

AONTAS Community Education Network Meeting Report

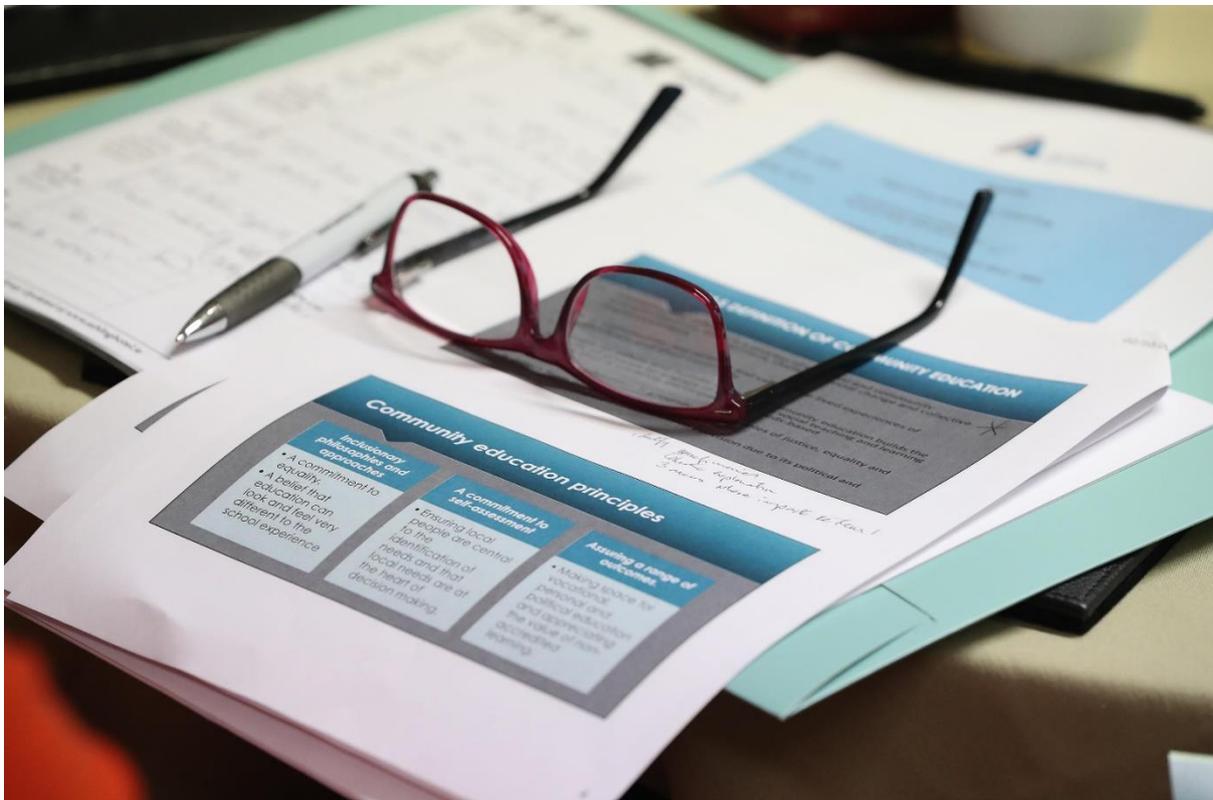


Theme: Building on the Strengths of the CEN

Date: 3rd October 2018

Time: 10.00am – 3.30pm

Venue: Parkgate Street, Dublin 8



Agenda

09.30 – 10.00	Registration, tea & coffee, networking
10.00 - 10.15	Introductions and updates Suzanne Kyle, CEN Coordinator
10.15 – 12.45	Consultation: AONTAS Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022 Niamh O’ Reilly, CEO Deirdre Duffy, Quality Matters
12.45 – 01.30	Lunch and networking
01.30 – 02.00	The value of developing partnerships with higher education Catherine Bates, DIT
02.00 – 3.15	‘Purpose, People, Process: Community Education in Donegal 2018’ Research Report Overview Donegal Community Education Forum





The objective of this meeting were as follows:

- Facilitate a consultation with the CEN aimed at contributing to the AONTAS Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022
- Explore the opportunities for greater engagement with third level institutions
- Provide a space for sharing of information on research recently published by Donegal Community Education Forum



Consultation with the CEN aimed at contributing to the AONTAS Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022



The first half of the meeting focused on an AONTAS Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022 consultation. Deirdre Duffy from Quality Matters facilitated this session which allowed for an exploration of the AONTAS definition of community education.



The following were among the points to arise at the meeting:

- The outcomes of community education are difficult to measure if the focus is entirely on quantitative measurements that base outcomes on certifications and employment. The benefits of community education are broad, wide ranging, and cut across the generations. Funders need to be mindful of these wider benefits and outcomes of education.
- Some methods have been developed by community providers and academia over the years to capture the wider benefits of community education. These methods could be used as a guide if a national measurement requirement is to be put in place.
- The CEN needs to be careful that providers do not get bogged down and feed into an ill-judged measurement debate.
- Excessive bureaucracy and lack of funding has had the impact of watering down community education provision and can result in further exclusion of people who are already socially excluded.
- Community education is about a social, teaching and learning process that is creative and participative
- Community education gives a voice to marginalised communities
- Community education should be driven by the grass roots and has a social change agenda
- Community education has a strong role to play in promoting inclusion, critical thinking and engaged citizenship, and combatting racism and the rise of ideologies of division.
- Community education responds to educational needs which are not met by formal and institutional education provision
- There are many challenges associated with data collection in community education. Such challenges need to be examined and addressed.
- Community education is about much more than skills development for the economy.
- Being community-led means listening, responding and creating supporting learning environments. The community-led ethos should continue to inform all community education provision.





Notes were taken during the session and the points made will inform the development of strategic priorities of the next AONTAS Strategic Plan.



Deirdre's presentation is available on the EPAL CEN closed group or on request by contacting a member of staff of AONTAS.



Explore the opportunities for greater engagement with third level institutions

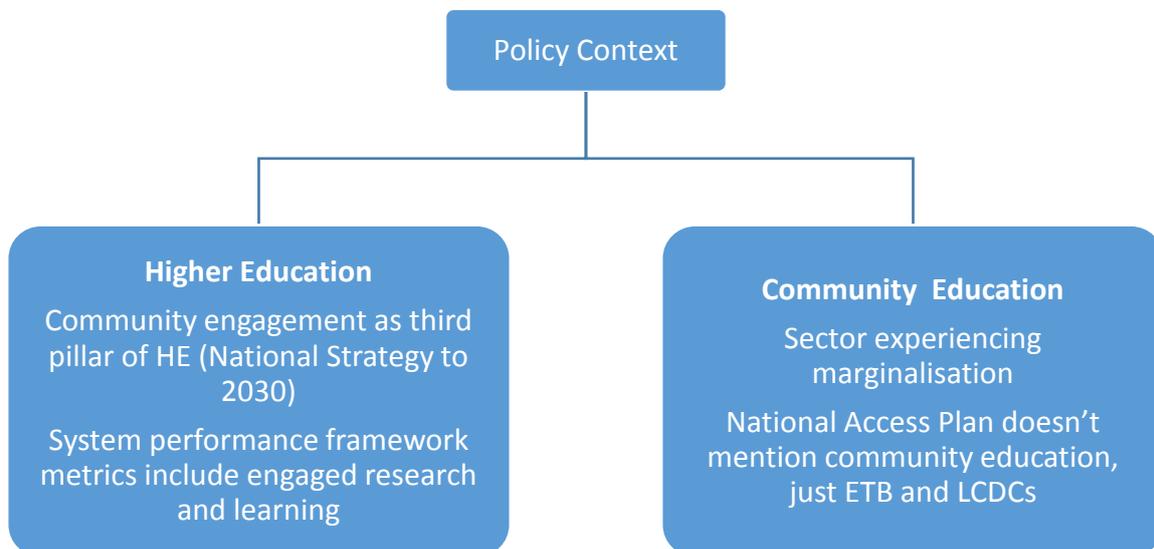
In the afternoon we heard from Catherine Bates of DIT who spoke about DIT's **Students Learning with Communities** initiative and the opportunities for developing partnerships between community education providers and higher education institutions. While the current National Access Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education does not mention community education specifically, it does commit to building regional and community partnership strategies for increasing access to higher education.

Some of the main points of Catherine's presentation are captured in the illustrations below.



What is Students Learning with Communities?

Staff/students collaborate with underserved community partners (local groups, not-for-profit organisations, etc.) to develop real-life course-based projects/research for mutual benefit.



Why get involved?

- Build links and understanding between community and college – alliances to strengthen case for Community Education (+ Access)
- Research on Community Ed. for policymakers
- Educate students and lecturers about your community, its strengths and needs
- Harness students' developing skills to further your community's goals and build on your strengths, in collaboration with lecturers
- Bring community knowledge to relevant research, working together to identify and address local or societal challenges



How do communities benefit?

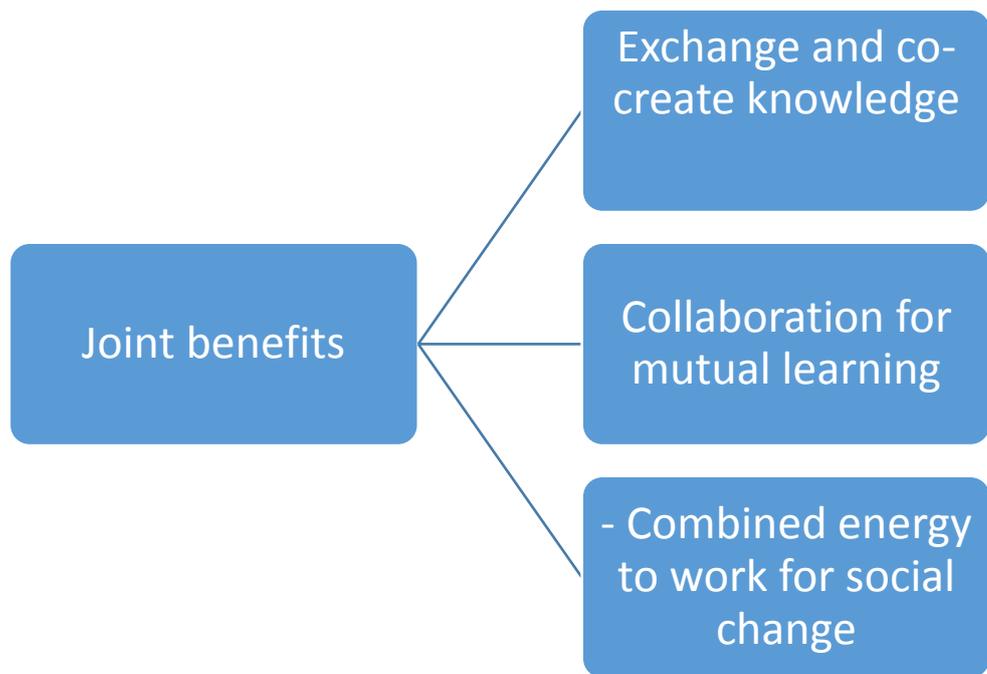
- Collaborative learning with students during the project - energising
- Project has usable end-product (eg research report, designs)
- Students as role models for HE
- Opportunity to educate future professionals about community, and influence curriculum
- Influence research agenda

How do students benefit?

- Learning comes alive
- Work with real-world partners
- Apply specialist subject skills
- Receive course credits
- Develop essential transferrable skills - CV
- Learn from and with communities
- Increase social awareness

Community-based research (CBR)

- Lecturers/students work closely with a community to identify their research questions
- Outcome of research project must be in a form that the community can use to effect change
- DIT database of research ideas from communities for projects for students
- Closely linked to European Commission focus on Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) – DIT was part of EnRRICH project



Catherine's presentation is available on the EPALE CEN closed group or on request by contacting a member of staff of AONTAS.

Provide a space for sharing of information on research recently published by Donegal Community Education Forum

Martina Needham, AEO of Donegal ETB, representing the Donegal Community Education Forum presented research that had recently been published on community education in the county. The objectives of the research, entitled ***Purpose People Process, Community Education in Donegal 2018***, were to facilitate the development of a strategic and collective approach to community education provision in the county, the identification of needs around community development and community leadership training, the improvement of access for potential learners, and the facilitation of information sharing. The study is also a vehicle for research into the benefits of community education.

Martina provided information on the scale of community education provision across the county of Donegal and highlighted the role of the Donegal Community Education Forum in recognising, promoting and advocating for community education and its resourcing in the county. Membership of this forum is drawn from community education providers across the county. An overview of the policy context was also provided during the presentation.



The research found that participants availed of community education for many reasons including personal development, social change, community development and employment. Also uncovered in this research was a strong focus on community development and it was recommended that collaboration between community development advocates and community education advocates be strengthened. Another recommendation of the research was the investment in tutor training and continuous professional development.

This research is of value to all members of the CEN and is available to download from Donegal ETB's website under the category: 'Other' at:

www.donegaletb.ie/corporate/publications

Martina's presentation is available on the EPALC CEN closed group or on request by contacting a member AONTAS staff



Purpose, People, Process, Community Education in Donegal 2018: Research commissioned by Donegal Community Education Forum. Pictured left to right: Sinéad Campbell (DETB) Niamh O' Reilly (AONTAS), Martina Needham (DETB), Catherine Friel (DETB), Suzanne Kyle (AONTAS)

