in the development of the sector as a national strategic priority. It will not be possible in the short term to provide for adult learning needs on the scale identified in Chapter 4, and it is clear that not all those identified will be seeking a return to education. What is vital, however, in the interests of equity, social justice and competitiveness, is that

- priority resources are allocated to addressing adult literacy needs;

- we increase systematically the opportunities for adult learners within the system through a phased expansion of part-time options within VTOS, PLC and Youthreach programmes, prioritising the needs of those with less than upper secondary education;

- supporting services such as childcare and adult guidance and counselling are developed;

- and existing provisions within the education and training system evolve in a way which is responsive to the needs of adults and young people alike, optimising the participation of those at risk.

As the rest of the industrialised world increasingly moves towards a recognition of the importance of lifelong learning in providing the basis for a sustainable future for their people, it is incumbent on Irish society to embark with vigour, imagination and resources on tackling this last remaining educational frontier.

Bibliography

Main References

Capra, F. (1996). The Web of Life, London: Flamingo.

Central Statistics Office, (1997). Labour Force Survey, Cork: CSO.

Chambers, R. (1997). Whose Reality Counts?, London: Intermediate Technology Publications.

Clancy, P. (1997). Higher Education in the Republic of Ireland : Participation and Performance, Vol.51, No.1, pp.86106.

Commission on Higher Education 1960-67, (1967). Presentation and Summary of Report Vol. 1, Dublin: Stationery Office.

Commission on the Status of Women, (1972). Report to the Minister for Finance, Dublin: Stationery Office.

Coolahan, J. (ed.) (1996). Increasing Participation : Proceedings of the Irish National Conference for the European Year of Lifelong Learning, Dublin: Teastas and NUIM.

Coolahan, J. (1994). Report on the National Education Convention, Dublin: National Education Convention Secretariat.

Collins, T. (1998). Community Development : An Overview, Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency (awaiting publication).

Council of Europe, (1990). Report on Education in Prison, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Cresson, E. and Flynn, P. (1996). Teaching and Learning : Towards the Learning Society, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Department of Education (1965). Investment in Education, (Report of the Survey Team appointed by the Minister of Education), Dublin: Stationery Office.

Department of Education and Science (1998). Guide for Mature Students 1999 - Entry to full-time third-level courses, Dublin: Department of Education and Science.

Department of Enterprise & Employment (1997). Human Resource Development, Dublin: Stationery Office.

Department of Justice, (1984). Policy Document on Prison Education, Dublin: Stationery Office.

Department of Justice, (1994) The Management of Offenders - A Five Year Plan, Dublin: Stationery Office.

Department of Social Welfare, (1997). Supporting Voluntary Activity (A Green Paper on the Community Voluntary Sector and its Relationship to the State), Dublin: Stationery Office.

Dolphin, E. (1996). in Coolahan, J. (ed.) Increasing Participation : Proceedings of the Irish National Conference for the European Year of Lifelong Learning, Dublin: Teastas and NUIM.

Edwards, R. (1996). Adult Learners, Education and Training, London: Routledge.

Employment Action Plan, (1998). Dublin: Stationery Office.

European Commission, (1995). Teaching and Learning : Towards the Learning Society, Brussels: Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Commission.

European Commission (1996). Strategy for Lifelong Learning, Brussels: Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Commission.

EU Task Force (1995). Euro-Delphi Survey: The Future Goals and Policies of Adult Education in Europe 1995, Dublin: National Report.

Fahey, T. and Fitzgerald, J. (1997). Welfare Implications of Demographic Trends, Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency.

Forfas, (1996). Shaping our Future : A Strategy for Enterprise in Ireland in the Twenty-First Century, Dublin.

Frazer, H. (1996). Combat Poverty Agency : Strategic Plan 1996-1998, Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency.

Fryer, R.H. (1997). Learning for the Twenty-First Century, First Report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning.

Government of Ireland (1995). Interim Report of the Task Force on Long-Term Unemployment, Dublin: Stationery Office.

Haase, T., McKeown, K. and Rourke, S. (1996). Local Development Strategies for Disadvantaged Areas : Evaluation of the Global Grant, 1992-1995, Dublin: ADM.

Hannan D.F., McCabe B. and McCoy S. (1998). Trading Qualifications for Jobs - Over-education and the Irish Labour Market, Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute.

Healy, M. (1998). Everything to Gain : A Study of the Third Level Allowance Scheme, Dublin: Aontas.

Higher Education Authority, (1996). Report of Committee on Access and Participation of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education, Dublin: Stationery Office.

Jarvis, P. (1995). Adult and Continuing Education : Theory and Practice, London: Routledge.

Kellaghan, T., Weir, W., O'hUallachain, S., Morgan, M. (1995). Educational Disadvantage in Ireland, No.20, Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency.

Kelly, M. (1994). Can You Credit It? Dublin: Aontas, Combat Poverty Agency and NOW.

Kenny, I. (1983). Report of the Commission on Adult Education, Dublin: Stationery Office.

Knowles, Malcolm, G. (1970). The Modern Practice of Adult Education : Andragogy versus Pedagogy, New York: Association Press.

Lee, J.J. (1989). Ireland 1912-1985 : Politics and Society, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

Lynch, K. (1997). "A Profile of Mature Students in Higher Education and An Analysis of Equality Issues" in Morris, R. (ed.), Mature Students in Higher Education, Cork: Higher Education Equality Unit.

McNamara, G. (1998). Guidance in Adult and Continuing Education, Dublin: National Centre for Guidance in Education.

McIver Consulting, (1995). Managing Strategic Change. Vision 2010 Education and Training Study, Unpublished Report for Forfas.

McNair, S. (1996). "A View from Philadelphia : 50 Years On", in Adult Learning and Technology in OECD Countries, Paris: OECD.

Merriam, S.R. and Cunningham, M. (eds.), (1990). Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education, San Francisco: JosseyBass Publishers.

Morgan, M., Hickey, B., Kelleghan, T., Cronin, A. and Miller, D. (1997). Report to the Minister for Education on the International Adult Literacy Survey : Results for Ireland, Dublin: Education Research Centre, St. Patrick's College.

Murphy, C. (1973). Adult Education in Ireland : A Report of a Committee Appointed by the Minister for Education, Dublin: Stationery Office.

National Anti-Poverty Strategy, (1997), Sharing in Progress, Dublin: Stationery Office.

Nolan, B. and Callan, T. (eds.) (1994). Poverty and Policy in Ireland, Dublin: Gill and McMillan.

Ó Buachalla, S. (1988), Education Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland, Dublin: Wolfhound.

OECD (1995). Economic Surveys. Ireland 1995, Paris: OECD.

    –   (1996). Adult Learning and Technology in OECD Countries, Paris: OECD.

    –   (1996). Lifelong Learning for All, Paris: OECD.

    –   (1997). Education at a Glance : Policy Analysis, Paris: OECD.

    –   (1997). Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society, Canada: OECD.

    –   (1997). "Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society", in International Adult Literacy Survey, Paris: OECD.

Rogers, A. (1996). Teaching Adults, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Rubenson, K. (1998). Adult Education and Training:The Poor Cousin: An Analysis of Reviews of National Policies for Education, OECD: University of British Columbia and Linkoping University.

Ryan, A. (1997). Feminist Subjectivities : Sources for a Politicised Practice of Women's Personal Development Education, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, NUIM.

Steering Committee on Future Developments of Higher Education, (1995). Interim Report, Steering Committee Technical Working Group, Dublin: HEA.

Steering Committee on Technical Education, (1967). Report to the Minister for Education on Regional Technical Colleges, Dublin: Stationery Office.

Sweeney, P. (1998). The Celtic Tiger : Ireland's Economic Miracle Explained, Dublin: Oak Tree Press.

Task Force on Long-Term Unemployment (1995). Interim Report and Final Report, Dublin: Office of the Tanaiste.

TEASTAS, (1997). Second Report, Dublin: TEASTAS.

United Kingdom Department of Education and Employment, (1998). The Learning Age - A Renaissance for a new Britain, London: The Stationery Office Ltd.

Weil, S.W. (1986). "Non-traditional Learners Within Traditional Higher Education Institutions : discovery and disappointment" in Studies in Higher Education, Vol.11, No.3. University of London.

Wolf, A. (1995). Competency-Based Assessment, Milton Keyes: Open University Press.