

# AONTAS Community Education Network

## Meeting 10: The Position Paper for Funding Community Education Report



**Date: Thursday 21st October 2010**

**Time: 9.45am – 2.00pm**

**The Carmichael Centre, North Brunswick St, Dublin 7**



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## Summary

The 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Community Education Network (CEN) focused on how the position paper on a proposed funding mechanism for community education will be promoted and used as part of a lobbying plan for the Network. The meeting was also used as a consultation space for the AONTAS strategic plan. Coupled with the discussion sessions there was an input from Frances Byrne (CEO of OPEN) regarding the [Claim our Future](#) event and from Niamh O'Reilly about the [REVEAL](#) (Level 5 method) for evaluating the outcomes of informal learning.

## Introduction

The community education network meeting is the only space that draws together community education groups, from various backgrounds at national level. The action-focused meetings serve AONTAS members in a tailored method in order to address specific needs, to avoid duplication and ensure that meetings are effective and cost efficient. The aim of the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CEN was dedicated to promoting the position paper on a proposed funding mechanism for community education.

The agenda of the meeting was developed by the community education network steering group and the outcomes from the evaluation of meeting nine. It also sought to act upon the learning from the [CEN meeting evaluation](#) which was undertaken during the summer; it used a number of processes to develop effective discussion spaces, it facilitated networking and shared learning and balanced the current needs of the sector with the long-term aims of the community education network.

## Content of the day

Niamh presented the work of the CEN over the previous three years: the history, achievements and the outreach work over the summer (including visits to Limerick, Clare, Galway and Dublin). The first discussion session focussed on the AONTAS strategic planning consultation whereby participants were asked to consider the three themes: Voice, Value and Visibility in relation to future of the Network.

France Byrne (CEO, OPEN) gave an overview of the history of the Claim our Future event and the plan for the meeting on Saturday 30th October. Earlier this year Is Feidir Linn, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the Environmental Pillar of Social Partnership, the Community Platform, Social Justice Ireland and TASC began a series of meetings to explore how best to cooperate and coordinate endeavours for a more equal, inclusive and sustainable Ireland. From this beginning, Claiming Our Future evolved. Not a political party, it went on to include many different organisations such as trade unions, environmental groups, community groups, migrant worker organisations, youth groups, older people's organisations, cultural groups, student groups, developing world groups, rural networks, women's organisations, disability groups, social media and social justice organisations. One of the outcomes of the meeting is to work collectively to create a sustainable, inclusive and thriving Ireland.

The second discussion session concentrated on how the CEN should promote the position paper. Each group concentrated on 3 specific actions and used an updated manifesto as a tool for this lobbying work. Finally, Niamh gave an input about the REVEAL (Level 5) which is a system for evaluating the learning experienced by an individual (or group) after an activity. It can be used for specific activities or other actions that bring about learning (e.g. predevelopment work). The effect of the learning can be evaluated in terms of the development of the learner's competences from 3 perspectives (cognitive, activity and affective). Individual or group learning competences are evaluated in a process orientated way and visualised in a 3-D cube and fully documented via a software programme. The handout which accompanied this presentation is available in appendix 2.

### Discussion Session 1: What do you think the main goal of the CEN for the next strategic plan should be?

This session focused on what the main goal of the CEN should be with respect to the 3 themes of voice, value and visibility in addition to the 5 actions which are required to achieve this goal.



### Value

In terms of value the following proposal was made in terms of what it is and how it can be evaluated and communicated:

Acknowledge and embrace the individual and collective nature of community education (i) support individual learning journey (ii) offer social analysis and influence change. This should be supported by evidence, which should be promoted to the public and key stakeholders. In terms of monitoring value: entry point/access, progress and outcome should be considered by way of using consistent tools for documenting the value of community education.

### The VALUE will be defined and promoted by the following actions:

- Ensuring a learner centred approach in all community education organisations
- CEN promoting best practice in the sector
- Offering a critical voice to theory and practice
- Looking for allies within political systems and public institutions
- Demanding recognition of the social, economic importance of community education to society at large.

**This will be achieved through evidence gathering:**

- Use of alternative methods for gathering evidence and disseminating
- Developing 'wider' or new models for 'terms of reference/processes to evaluate models to better suit the principles of community education other than the traditional academic model i.e. FETAC, Quality Assurance etc.
- Collecting evidence that reflects the impact of community education on the quality of life and its impact on reducing costs of health services etc.
- Collecting/collating information from across the country

**Visibility**

After the strategic plan no-one should have to ask 'what is community education?' as all members of the CEN will be able to find/apply methods to raise the profile.

**This will be achieved through:**

- Agreeing guidelines for writing outcomes of learning from community education, annual reports (that charities will be obliged to put up on the web)
- Communicating these outcomes through social media
- Visibility is noise: people need to see and hear
- We are focusing on visibility of community education for the wider public and policy arenas.
- Translation exercise: the informed language put alongside formal language - a glossary is needed to enable this transferability

**Voice**

In order to ensure the voice of the CEN is heard we need the ability to state our case. The CEN must be recognised as 'the' legitimate strong strategic independent expert voice for the community education.

**This will be achieved through:**

- Developing and training the network to utilize social media/networking
- Establishing a strong credible image/brand
- Building on expertise in the field through research, policy papers, articles etc.
- Building partnerships, the voice and the capacity of the CEN whilst ensuring this is learner centred.
- Creating a strategic line of communication between the voice of the individual learner and national/international platforms.



## Discussion Session 2: How the CEN should promote the position paper.

### Ideas about promotion:

- **Promote** the value of community education in terms of the economic and social benefits in the current climate. Back this up with evidence, e.g. cost-benefit analysis. This will be used to justify a distinct funding stream.  
*This will be carried out as part of a new piece of research with the community education network.*
- Create strategic **partnerships** with other credible organisations and identify power brokers to lobby.  
*AONTAS to contact other organisations to build alliance with.*  
*CEN members to build links locally with organisations, gain their support for providing a distinct funding stream for community education, disseminate the position paper and new manifesto.*
- Identify a high profile **spokesperson** and a learner (from that National Adult Learner Forum) to promote community education.  
*Members of the CEN to put themselves forward as official spokespeople.*  
*Community education learners to become learner ambassadors for community education.*
- Provide a **link** from all education providers' website to AONTAS.  
*AONTAS to contact other education organisations to put a link to their website.*

### Actions for CEN members to take:

1. Change the **name** to the Community Education Network of Ireland or the Irish Community Education Network.  
*Agree a new name for the CEN*
2. **Signature** – All members of the Community Education Network should use a signature at the end of their emails.  
*Please paste the following into your outlook email signature:*



*Member of the AONTAS Irish Community Education Network*

*[www.aontas.com](http://www.aontas.com)*

3. Use CEN members' **websites** to:
  - a. *Use the CEN logo to your website*
  - b. *Upload extracts from Beyond the Classroom television programmes to your website*
  - c. *To upload the position paper*
4. Disseminate the position paper to all local TDs and Councillors. Be strategic about when we send this out and follow up (arrange meeting).  
*Send the position paper and the manifesto to your local TDs and councillors and follow up with a meeting.*

## Way forward for the Community Education Network

1. Members of the CEN to complete the appropriate actions as outlined the section: Discussion Session 2: How the CEN should promote the position paper.
2. A questionnaire will be sent to all members of the CEN to confirm their desired involvement in the network and the actions that are needed to be carried out by all members of the CEN in order to drive the work forward.
3. The policy subgroup will be reconvened to create an effective lobbying plan for promoting the position paper for an effective funding mechanism for community education.

## Stay up to date with the community education network or join today:

To join contact Niamh O'Reilly on [noreilly@aontas.com](mailto:noreilly@aontas.com)

Join the discussion on the googlegroup: <http://groups.google.ie/group/aontas-community-education-network>

To read about previous meetings and manifestoes go to: <http://www.aontas.com/commed/networkcen.html>

Read the history of the CEN paper on the CEN section of the website.

### Community Education

Community Education  
Network

What is Community Education?

Television Programmes on  
Community Education

National Community Education  
Network Meetings

Resource materials for the  
Community Education Network

Join the Community Education  
Network

▶ Developments in  
Community Education

▶ History of Community  
Education

▶ Theorists

▶ Community Education  
Research

▶ Community Education  
Facilitators (CEFs)

▶ Quality Assurance  
Framework (QAF)

▶ Join AONTAS

## Community Education Network



The Community Education Network comprises over 130 community education organisations which work collectively to gain recognition for community education, raise its profile and lobby to ensure it is adequately resourced. It was established in 2007 and has three national meetings per year. It is unique in that it is the only national network that is dedicated to independent voluntary community education groups who are committed to social change.

[For a full history of the community education network download this paper.](#)



### Aim of the network

**Resource:** It lobbies for a distinct funding stream for community education.

**Outcomes:** Manifestoes, lobbying training, research into the funding streams used to support community education organisations and a position paper 'Effective funding for sustainable community education'.

**Recognition** of community education as an equally valued part of the education system on a par with all other sectors.

**Outcomes:** Television programmes on community education.

**Raise profile** of community education by ensuring greater awareness to prospective learners

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: What do you think the main goal of the CEN for the next strategic plan should be?

	Voice	Visibility	Value	Value
<b>Goal</b>	Ability to state our case. The CEN is recognised as 'the' legitimate strong strategic independent expert voice for the CEN.	Enable members to find/apply ways to raise our profile, so that by the end of the year/plan no-one will have to ask 'what is community education?'	Acknowledge and embrace the individual and collective nature of community education i) support individual learning journey (ii) offer social analysis and influence change	Evidence - the value of it to public and key stakeholders. Monitoring - entry point/access, progress and outcome. Find consistent tools for documentation of the value of community education
<b>Action</b>	1 Develop and train the network to utilize social media/networking	Agree guidelines for writing outcomes, annual reports (that charities will be obliged to put up on the web)	Ensure a learner centred approach	Use alternative methods of gathering evidence and disseminating
	2 Establish a strong credible image/brand	Communicate these outcomes through social media	Promote best practice	Develop 'wider' or new models for 'terms of reference/processes to evaluate models to better suit the principles of community education other than the traditional academic model i.e. FETAC, Quality Assurance etc.
	3 Build on expertise in the field through research, policy papers, articles etc.	Visibility is noise: people need to see and hear	Offer a critical voice to theory and practice	Collecting evidence that reflects the impact on quality of life and reduced costs of health services etc.
	4 Partnership, build the voice/capacity and ensure this is learner centred.	Translation exercise: the informed language put alongside formal language - we need a glossary to enable this transferability	Look for allies within political systems and public institutions	Collecting/collating information from across the country
	5 Strategic line and communication, voice of individual learner to national/international platform.	We are focusing on visibility of community education for the wider public and policy arenas.	Demand recognition of the social, economic importance of community education to society at large.	

## Appendix 2: Reveal

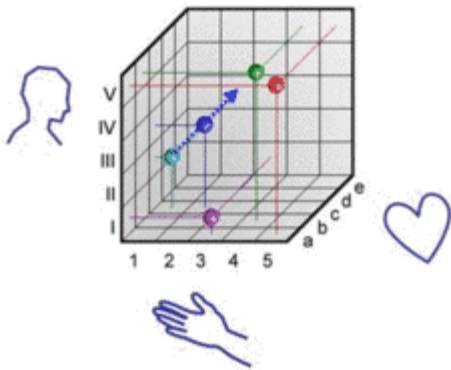
On October 1st 2010 the fourth conference on Validation and Evidencing of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Activities was carried out in Göttingen, Germany, organised by the REVEAL group. Within the conference LEVEL5 approach to evaluate, assess and evidence the competence development of learners in non-formal and informal contexts will not only be presented but applied in practical workshops.

### REVEAL Project and Level 5

REVEAL Project is a network of European experts from grassroots and universities that have created an evaluation system to evaluation non-formal and informal learning through the LEVEL 5 system.

### What is Level 5?

It is a system for evaluating the learning experienced by an individual (or group) after an activity. It can be used for specific activities or other actions that bring about learning (e.g. predevelopment work). The effect of the learning can be evaluated in terms of the development of the learner's competences from 3 perspectives (cognitive, activity and affective). Individual or group learning competences are evaluated in a process orientated way and visualised in a 3-D cube and fully documented via a software programme.



### Who can use it?

Any organisation or individual that is involved in activities which result in a level of learning, whether intentional or unintentional.

### REVEAL Offers

From the extensive use of LEVEL5 to evaluate more than 50 micro projects (learning activities) it has become apparent that a multitude of benefits can be gained from this informal learning evaluation process. This process is not merely a documentation exercise but rather a dual process that benefits both the learner and the educator. Firstly, the learners' skill and

competency levels can be accurately defined and measured before and after a learning experience. The impact of the learning becomes clearly evident through the evaluation of specific parameters which enable the individual's progress to be charted and monitored thus enabling the learner to recognise the impact of learning at a cognitive, active and affective level. Secondly, the practitioner (or educator) can monitor the effectiveness of the learning activity through highlighting specific areas for development or improvement and thus maximising the impact of their work.

### The concept of learning objectives

European countries are increasingly referring to learning outcomes when setting overall objectives for their education and training systems. Instead of focusing on input factors such as the duration, location and particular pedagogical method underpinning a qualification, attention is directed towards what a learner knows and is able to do at the end of a learning process.

Expectations of the learning outcomes approach are thus higher than ever before and many see this shift as an opportunity to tailor education and training to individual needs, improve links to the labour market and improve the way non-formally and informally acquired learning outcomes are recognised (CEDEFOP, 2010).

This is why REVEAL offers support for providers of informal learning in the following domains:

#### Evaluation of learners

- Defining the learner's competence development using LEVEL5 through LEVEL5 software, quality assurance by REVEAL evaluators and production of an internal certification.
- Self-evaluation of learners' competence developments with LEVEL5 (by using the LEVEL5 software, quality assurance by REVEAL-evaluators; Internal certification)
- External evaluation by accredited REVEAL evaluators

#### Evaluation of projects

- Validation of non-formal and informal learning projects (labelling and accreditation of learning projects)
- Evaluation of competence development in European projects (Project VIP; [www.vip-eu.org](http://www.vip-eu.org))
- Validation of European Mobility Actions and Projects (Projekt VILMA, [www.vilma-eu.org](http://www.vilma-eu.org))
- Planning Informal learning

- Development of regional informal and non-formal learning projects
- Development and collaboration in European funding project proposals

### Support

- Counselling (in-house, help-desk, online-Conferences)
- Training (regional and European seminars (funding possible))
- Networking (informal LEVEL5 community)
- Knowledge base for informal learning (literature database)
- Informal learning planning patterns (WIKI)

REVEAL is a transnational community of European experts and practitioners working in more than 15 European member states. Since 2005 our community has developed a unique validation approach ("LEVEL5") for informal and non-formal learning. The approach has been piloted and applied in more than 50 learning projects and scientifically evaluated in the framework of two European PhD theses.

### **LEVEL5 is based on a few basic assumptions:**

Learning outcomes can be displayed with the help of three components or dimensions:

- The knowledge component (cognitive; "knowing")
- The activity component (ability, "doing")
- The affective component (attitudes, "feeling")

Especially this third dimension is often neglected in evaluation of learning outcomes. However, in many informal learning projects, this "affective dimension" is of major importance.

For the informal learning evaluation process the competence levels of an individual are set at 5 levels for each dimension of learning (knowledge, activity and affective) thus giving rise to the name: LEVEL5. The name of the system has been derived from the five levels that mark individual competence grades on each of the three dimensions.

### **LEVEL5**

The evaluation approach is based on a five step procedure:

#### **1. Micro Project Description**

The LEVEL5 evaluation approach is organised in a standardised procedure consisting of 5 stages:

- The informal learning project is described in a predefined template.
- 2. Selecting topics**
    - Learning topics are chosen from an open inventory system which offers the scope to evaluate areas applicable to the learning activity.
    - Topics can be chosen for projects or can be tailored specifically for an individual learner.
  - 3. Establishing an individualised reference system**
    - A reference system is developed on the basis of the three dimensions (cognitive, activity related and affective) for the 5 competence levels.
  - 4. Assessment**
    - Assessment is made through a variety of processes in order to ascertain the development of the project or learner in relation to the selected topic. Information on assessment methods is available.
  - 5. Rating/Documenting/Visualisation (Online Documentation System)**
    - Following assessment the values from competence level 1 to 5 are recorded in the reference system and displayed as a LEVEL5 – CUBE.
    - In addition to analysing and storing data the software also produces certificates.
    - Results of learners and project characteristics are recorded internally .
    - Learners' certificates will be automatically generated (as editable PDF)
    - Projects may also be accredited (online and PDF-certificate).

### **LEVEL5 Approach**

The LEVEL5 approach consists of a sequence of five evaluation steps, starting with a description of the learning project and ending with the evidencing of learning outcomes and the validation of an individual's learning learners and projects.

The LEVEL5 system is based on action theory principles and therefore works as a cyclic procedure. Therefore, during the course of the evaluation processes may be amended and developed.

**1. Micro Project Description**

- Describing the basic properties of the informal learning project in a preformatted pattern

**2. Selecting topics**

- Selecting relevant learning topics from an open inventory

**3. Establishing an individualised reference system**

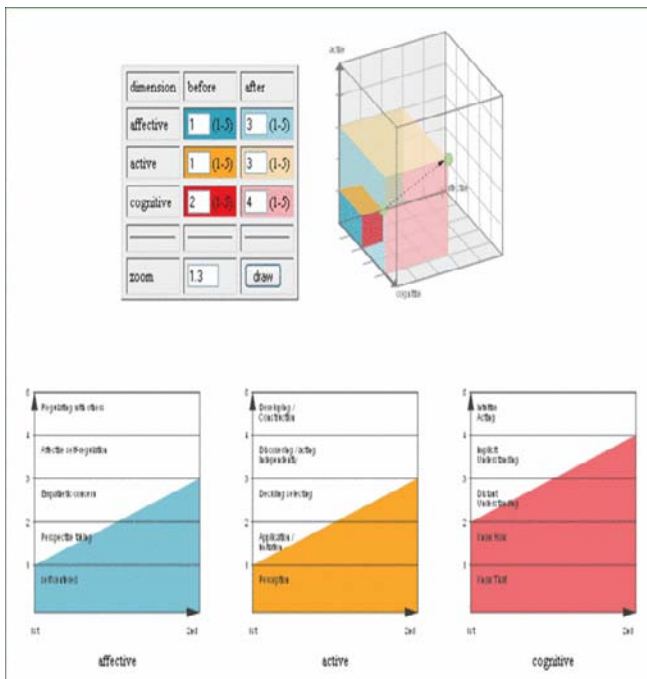
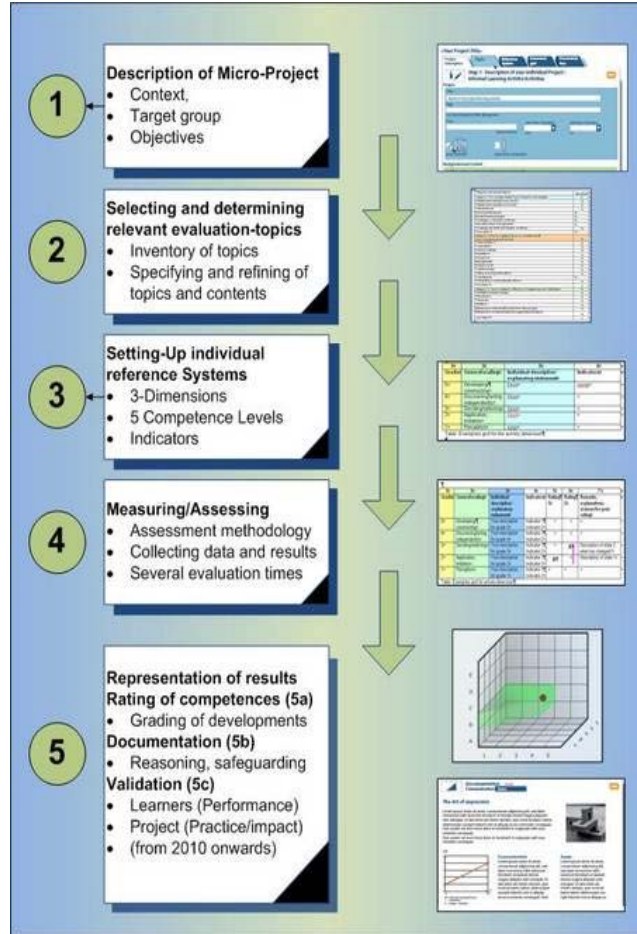
- Developing an individual reference system on the basis of a 3-dimensional (cognitive, affective, activity related) rating system with five individualised stages

**4. Assessment**

- An evaluation toolbox is offered as help tool for stakeholders from the field.

**5. Rating/Documenting/Visualisation**

- Inserting the ratings in the individualised reference system and displayed in a 3-dimensional evidencing system
- The ratings will be substantiated and documented in the software
- Results may be recorded internally and/or connected with learners' certificates



**Possible uses for AONTAS members**

*Perhaps it could possibly be investigated for using it for:*

1. To recognise the outcomes of community education that cannot be captured through other accreditation processes.
2. As a resource for education practitioners to show the impact of their work, or could be amended to show impact of their organisation in order to gain funding.
3. As a resource for practitioners to create a portfolio to support recognition of prior learning – as a report if produced.
4. As part of a learning programme whereby the individual learner can gain recognition for their learning but not in the form of FETAC

accreditation. This could also support the value of non-accredited learning.

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