The Adult Learner 2001

Contents

Editorial Comment

It was James Joyce – who else? – who offered the observation that the Irish were the most tolerant people on earth – because it had never been tried. That was earlier in the twentieth century and now early in the twenty first, the time of trial has arrived. Last year in the Coombe Maternity Hospital, the number of nationalities represented in new births was ninety while, at present, there is an estimated one hundred different nationalities attending our primary schools. So there is no debate now – we are a multi-cultural society in fact and it raises the question – how will we respond?

Thus far, there are signs that are encouraging and depressing. Let's deal with the negative omens first. There is, of course, here as in every other society a racism that is born out of sheer prejudice and for which there is not, nor ever will be, any kind of rational explanation. This is the mindset for which different colouring and different accent are excuses to offer insult and, more depressingly, engage in violence. We would hope, and it is only a hope, that this will remain confined to the minority. But we have other more subtle, more 'educated', responses. This is the line that says we have to be careful about who is allowed to enter, that certainly it is a time of prosperity and economic success and naturally we are now an attractive proposition for people from other less successful countries. So, the line continues, we must now be very careful about who is admitted to our first world island – that we should select carefully, look for those who are well qualified and reject those who are poor and lack education. This is the 'qualified' option because, you will understand, we must protect the situation which we have worked so hard to achieve.

And, of course, all of this begs the questions – who do we think we are now? What does it mean to be Irish in these times? Are we some kind of Celtic white (or red) super race with pure bloodlines reaching back to Brian Boru and proclaiming our newly found self confidence in a Riverdance of modern, miniskirted, manly Irishness?

We have put those Vikings well behind us and what if there are reminders in the de Laceys, the Burkes and the Bourkes and all those Fitz's that are still hanging about. And what ever became of those *Hiberniores Hibernioresque*, those more Irish than the Irish themselves, those Gall-Gael, or did we succeed in keeping them strictly apart? And who took the place of those who went to hell or to Connacht, those ranchers and opportunists who arrived here from, dare I say it, the United Kingdom? Did they leave not a trace behind? And all the time, they have been slipping in from other places too. As in sexual morality, so it is in terms of race – pure is a relative term.

There is another Irishness which is now being tested and this is where the encouraging signs are evident. There is the perception of an Ireland which is welcoming and an Irish people who are generous. The problem for us now is to ensure that this does

not just remain a Bord Failte promotion but that it will be translated into hard fact when it really counts – that there will be a genuine welcome for the less fortunate and that we will be generous in our response to those wishing to seek shelter here or to make a home here. There are positive signs. There are those who do welcome these newcomers, not in any patronising way, but for the gifts and talents that they bring and for the cultural diversity that they represent. I am glad to say that much that is positive has come in the area of adult and community education.

There is a recognition too that, in this new dispensation, adult education has an important role in helping immigrants to come to terms with a strange land and a strange people – of course, we never thought of ourselves as a strange people. In this edition of the Adult Learner, we examine the issue of racism and we report on some of the ways in which adult education administrators, tutors and learners are attempting to give real meaning to Cead Mile Failte.

Do you remember the White Paper on adult and community education? It, too, had some interesting things to say about making educational opportunities available to refugees and asylum seekers. Since it now looks as if this particular paper is set to sink without trace, we attempt a refloat as Ted Fleming leads a discussion on the important issues contained in this document and how its recommendations should now be implemented.

I would like thank the contributors to this edition, to my colleagues on the Editorial Board, to Margaret Purcell of Aontas for her help in providing information and materials and to all who have helped in producing the Adult Learner 2001.

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Racism, Power and Fear of Outsiders

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Racism is frightening. It can turn people into thugs. It can reduce them to uncivilised animals. It can start as a small isolated fire and turn into an inferno. If not caught in time, the fragile project of creating a civil society can be reduced to ashes.

Ten years ago, with the exception of Travellers and the conflict in the North, we in Ireland were relatively immune from racism. But we have seen enough signs in our past and in recent years to cause concern. If the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants grow as quickly as they have over the last five years, those of us who grew up in a homogeneous white, Catholic Ireland, will have to learn quickly how to live in a multicultural, pluralist society. Moreover, those who believe in creating and maintaining a mature, democratic society – and who believe that adult learning has a crucial role to play in this project – cannot stand idly by while racists contaminate people's hearts and minds, and the community and society in which we live.

Understanding Racism

Racism is a particular form of social prejudice. It is a hostile, rigid and negative attitude towards outsiders. It often takes the form of 'an incoherent assembly of stereotypes, images, attributions and explanations which are constructed and employed by individuals or groups to negotiate and make sense of their everyday life.'[1] Racism can be intentional or unintentional, and can be perpetrated by individuals, groups or institutions. Finally, and most important, it always revolves around issues of power.

Racism can begin through ridicule or speaking ill of others. This can lead to deliberately avoiding or shunning them. The next stage is active discrimination. This can range from not serving someone to racial segregation. The last stages are physical attacks, expulsion or extermination.[2]

But racism is not a black and white issue. It is a mentality, a way of reading, interpreting and understanding people, that goes way beyond the colour of their skin.[3] Racism is the social exclusion of people from civil society, because they are deemed not to have certain 'natural' properties. These properties can vary historically, and within different geographical and political contexts. This is what connects the social exclusion of Irish travellers from middle-class suburbs, to the domination of Catholics living in Loyalist areas of the North, and Blacks surviving in the Deep South of America.[4] It is reflected in people being excluded from family life because

they married in, and from community life because they are 'blow-ins'. The outsiders are made out to be different. In this way, Norbert Elias argued that racism was part of a much broader universal, human figuration, the distinction between what he called the 'established' and 'outsiders'.[5] He was able to show how a small neighbourhood community in England in the 1950s was oftentimes bitterly divided between an old established working-class group and a new working-class settlement.

The problem with racism, and they way we see and treat outsiders, is that it may be endemic to the way we know, classify and categorise the world. Ever since Emile Durkheim wrote his classic *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* we have realised that human knowledge derives from dividing people into different clans, tribes, groups.[6] Durkheim realised that when, for example, a clan worshipped the eagle they literally saw themselves as belonging to the air and therefore they could not marry clans that worshipped land or water creatures. But they could trade with these clans. And so the differences between clans and tribes became cemented into social life. Some clans and tribes were for marrying and some were for trading.

But, as Elias pointed out, it is not just that established groups see themselves as different, they also see themselves as superior or better people.[7] There was a taboo about engaging in non-occupational contact with outsiders. The established set themselves up as a higher and better order of human beings. Moreover, there was a tendency for outsiders to accept and internalise the superiority and group charisma of the established, and their own inferiority and sense of disgrace.

There are two processes at work here. First, seeing others as inferior is fundamental to the process of developing and maintaining group solidarity, or what Durkheim called 'collective consciousness'. In other words, clan and group solidarity is not just about being different from but, in a crucial way, morally superior to. Second, if the other clan or tribe is seen and depicted as morally inferior this justifies not caring about them when it comes to trade, or other forms of political and economic exchange. Put more philosophically, ontological difference, the classification of the social world into different categories is enmeshed in the discourse and practices that create a belief and feeling of moral superiority.

Elias and Scotson argued that there were four tendencies common to established-outsider relations: (1) for members of the established to see outsiders as 'law-breakers' (2) for members of the established to generalise about outsiders who break the law or contravene social norms as the 'minority of the worst' (3) for outsiders to accept the negative view the established have of them 'group disgrace' and the positive view of the established have of themselves 'group charisma', (4) for the established to see the outsiders as in some way 'unclean'.[8] This helps explain why the established engage in ridiculing, talking down and, the most common tactic, telling jokes about outsiders. How often have we been in the company of others and someone begins to tell a racist joke? The question, here, is not so much what to do about it, as why does it occur in the first place. There are three main reasons. First, it excludes and demeans the outsiders but at the same time makes them exotic. Second, it helps

cement the identity and solidarity of the established. This is why it is difficult to challenge a joker. In doing so, you are in danger of being cast as an outsider. Third, telling jokes and stories about outsiders helps relieve the tension and fear that comes from the threat they are seen to pose to group unity. Having been created and maintained as outsiders, they become an unknown, and the unknown is a source of mystery and fear.

Fear of the Other

Despite living in a highly technological, rational, and scientific world, life is still full of risks, fears, uncertainties and tragedies. Everyday life is surrounded with bad news stories. Despite all the evidence to the opposite, we insist in reminding each other that life, people, institutions cannot be trusted. Throughout history we have needed someone to blame for our misfortune; the devil, witches, Jews, Blacks, Arabs. History has shown that humans cannot live without scapegoats. There must be a cause for our misfortune. There must be someone to blame.[9]

Racism is rooted in fear. It is fear of the outsider, of the unknown, of how they will disrupt the peace, tranquillity and security of existing social arrangements and networks. It is a fear that they will be a drain on existing resources; that there will not be enough to go round. From an early age we are socialised into fearing and distrusting outsider, whether they be Vikings, Norse, English, Protestant, Jew, Black or Coloured. The idea is produced that these people will take our land, places in our schools and hospitals, our social welfare benefits. They will destroy our language, our religion, our heritage and 'way of life'. They will rape and sexually defile our daughters. This brings us back to the kind of xenophobia that can emerge when nation and culture become conflated. In other words, as much as a colonised people we had to endure the way the Protestant-English establishment developed a discourse in which we were constructed as savages, we have to ask ourselves the extent to which our cultural-nationalist establishment has constructed Unionists, English, Protestants and, increasingly, racial and ethnic minorities, as outsiders.

Fear is an important part of racism. It is the emotional side. Fear may be irrational, but it is real. In W.I. Thomas's famous concept of 'self-fulfilling prophecies': If people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences. In other words, if outsiders are constituted not only as 'not like us' but as 'not belonging' and 'unnatural' they will be perceived as a threat. And when people are emotionally charged this threat can unleash the always ready and present potential for violence in us.

Racism and Power

The strategy of constituting outsiders as inferior is rooted in power and exploitation. It is not just about symbolic domination, making outsiders out to be inferior, lesser human beings, it is also about securing and reproducing existing capital, wealth and resources, and passing them on to the next generation of the established.[10] One of the best ways of maintaining power is for the established to convince outsiders, and

ultimately for the outsiders to convince themselves, that they are inferior and unworthy of high positions in society. In this way, economic and political domination have always been linked to symbolic domination.

This is where the strategy of social exclusion becomes crucial. Because outsiders are deemed to have 'naturally' different characteristics, they can never become the same as the established. Even when they follow their customs, talk their language, wear their clothes, eat their food, they will still be treated as outsiders. This is the important link between what Pierre Bourdieu calls symbolic capital (the honour and respect of others) and the attainment of cultural, social, political and economic capital. Without honour and respect it is difficult to be regarded as the same as everyone else, to be successful in education, to develop social networks, to attain political office, or to do well in business.[11] Indeed, as Elias pointed out, besides lacking symbolic capital, outsiders do not have the same social network that the established can exploit.[12] This social capital, the indebtedness that can be called on from existing alliances, loyalties and favours done, is a crucial aspect of the established group's power.

The existence or arrival of outsiders can gloss over the imbalance in power among individuals, groups or sub-sections of the established. It glosses over social and economic differences and, through creating a siege mentality, helps develop and sustain a sense of community which may be more imagined than real. Indeed, Elias argued that over-identification by individuals with the established group leads to a loss of balance between I-images and We-images. Individuals subsume themselves within the group. They do not think or have a conception of themselves as individuals. This imbalance, Elias argued, can be fatal for the individual as well as for the group.[13]

How Racist are the Irish?

Micheál MacGréil has mapped the level of prejudice and tolerance in the Republic of Ireland over the last thirty years. He demonstrates the level of prejudice there is to different out-groups. For example, 78 per cent of his respondents would marry or accept English people into their family through marriage. But this declines to 40 per cent for Jews, 30 per cent for Blacks, and 20 per cent for Arabs. But the prejudice against some indigenous groups is even higher. Only 14 per cent would marry or accept a Traveller into their family through marriage. This declines even further for Gay People, 13 per cent and for Drug Addicts, 5 per cent. Indeed the level of intolerance towards drug addicts is very high. Thirty-five per cent of his respondents would not have them as Irish citizens and 29 per cent would debar or deport them.[14]

MacGréil asked some more interesting questions. Again, at one level Irish people come across as very tolerant. Over nine in ten (93 per cent) agreed that the Black person deserves exactly the same privileges as the White person. And almost nine in ten (87 per cent) held that by nature the Black and White person are equal. But there is a dark side to his findings. One in ten (11 per cent) of his respondents believed that the Black person is basically or inherently inferior to the White person. One in seven (15

per cent) said that they would refuse digs (accommodation) to Black people.

This suggests that, on average, one in seven people we encounter in everyday life will be prejudiced against and discriminatory towards Black people.[15] MacGréil went on to show that racialism, and indeed sexism, ethnocentricism, and anti-semitism, were directly related to authoritarianism. In other words, people who are more conservative, fundamentalist, moralistic, fascist and aggressive – literally people who think that everything is either black or white, are more likely to have negative, prejudiced attitudes to Black people.[16]

But what MacGréil's findings do not reveal is the way authoritarian people express their attitudes. Are they more expressive and evangelical about their feelings and opinions than liberals? When, where and with whom do they express their prejudices? How do liberals respond when racist attitudes are expressed? These questions are crucial, for it is within the cut and thrust of discussion in everyday life that public opinion is not just formed, but reformed. It is crucial, therefore, to be aware of the tactics that racists use to seek attention, win approval, and legitimate their attitudes.

This is where the setting of boundaries and the policing of boundaries becomes a crucial issue. And this is where political correctness enters the arena. Over recent years, people have become aware that it unacceptable to use derogatory terms to describe outsiders. So, for example, the word 'nigger' is rarely used in relation to black people. But increasingly the term 'black' or 'Negro' has become politically incorrect, as it reproduces a stereotype when there are crucial distinctions. Consequently, it is preferable to use 'Afro-American' when referring to Americans who originally came from Africa.

It is the ongoing creation and maintenance of negative attitudes which make every social encounter, particularly within institutions which make decisions about outsiders, the site of a political struggle. People in organisations, particularly those working with refugees and asylum-seekers, have to be careful how certain names, terms, policies and practices can be seen as demeaning, derogatory and discriminatory. This demands critical reflection, not just at the level of the individual, but also at the level of the institution. For example, Fanning reports trying to use the term 'racism' in several conversations with people working with asylum-seekers in the statutory and voluntary sectors. He found 'a degree of resistance to using the term on a number of fronts'. People were reluctant (a) to admit to institutional racism (b) to be critical of the policies and practices of other agencies dealing with asylum-seekers with whom working relations had developed and, (c) to critically reflect on their own attitudes and practices to asylum-seekers.[17] Beyond institutional and public life, we need to understand how racism is created and maintained in everyday social life. Elias described some tactics. One is blame gossip where anything that happens in a community is immediately blamed among members of the established as having been caused by the outsiders. Another is to focus on the worst of the outsiders as being typical of the group as a whole. It is not that one bad apple destroys the barrel, but more that the one bad apple reveals how the rest are inherently rotten. The

established also use derogatory terms such as 'Nigger' not only as a means of establishing solidarity among themselves, but as a shaming tactic to stigmatise, demean and demoralise outsiders.[18]

Lessons to be learnt

The growing number of refugees and asylum-seekers has brought about a growing number of studies which have made important recommendations about policy and practice.[19] Adult education, or formal learning programmes, can play a crucial role in creating a mature democratic inclusive civil society, in which there is recognition, acceptance and appreciation of difference.[20] Such programmes have to go beyond the obsession with personal self-development and critically reflect on the structures of power which reproduce inequality and exclusion.[21] There are two immediate problems. First, the project of creating a civil society is based fundamentally on reason, that is on the power of reasoned argument. Racism, however, has more to do with fear, emotion, group identity, economic and political power and people being unreasonable. Second, those whose fear is greatest and who may have most to learn and gain, are those who might feel that they have most to lose. It is hard to see the fears and anxieties of the established being allayed until regular social contact through trade and occupation is developed. One of the benefits of greater interdependency is greater trust. This has always been one of the problems in overcoming the gap between the established or settled community in Ireland and Travellers.

Adult education can play a useful role in helping outsiders integrate and assimilate by providing courses which enable them to attain economic, social and cultural capital. Courses can be provided which enable refugees and outsiders to learn the language, understand the culture, and acquire the labour and social skills which will help them find employment and integrate within the community. Adult education can also play a crucial role in helping outsiders maintain their language and traditions, and to critically reflect about themselves, their problems and concerns, the community in which they live, their position and power in Irish society and the best tactics for resolving these problems and improving their conditions. Such programmes, if run within the codes of best practice, can help maintain the dignity and integrity of outsiders, while at the same time helping them to integrate within society.

However, breaking down the mental and spatial barriers of social exclusion has often more to do with the established learning to see, understand and react to outsiders differently, to appreciate rather than be threatened by difference. But it is difficult to provide educational programmes for those who feel they have little or nothing to learn and who feel that the logic of reason and education can only dilute the feelings and practical logic of the established group. In an ideal world, one can imagine, for example, an organiser of programmes putting on a course such as 'African Food, Culture and Customs' and it being a resounding success among the established. On the other hand, one could organise an innovative, Freirean-based course on 'Community Fears and Anxieties'.

When faced with these practical dilemmas, I have tended to ask myself 'What would a good Dane do here?' Two things come to mind. The first thing might be to establish a type of folk-high school for cultural pluralism. This would necessitate a heavily subsidised residential centre which would run a variety of courses revolving around understanding and appreciating cultural differences. The second would be to establish courses for the parents of outsiders whose children attend established schools. What would be even better is if these courses could incorporate in some way established parents. This would be crucial to outsiders developing symbolic and social capital. The idea is to find a way to break down the barriers of social exclusion by developing minimal, non-threatening social contacts. Learning cafés, in which there could be rooms for small learning groups, would provide an opportunity for members of the established community to mix informally but publicly with outsiders. The problem is how to ensure that contact by members of the established with outsiders does not lead to a loss of position, status and respect for members of the established.[22] The cafés could also function as a first-stop shop for information and advice about more formal adult learning.

Footnotes

1. See, B. Fanning, S. Loyal and C. Staunton, *Asylum-Seekers and the Right to Work in Ireland.* Dublin: Irish Refugee Council, 2000:18-19.

2. Micheál MacGréil, *Prejudice in Ireland Revisited.* St Patrick's College, Maynooth: Survey Research Unit; 1996: 19-21.

3. Robert Miles, *Racism after 'Race Relations'.* London: Routledge, 1993.

4. John Solomos and Les Back, *Racism and Society.* London: Macmillan, 1996:25-29.

5. Norbert Elias, 'A Theoretical Essay on Established and Outsider Relations' pp. xv-lii in Norbert Elias and John Scotson, *The established and the outsiders: sociological enquiry into community problems*, 2nd ed. London: Sage, 1994.

6. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.* London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976 [1915].

7. Elias, 'A Theoretical Essay' xv.

8. This summary comes from Eric Dunning. See Eric Dunning, *Sport Matters: Sociological studies of sport, violence and civilisation.* London: Routledge, 1999.

9. René Girard, *The Scapegoat.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986.

10. As Said points out, the myths, lies, and exotic tales told about the Orient cannot be disassociated from the material interest economic and political institutions had in exploiting it. Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995:6.

11. See P. Bourdieu, 'Forms of Capital' pp. 241-58 in J. Richardson (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education.* Westport [Conn.] Greenwood Press, 1986.

12. Elias, 'Theoretical Essay', xviii.

13. Elias, 'Theoretical Essay', xliv.

14. MacGréil, *Prejudice in Ireland*, 65-67.

15. MacGréil, *Prejudice in Ireland*, 133.

16. MacGréil, *Prejudice in Ireland*, 459. Of course, it is important to remember that there is not a direct correlation between attitudes and actual behaviour, between what we say and what we do. Lapierre is famous for his practical study of racial prejudice. He travelled around America in the early 1930s with a Chinese colleagues, staying and eating in various hotels, motels and restaurants. In only one of 251 instances was the Chinese man refused. Sometime later he sent these establishments a small questionnaire. One of the questions was 'Will you accept members of the Chinese race as guests in your establishment?' Of the 128 replies he received, over 90 per cent said 'No'. See Richard Lapiere, 'Attitudes and Actions' pp. 14-21 in Irwin Deutscher *what we say/what we do.* Glenview [IL]: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1973. It turned out that symbolic capital was the crucial factor. Once the owners met the perfectly articulate, well-suited, smiling, polite and deferential Chinese gentlemen who spoke with an unaccented English accent, there was no difficulty. This is echoed by Cullen's study of the way refugees were treated. 'The word is that the Gardaí at immigration are on the lookout for blacks and gypsies ... . Accent is a big determination in whether you make it past the plain-clothes police or not.' See P. Cullen, 'Refugees, Asylum and Race on the Borders' in E. Crowley and J. MacLaughlin (eds.) *Under the Belly of the Celtic Tiger: Class, Race, Identity and Culture in the 'Global Ireland'.* Dublin: Irish Reporter Publications, 1997:105.

17. Bryan Fanning, 'Asylum-Seekers, Travellers and Racism' *Doctrine and Life*, 50.6 (2000): 358-366.

18. Elias, 'Theoretical Essay' xxvii.

19. See, for example, P. Faughnan, Refugees and Ayslum-Seekers in Ireland. Dublin: Social Science Research Centre UCD, 1999. Fanning, Loyal and Staunton, *Asylum Seekers.*

20. See, M. Welton (ed.) *In Defense of the Lifeworld: Critical Perspectives on Adult Learning.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

21. See, T. Inglis, 'Empowerment and Emancipation' *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48.1 (1997):3-18.

22. Elias, 'Theoretical Essay', xl.

Researching the Language Needs of Asylum Seekers

tanya ward [1]

The objective of this article to introduce the notion of an asylum seeker, explain and describe their rights and entitlements and mention some of the difficulties and problems confronted by them in Ireland. This will be followed by a short discussion on the role of adult education in addressing the language needs of asylum seekers and research that is being undertaken in order to meet these needs.

What is an asylum seeker?

An asylum seeker is a person who arrives spontaneously in the State and asks to be recognised as a refugee under the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. According to the Convention, a refugee is a person who

> *"owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."*

Hence, the term asylum seeker is a legal category or label, but who are asylum seekers?

Brief history

The current asylum seeking population in Ireland comes from an estimated one hundred and fifty countries of origin[2]. Gender, ethnicity or tribal group, age and class further subdivide this category of people. In addition, asylum seekers have different religious, cultural backgrounds, linguistic, educational backgrounds and employment experiences. In particular, they all have different reasons for leaving their country of origin. Hence, the asylum seeking population is heterogeneous and hugely diverse.

No. of asylum seekers 1992-2000
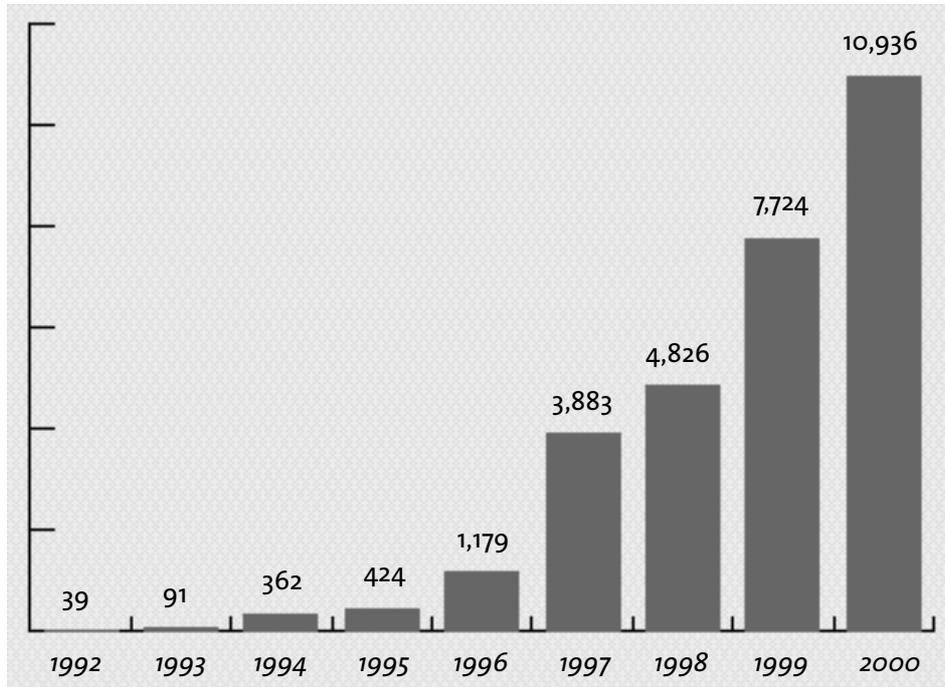
Source:Department of Justice,Equality and Law Reform

Ireland received few applications for asylum during the 1980s. However, the situation soon changed in the 1990s. From the above figure, we can see that in 1992 Ireland only received 39 applications for asylum; this figure steadily rose to 424 in 1995 and then to 1,179 in 1996. Applications have been either doubling or tripling since then. Last year, Ireland received 10,936 with an average of 1,000 applications being lodged with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform a month. This new occurrence has given rise to much debate in Irish society and has challenged service providers and policy planners from the outset. While these statistics are in stark contrast to Ireland's previous experience, when considered in a European context it is apparent that this growth in numbers is part of an overall trend throughout Western Europe.[3] Moreover, the rising figures are a reflection of social and political instability in many refugee producing countries and the polarisation and poverty that many are forced to endure.[4]

No. of asylum applications 2000 (17/11)
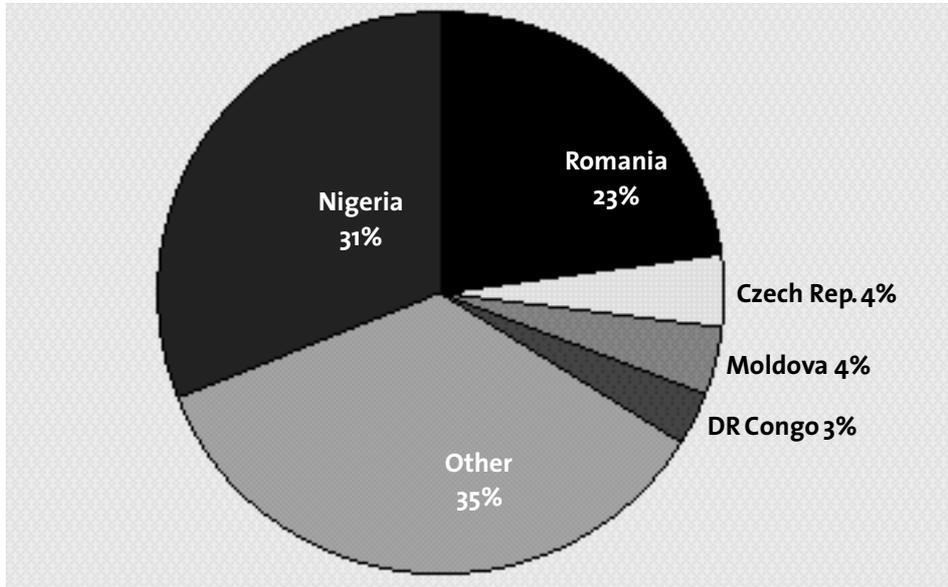
Source: Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

The majority of asylum seekers in Ireland are from Nigeria at 31%, which is evident from figure 2. Romania follows close behind with 23%, while applications from Moldova and the Czech Republic amounted to 4% each respectively.

Rights and entitlements

All asylum seekers do not have the right to leave the State without the consent of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, to local authority housing or to third level education and to vote. However, all their other rights depend on when they applied for asylum. For example, asylum seekers who arrived in the State before the 26th of July 1999[5], and who have been in the State for *more than one year* have the right to work. Moreover, according to the White Paper on Adult Education (2000) – *Learning for Life*[6] – these persons can access VTOS courses, literacy and language provision and mother culture support.

Asylum seekers who entered the State after that date are not permitted to work. In fact they can face criminal prosecution under *Section 9 (7)* of the *Refugee Act 1996* if they are found to be working illegally. They can be imprisoned for a term not exceeding a month and /or fined £5000, while employers that take them on face no penalty whatsoever. Also, the aforementioned White Paper only provides them with access to literacy and language provision (the full implications of this will be discussed below).

The Health Board places all asylum seekers in emergency accommodation in the form of B&Bs and hostels when they arrive in the State and asylum seekers can avail of free medical care. However, again they are settled and supported through two different systems. Before April 2000, all asylum seekers were in receipt of full Supplementary Welfare Assistance (SWA)[7] payments and rent supplementation if they secured private rented accommodation. Whereas for asylum seekers who arrived after that date, they are now provided for through a system of direct provision and are regionally resettled to a location outside Dublin in full-board accommodation. Under direct provision they receive £15.00 a week per adult and £7.50 per child[8]. In November 2000, the Directorate of Asylum Seeker Support Services[9] reported that there were 2,904 people who had been dispersed outside Dublin.

Difficulties and problems confronted by asylum seekers

While the asylum seeking population is hugely disparate, they all take the same journey. This journey is highly bureaucratised, as they are obliged to move through a complicated and demanding legal procedure. Many suffer from uncertainty, boredom and loneliness and will experience accommodation difficulties at some stage, deprivation and even racism.[10] Moreover, for those without spoken and written English, they have the added burden of trying to exist and carry out every day tasks without even this basic survival skill.[11] Finally, they have language problems in that they are separated from their own linguistic community to which they owe their sense of ethnicity and personal identity.[12]

In reality, asylum seekers are one of the most materially disadvantaged and marginalized groups in Irish society, particularly those on direct provision[13]. Indeed, the reception strategies that have been employed by the State for asylum seekers result in producing a disabling environment.[14] In *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Young (1990) clearly illustrates how the denial of difference results in the oppression of certain social groups, and makes a case for a politics that recognises rather than represents difference. She contends that social justice can only be achieved through the elimination of institutionalised domination and oppression and maintains that marginalisation (which is institutionalised) is the most dangerous form of oppression. Moreover, she considers "marginals" to be people that the system of labour cannot or will not use; they are a whole category of people who are expelled from useful participation in social life.[15] Young identifies numerous different social groups as being marginalized such as old people, people with disabilities, young mothers, young people and so on, many of which the adult education sector work with on a regular basis.

Young's view of marginalisation is analogous with the notion of social exclusion expressed in the White Paper on Adult Education for it describes social exclusion not only as a phenomenon of poverty but as a structural process of disablement, whereby

disadvantaged groups are both rendered voiceless and powerless.[16] Evidently from above we can see that asylum seekers suffer from a structural process of disablement. Given that this is the case, we must ask ourselves how the adult education sector can produce an enabling environment whereby asylum seekers can learn, succeed and become active participants in their local communities?

Learning for Life – White Paper on Adult Education

In section 8.13 of the White Paper on Adult Education, it was proposed that asylum seekers would have "*free access to adult literacy, English language and mother culture supports*[17]". In addition, it states that the role of the Refugee Language Support Unit (RLSU)[18] should be expanded to include asylum seekers and that the scope for providing a national programme for language provision should be explored through the VECs and other education providers.

This is certainly one of the most positive developments for asylum seekers in recent years, especially given the other limited rights that they have. It is also congruous with the informed recommendations of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). They advise the following in Section 47 of their *Position on the Reception of Asylum Seekers June 1997:*

> *State policies should in no way prevent adult asylum seekers from acquiring new education and skills in the host state. All asylum seekers should be supported in these aims. Again, ECRE believes that such as policy – if it meets both the asylum seekers' needs and those of the host state – will both prevent exclusion from the host society and facilitate re-integration upon return to the country of origin.*

They also propose that services should be integrated with service provision for local citizens.[19] Undoubtedly, the VECs and other education providers are in a position to ensure that this can happen. This would also mean that they would be involved in the first step of integrating the asylum seeking population in their local communities. Indeed, the adult education sector and adult learning have a lot to contribute to the asylum seeking population if the two groups work together through a process of consultation and negotiation.[20]

Fleming (1998) argues that adult learning, which is social, political and critical, can change systems and institutions that operate in the interests of few to work for all.[21] He explains how women's groups and community groups have used their learning experience to transform unjust and exclusionary structures. In truth, Fleming has an ideal vision of adult education in mind. He contends that it would be "*committed to the social and political practice of participatory democracy, informed through critical reflection, continuously engaged in discussion and together acting thoughtfully to ensure that social systems, institutions, organisations, and practices are responsive to the*

needs of everybody and operated under an ethic of care"[22]. If we take on this ideal vision of adult education, it is not difficult to imagine a holistic form of education and language provision for asylum seekers which addresses their immediate needs, and enables them to become independent, visible and active participants, that can directly contribute to and change structures, services and Irish society.

Research on the language needs of asylum seekers

There is very little in the way of research in regard to refugee and asylum seeker issues in Ireland, particularly in regard to language needs. However, in 1996 the Refugee Agency[23] and the Department of Education and Science commissioned the Centre for Language and Communication Studies to prepare a report on the language needs of refugees. Professor David Little and Dr Barbara Lazenby Simpson wrote and submitted the report in July 1996.[24] The report looked at some general principles in the language learning process and providing appropriate language teaching for refugees. In addition, it examined language support for refugees in Ireland, Australia, Canada, Sweden and the UK. Finally, it included detailed recommendations, which eventually led to the establishment of the RLSU, the development of English language proficiency benchmarks and assessment procedures for use with refugees of all ages.

In response to the recommendations in the aforementioned White Paper, the CDVEC in association with County Dublin VEC, initiated the following research project – *The Language Needs of Asylum Seekers in Dublin: A Community Based Approach* in November 2000. The overall objective of this project is to: (a) Draw a profile of the asylum seeking community in Dublin and (b) Assess their literacy and language needs with a view to formulating an integrated and community-based approach.

The profile is based on the following variables: age, gender, mother tongue, country of origin, cultural background, educational background, domestic situation and familial relationships, language provision to date and location. The research has been undertaken in the Inner City (Dublin 1), Dublin 7, Rathmines (Dublin 6), and Dublin 24 in association with the Co. Dublin VEC.

Particular attention will be paid to the experiences and needs of groups with special needs such as women, older people and people with disabilities.[25]

The research proposal was developed on the basis of an initial evaluation,[26] which was carried out in the first month of the project.[27] It was found that for programmes dealing primarily with asylum seekers, the organisers had relied on Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) trained teachers and TEFL materials to begin with. However, they soon realised that this approach was unsuitable for their client group,

particularly for beginners and non-literate learners. This is due to the fact that TEFL teaching methods and materials are designed for learners who are well educated and who are learning English as a foreign language. As a result, most began using communicative teaching approaches and started using authentic teaching materials (i.e. bus timetables and so on) to enable students to cope with everyday situations.

Most programmes reported that there was considerable absenteeism among students. The reasons for this are varied and may pertain to the difficult situation that asylum seekers find themselves in, as outlined above. However, a number of teachers provided other reasons for non-attendance. They relate to no formal accreditation, students working illegally, no childcare facilities, familial and domestic commitments and travelling distances.

Some projects maintained that there was considerable ethnic tension among some of the students, which they were not qualified to deal with. However, there was a significant number of teachers with intercultural working experience and conflict resolution skills. This permitted them to contend with problematical circumstances as they came up.

Research methodology

The survey of the adult population was undertaken with the assistance of the Northern Area Health Board and the FAS Asylum Seeker Unit[28] and commenced in April 2001. The Health Board facilitated the distribution of questionnaires to asylum seekers in the designated areas by hand (for people in emergency accommodation) and by post (for people living in the local community). FAS disseminated the questionnaires to individuals who had the right to work. The questionnaires were available in seven languages: Arabic, English, French, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian and Russian. This survey is now near completion.

In order to ensure the success of the survey and promote the project, the researcher spoke to almost all the Community Welfare Officers (CWOs) and their Superintendents in the selected research areas from the Health Board and the FAS Asylum Seeker Unit, about the aims and objectives of the project, and issued them with guidelines to enable them to deal with asylum seekers that needed assistance filling out the questionnaire. The researcher also visited many different organisations during the pilot phase of the project including statutory agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and representatives from refugee groups. Finally, the project was also publicised through an information sheet, a poster campaign and an article in *Metro Eireann.*

The other principal constituent of the primary research for this project will consist of a number of focus groups with asylum seekers and refugees who have gone

through the asylum procedure in order to gather qualitative data. A number of interviews will also be conducted with certain ethnic groups, which have traditionally been difficult to target i.e. the Roma community. Asylum seekers and refugees are considered to be project partners in this research. Therefore, it is also intended that these focus groups will directly input into the kind of provision that they require in regard to teaching processes, curricula, learning environment, accreditation among others.

Evaluation of current language provision

An evaluation of current language provision for asylum seekers is currently being undertaken. The agencies and organisations that have be targeted include VEC Adult Literacy Schemes, Community Groups, FAS, non-governmental organisations, the RLSU and other education providers.

It is intended that the project will address issues around co-ordination and referral between agencies; networking and information exchange; accessibility, safety and transport; equality and anti-discrimination policy; resources and childcare; learning sites; teaching approaches and materials; teacher training, induction and support; learner support and guidance; targeted interventions; outreach centres and family groups; accreditation and the role of European initiatives.

Management structure

A Management Committee has been set up to direct and support this research. Moreover, it will assist in the design and implementation of recommendations, and advise on the realisation of pilot projects in the selected areas. The Committee is chaired by Jacinta Stewart, Education Officer for the CDVEC, and is comprised of the following agencies:

Association of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland (ARASI); Curriculum Development Unit (CDU); Directorate for Asylum Support Services (DASS); FAS Asylum Seeker Unit; National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA); the Northern Area Health Board; Spiritan Asylum Services Initiative (SPIRASI); Refugee Language Support Unit (RLSU); representatives from the CDVEC and Co. Dublin VEC and the Department of Education and Science.

This is the first time that these agencies have come together to work on education and language provision for asylum seekers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research project should be completed and available towards the end of 2001. At this point the primary phase of the research is almost near completion. When the recommendations have been framed, a final consultation will take place with the asylum seeking and refugee population to ensure that their needs are appropriately addressed.

While the actions of the project partners in relation to asylum seekers can be deemed as positive, there still remains a primary issue of concern. Asylum seekers are still one of the most materially disadvantaged groups in Irish society[29] and no amount of high-quality and well-developed education and language projects will ensure that their most fundamental needs are met. Therefore, any progress in education needs to be accompanied by improvements in other areas of provision.

Tanya Ward was appointed in November 2000 as the "Asylum Seeker Research Worker" to carry out a study on the language needs of asylum seekers in Dublin. Tanya is a graduate of University College Cork (UCC) and has a strong commitment and background working with asylum seekers and refugees. Previously, she has been employed by the Irish Centre for Migration Studies (ICMS), the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL), and most recently, the Irish Refugee Council (IRC).

Footnotes

1   The author would like to thank Susan Neill for her helpful comments on an earlier draft of this document.

2   Fanning, Bryan. Loyal, Steven. & Ciaran Staunton (1999) *Asylum Seekers and the Right to Work,* p.17.

3   See European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) Country Reports for 1999, published by ECRE.

4   For a more comprehensive explanation of the dynamics of displacement, please see UNHCR (1997) *The State of the World's Refugees,* Oxford University Press.

5   This is providing they have compiled with all aspects of the asylum procedure.

6   Published by the Department of Education and Science.

7   SWA is equivalent to Unemployment Benefit or Assistance.

8   Asylum seekers with children can apply for Child Benefit.

9   The Directorate is part of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform with responsibility for integration and reception.

10   Faughnan, Pauline. & Woods, Mairide. (2000) *Lives on Hold,* published by the Applied Social Science Research Programme, UCD, is an excellent report and details many of the problems facing asylum seekers I have described above.

11   Language skills was recognised by the Interdepartmental Working Group on the Integration of Refugees in Ireland in their report – (2000) *Integration: A two way process,* published by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, as being crucial to enable people to access

essential services such as housing, social welfare and health services.

12 Little, David. & Lazenby Simpson, Barbara. (1996) *Meeting the language needs of refugees – Some general principles in Ireland and elsewhere, and some recommendations*, p.1.

13 It is worth mentioning that the National Anti Poverty Strategy (NAPS) was bypassed due to a Cabinet decision when direct provision was being implemented.

14 Ward, Tanya. (1999) *Journeys in Asylum Space: A Comparison of the Socio-Spatial Condition of Asylum Space in Norway and Ireland,* unpublished MPhil thesis, submitted to the Geography Department, UCC.

15 Young, Iris. (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton: NJ, p.53.

16 Department of Education and Science, *Learning for Life: Adult Education White Paper on Adult Education*, p.70.

17 Ibid., p.173.

18 The Department of Education and Science set up the Refugee Language Support Unit in March 1999 to co-ordinate the provision of language support for refugees admitted to Ireland as a two-year pilot programme. However, it has now been built into the National Development Plan.

19 ECRE (1997) *Position Paper on the Reception of Asylum Seekers*, Section. 34.

20 See National Organisation for Adult Education (NIACE) (1998) *Adult Education in Multi-Ethnic Europe: A Handbook for Organisational Change*, published by NIACE and Stuart & Thomson (eds.) (1995) *Engaging with Difference: The 'Other' in Adult Education*, published by NIACE.

21 Fleming, Ted. (1998) "The Role of Adult Education in Ireland" in *Institute of Guidance Counsellors Journal, pp.58-61.*

22 Ibid. p.61.

23 The Refugee Agency was set up under the aegis of the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1992 to deal with the settlement of refugees admitted to Ireland under international agreements with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Agency has now been amalgamated into the Reception and Integration Agency, which is a section of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

24 *Meeting the language needs of refugees: Some general principles, a report on current practice, in Ireland and elsewhere, and some recommendations*, the Centre for Language and Communication Studies, TCD.

25 Unaccompanied minors (meaning asylum seekers who are under the age of 18 who are here in Ireland without a legal caregiver or parent) were initially to be included in this report. However, it has been decided that a separate report will be written on the education and language needs of unaccompanied minors in Dublin.

26 The programmes and centres targeted included VEC Adult Literacy Schemes, schools and colleges, FAS, non-governmental organisations and the Refugee Language Support Unit.

27 Ward, Tanya (2000) *Current Language Provision for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Dublin*, CDVEC.

28 The FAS Asylum Seeker Unit was set up in December 1999 to assist asylum seekers with the right to work secure employment. They have two offices in Tallaght and Coolmine in Dublin.

29 At a meeting of the Research Forum of the Irish Refugee Council in March 2001, Veale, Angela & Fanning, Bryan in an interim report on research on child poverty among asylum seekers and refugees, reported a case where a family were watering down powdered baby milk for their baby due to financial constraints.

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'There is a need for more English classes'… and childcare

agim berisha

When I came to Ireland about two years ago, I didn't have any English, so I wanted English classes. I wasn't actually looking for classes because at that time I didn't have the words in English to ask; if you don't know English, how can you ask? For about a year I learned by watching TV; a few words, not really proper English. When I started to understand something, I was interested in learning English and when I was in the unemployment office, they told me that my English wasn't too bad but they were looking for qualifications. I didn't have any qualifications, so I thought that if I had good English, I would get qualifications and make something better for myself and my family.

I have some secondary school education – a year or two – but I don't have a profession. I have permission to work. It's easy to get a job, but it's hard to find a job I want because I don't have qualifications. I wanted to follow a course; I asked about that but they told me I was not allowed; you just have permission to work but you are not allowed to follow any courses. I would like to follow a course, to do something better, to get a profession, to work in a job where I could make the conditions I want for my family and for myself.

I asked about English classes in the unemployment office and they told me about Spiritan House. I started about 2 months ago (in February 2001). I started in a beginner class, but it was too easy. I needed a higher level class, so I started a writing class. I think I want to learn to speak and write in English first. I would like to take a computer course, but I need more English first.

I think there should be more information about English classes. There are many people who would like to learn English, but there isn't very much information and they don't know what there is. For example, before, I did not know where Spirasi was, even though it is only about 15 minutes away from my home. How can you find out where English classes are? There should be more information. Maybe in the Department of Justice, they should give you a list of places when you make an application. There must be more people who want to know about classes, but if they do not have any English, how can they ask?

The first reason to learn English is for verbal communication, but I would also like to study reading and writing because I think I will be able to get a better job.

I am starting to learn new words, and how to make sentences, these are important things – but I know that I need more. I did not think I would learn so much English in so few hours.

I would like to study more skills. My class is only two hours, three days a week. I would like to learn writing for four hours a day, then the next day reading for four hours, to learn the skills I need. When I am sure that my skills are good, then I would go on to different skills and different levels.

I think the teacher needs to tell a student if he is ready for a class or not. Different levels in mixed classes is a problem. If some people who do not have any English are in a class then the teacher spends a lot of time explaining, which is a problem for students who know more. I think something should be changed; I'm not sure what, but people with different levels should be in different classes.

Sometimes I have problems attending because I have a small child and my wife does not have English at all. She's been here a year and she can't come to school because we have a small child. She has English once a week, a teacher comes to our flat and teaches her for an hour and a half, but I don't think this is enough. She needs to communicate. If she has to go to the doctor, I have to go with her to explain to him, so I might miss some classes or work, which is a big problem.

The important thing is that I am starting to learn more and more - I learn all the time and my English will get better, because you learn more all the time. I understand well, and I think I can speak so that people understand me. I would like to have more English classes than I do now.

I am unable to follow a course. I would like to follow a course for even six or seven months just to give me a qualification. I have different wishes for the future; everybody has things they want to do in their lives. I don't know what courses there are, but I would like to choose a course for a job that I would like to do, not just to work anywhere. No one will take me on for a good job without qualifications. Now I don't have a choice of jobs, but that's what I would like.

Agim Berisha is a 33-year-old Kosovar living in Dublin.

Learning for Life –The White Paper: A Discussion

ted fleming

The Irish Government's White Paper on adult education, *Learning for Life* (Department of Education and Science, 2000), outlines the Government's policies and proposals for adult education. Lifelong learning has become the taken for granted context in which adult education perceives its development for the future and has the advantage of giving adult education a credibility that it rarely gets without such a context. This White Paper is welcome and timely and is the result of a lengthy consultation process that preceded publication. The consultation process extended far beyond the Green Paper (DES, 1998),in fact back to the Education White Paper (DES,1995) and Green Paper (DES,1992). It has been a year since the publication of the White Paper and people have had an opportunity to assess the position after the widespread welcome for its publication.

This discussion took place at the annual Adult Education Conference organised by the Adult Education Organisers, Chief Executive Officers and Adult Literacy Organisers in Newbridge, May 2001. The participants were Berni Brady, Director of AONTAS, the National Adult Education Association, Inez Bailey, Director of NALA, the National Adult Literacy Agency and Sean Conlon, Chairperson of the AEOA,the Adult Education Organisers' Association.

In this discussion we look at the strengths and weaknesses of the White Paper and at some of the issues that concern practitioners. So, what are the strengths of the White Paper?

inez bailey: It is hugely important and a welcome development that we have a White Paper on adult education (DES, 2000). Its main strength is that there was a reasonable consultation process after the publication of the Green Paper (DES, 1998) and people did have a reasonable opportunity to influence the proposals of this White Paper. From the point of view of NALA, the National Literacy Programme was already designed and outlined in a submission made to government for the Green Paper (DES, 1998). This was subsequently included in the White Paper. The White Paper contains a number of proposals that had already being mentioned in the Green Paper and made in submissions as far back as 1997. There was a time lag before these proposals were realised in the White Paper.

The White Paper is also welcome because it gives priority to adult literacy. This made a huge impact on literacy projects because until then literacy tended to be the Cinderella of the system and the White Paper brings it to the fore.

berni brady: I agree with Inez about the White Paper - that it is there at all is important. It took a long time to lobby for it. It is an improvement on the Green Paper, in that it actually adopts a broader philosophical base. One of the concerns we had about the Green Paper was its focus on the economic. The Green Paper saw the purpose of adult education almost exclusively in economic terms. I think the feedback from the consultation process, that there was more to adult education than its economic potential got heard, and the White Paper, as a result, is an improvement.

In the White Paper the focus is on the most disadvantaged and I understand why this is so. This is both a strength and a weakness in that the economic climate has changed dramatically since the Paper was written and now people who are low waged are the new disadvantaged. There are other weaknesses too and I hope we can return to these later.

A major source of satisfaction to AONTAS, as the national body for Adult and Community Education in Ireland, is the inclusion of a chapter on Community Education (DES, 2000, pp. 109-120). Community Education is a very invisible part of the adult education field and it is important that such a section was included. AONTAS lobbied very hard for the inclusion of the proposal on community education facilitators (DES, 2000, p. 114).

Finally, the consultation processes run by other bodies besides the Department of Education was far more productive and participative than the official one. The process used by the Department of Education could have been better organised. However the consultation process survived because there were lots of other means of participating which were organised by groups all over the country.

sean conlon: The Adult Education Organisers' Association unreservedly welcomes the White Paper. We were there on the day it was launched and there was a good feeling realising that finally the White Paper had arrived. It had been through a process of consultation and on that day the White Paper was seen to acknowledge the work that had been done for many years in adult education and furthermore highlighted certain things that needed to be done. By and large, I think, there was, at the launch, a buzz and it acknowledged the energy and even some of the frustrations of working in adult education. The White Paper highlights adult education in some important ways. The AEOA is very positive about it.

When I try to identify the part of the White Paper with which I am most pleased, I

think the core principles of equality, interculturalism and the systemic approach are of central importance (DES, 2000, p. 30). The notion that adult education has these key principles gives us an important framework in which to work.

The White Paper (DES 2000, p. 28) also identifies six priority areas underpinning its proposals for adult education. The first is consciousness raising. For someone like me, coming out of the liberal 1960s, 1970s when I first read Paulo Freire, I now find that consciousness raising written in a State White Paper is very positive. It has other priorities too: citizenship; cohesion; competitiveness; cultural development and community building (p. 28). This fundamentally sets down core principles from which we can move forward.

ted fleming: In addition, the emphasis on the training of adult educators, the qualifications framework, structures for the development of the field and the higher education section are also strengths. These are parts of the adult education project that now have a policy framework for their development. Someone has at least thought about these important issues and the Government has put this forward as a project.

sean conlon: I also think the national and local structures outlined in the White Paper (DES, 2000, p. 185-200) are important. People on the ground look to structures to deliver services and now there are proposals to regularise the structures. For example if one looks at the success of the Institutes of Technology, formerly the Regional Technical Colleges, that started as sub-committees of the VECs, we can see what is possible within these kinds of structures. As a result, we now look at this model and wonder whether the adult education sector might develop in a similar way.

berni brady: It is very important to have an infrastructure within which adult education can develop. A National Adult Learning Council is proposed that will take responsibility for policy making, for looking after adult education. This has never happened before. I just wonder where it is at the moment, as it is a very positive proposal. The proposed technical support services of the Council are also very welcome (DES, 2000 pp.149-175).

In the consultation process, AONTAS thought that the crucial issue would be structures. In fact a far more interesting debate developed on the issue of the professionalisation of the sector. The proposals created great anxiety as there was a fear that professionals would take over the work which was already being done very well by people working in the community.

I realise that we are being selective in the strengths we have highlighted.

ted fleming: What are the weaknesses as you see them?

inez bailey: It might be worth looking at what happened with the literacy programme and see how that experience is mirrored in the remainder of the White Paper. When it was published, funding for literacy was already on stream. It had actually begun implementation prior to the publication of the White Paper. There was clearly a political decision made to address the funding of proposals within the White Paper for other reasons. For example, the OECD survey (Morgan, et al., 1997) was published before the White Paper. The adult literacy proposals had funding earmarked under the National Development Plan (Government of Ireland, 1999) and were then included in the White Paper. I remember, like Sean, flicking through the document when it was published as quickly as I could to see if certain things were in it. The first thing that struck me was that literacy was one of the few areas where funding was actually earmarked. It was funded under the NDP and that funding was already in place before the White Paper. This indicated to us that we were certainly getting money. We were not however getting funding because of the White Paper but only because of other policy considerations. We believed that the adult literacy service would benefit and we were very happy to see funding there. But it was clear that there was not the political will to fund proposals unless the momentum came from somewhere else. There was no clear willingness to implement proposals that were only in the White Paper even though it had taken a great deal of energy over two years to draw up the programme. This was a great opportunity to sort out funding but there was the not the political will to actually give the funding to implement the many proposals within the Literacy Programme.

ted fleming: There is probably a perception across the country that literacy has got significant funding. Is that a misconception then?

inez bailey: There was the political will to increase the adult literacy budget but it was raised from such a low base that it appears to be a significant increase. When the budget is increased from I£1m to I£10 million that is perceived as a colossal jump but that increase has not resulted in the adult literacy programme being appropriately funded. It still remains a tokenistic response because so much needs to be done with a limited amount of money. In the context of the total education budget, we know that we have less than I£3 to spend on adult literacy compared to the thousands of pounds spent in the mainstream education system. Unfortunately, what happens in adult education is that we tend to compare budgets with each other within the sector. We look at what the person or project nearest to us has got, as opposed to looking at the bigger picture.

berni brady: I think the White Paper started off brilliantly with the core principles and the subsequent discussion of those. Then it started to address various areas such as literacy and community education and what should be done. The most disappointing aspect for AONTAS is the issue of financial supports for students which

we see as an access issue for students whether in adult literacy or higher education. The White Paper is trying to broaden the categories of people who are eligible for free adult education but in doing so they have inadvertently excluded people on low wages. There ought to be an entitlement for all people to at least an upper second level education free of charge.

AONTAS has lobbied for a long time against the discrimination that is made in third level education in relation to fees for part-time and full-time students. We were extremely disappointed that this issue was not fully dealt with and we will continue to lobby for free fees for part-time students.

As the White paper goes on to discuss other issues such as professionalization and qualifications it becomes aspirational. The specifics of how the proposals are going to be implemented are not spelt out in the White Paper. There are also issues that are not really addressed at all, for instance North-South co-operation and interculturalism.

The proposal for Local Adult Learning Boards is problematic. I believe the number of members is too big. Smaller boards with emphasis on the role of the board instead of the representational element of it might have been better. Putting learner representatives on the Boards implies a process of capacity building for that work. Also the issue of how the community and voluntary places will be filled is not clear. AONTAS supports the development of community fora and networks as a mechanism for representation. The autonomy of the Boards is not made entirely clear nor is the role of the VEC in relation to their operation.

ted fleming: This may be a good time to address some of the issues about the implementation of the proposals?

berni brady: The proposals which are being implemented are already part of the National Development Plan. The proposals for access to free fees under the Back To Education Initiative has not yet been implemented and there are now people on low wages who cannot access education but who, prior to this, may have been treated favourably by their local VEC. .

There is no indication as to how the Government is going to implement the decision to allocate 10% of the annual increase under the BTEI which is to be allocated exclusively for the development of community education (DES, 2000, p. 116).

The Community Education Facilitators are funded, but not yet appointed. Job descriptions are being drawn up but we do not yet know what they are going to be. Nothing is happening on professionalisation. There is no Inter-Agency Working Group, no Forum for Practitioners. The national qualification authority has been set

up but no local or national structures and no sign of them in the budget this year. AONTAS is extremely concerned about this and we are going to use the time before the next election to raise these issues. With a possible change of government we could lose a lot of ground if this is put on the back burner like the Kenny Report (Kenny, 1983) was. The absence of implementation is worrying.

ted fleming: From the point of view of AEOA what are the weaknesses?

sean conlon: The major weakness is that it is high on aspiration and low on specifics about how it should be implemented. Without repeating other weaknesses already mentioned, the proposed Local Adult Learning Boards are not well thought out. These boards are a way of putting the current ad hoc Boards on a legal footing. AEOs looked at these proposals and do not see them as viable. Some of the existing boards work reasonably well, more of them are virtually non-existent.

ted fleming: Is there any work done on how the Boards have worked, an evaluation or review?

sean conlon: I cannot recall anyone having looked at these Boards. They came out of the Kenny Report (Kenny, 1983), were always ad hoc and have operated for fifteen years in that manner. There is also the notion of the 'administrative hosting' (DES, 2000, p. 195) of these boards by VECs which is not spelled out in the White Paper. This is going to be a source of real tension in the future, if the Boards are ever set up.

Additional AEOs have been promised and this is welcomed by the AEOA. The workload of each AEO has increased dramatically since the arrival of extra projects and along with the proposal for Community Education Facilitators, this means there are many proposals now awaiting implementation.

ted fleming: Implementation is crucial. There are clearly a number of proposals in the document that people like or that they can work with, but there seems to be a gap between aspiration, policy and structures and what is going to happen. People are identifying the issue of implementation as the key question. You are asking how is this going to happen?

inez bailey: When we went to our members after the White Paper was published to check their reaction to it, there was an awareness that, even if there was movement in adult literacy, there was no movement in other areas of adult education. That has affected morale on the ground. Our members had put huge energy into the consultation process for the White Paper and suddenly they were almost being conned. The sense of being conned was the reaction we got.

In adult literacy with modest funding, the absence of progress in other areas of adult education prevents a more effective roll-out of the adult literacy programme.

I looked at your copy, Ted, of the White Paper which is new and clean and my one is tattered. It fell apart the first day. That for me is a metaphor for adult education. In the rush to get something done the quality of what is actually produced is suffering. I don't think that is intentional but right through the system there is not the level of resourcing and support that is required. Adult education is still marginalised.

We may be expecting too much from a policy paper if we also expect it to deliver on the implementation side. The community platform has seen, through their involvement in the partnership process, that it took huge amounts of work to get policy proposals into the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (Government of Ireland, 2000) and even then there has not been a sense that the proposals have been implemented. There was a sense of being conned in that too.

berni brady: There is also the Action Group for Access for Disadvantaged in Higher Education where we rushed to complete a report in three months and AONTAS put a great deal of work into it. The same issues emerged as were to the fore twenty years ago, ten years ago, last year, this year. We also worked on the subgroup which examined barriers to access on the Task Force for Lifelong Learning. These groups were set up as part of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (Government of Ireland, 2000) and the National Development Plan (Government of Ireland, 1999). Following this we had the White Paper. There is always the feeling that there is no difficulty in setting up a committee or doing a paper on different issues but getting proposals implemented is quite a different thing. There is indeed more funding for literacy and adult education but it is important to remember that adult education was starting from such a low base, it will require a further substantial injection of resources.

ted fleming: What you seem to be saying is that the adult education sector has been engaged in a process, that you are not only disappointed but…

inez bailey: What is actually happening is that the more time that is taken up in committees and reports and task forces, the less time you actually have to put into political lobbying and the outcome is going to be a sense that this is not good enough.

berni brady: The problem is the political thinking of the day which has a very economic, functional, work based focus. The difficulty is in getting past the narrowness of this approach. Lifelong Learning needs to be understood in the broader perspective of civil society and not just as a means to an economic end and that is where the

problem lies. The question is how to get past that and what can an organisation like AONTAS do to achieve that?

Most people in adult education are so busy working locally there is little time left over to look at the bigger picture. They are not going to have time to be strategic.

Ted Fleming: This discussion clearly identifies some deep fault lines in the way the various sectors in society relate to one another. The White Paper is the state restructuring and identifying priorities for its adult education programme. The close connection between the state and the economy is troubling to those who see adult education with an important agenda over and above supporting economic development.

What is there over and above the economic? Firstly, the legitimate concerns that the state itself ought to have, i.e. the common good, justice, care, and the exercise of power in the interests of all its citizens. Secondly, there is civil society or that sector of society that concerns itself with family, community, voluntary organisations and is the locus for the potential expansion of democracy (Cohen & Arato, 1992, p. vii). Adult education can concern itself with the state by encouraging second chance, citizen education and equality of access. Adult education can also concern itself with the economy by teaching job skills, upskilling and indeed functional literacy. However, adult education in civil society concerns itself with learning for family, community and social involvements. Above all it concerns itself with increasing the potential for democratic interactions and making the system world more democratically accountable. Unfortunately, there is conflict between the system world (state and economy) and civil society. Any sector that is concerned with making the system more democratically accountable is not going to be happy with the ways the system world reorganises itself, as the system is so often counter democratic. The concerns and discomforts of adult educators are in part about these tensions. These tensions also underpin a number of new social movements and their relentless anti-capitalist protests.

These issues are coming to the fore in the literature on adult education (Murphy, 2001) and the task for leaders in the field is to navigate the complex journey between the system and civil society where the danger is colonization by the system. The task is to decolonise or infuse the system with democratic imperatives (Fleming, 2000). Instead of the traditional Marxist conflict between capital and workers, the contemporary conflict is between the system (state and economy) and the lifeworld, between the system and civil society. That Aontas, NALA and many AEOs have clearly and rightly allied themselves with the disadvantaged and with communities is an indication that they will always be disappointed with the system world's bureaucratic and functionalist discourse in a White Paper.

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We'll Meet Again

ad hock

This is an extract from the recently published and eagerly awaited reminuisances of Ad Hock entitled Ramblings in Adult Education. We are privileged here to be allowed a pre-launch glimpse into what promises to be a frank and controversial appraisal of the sometimes seamy, often steamy, little known world of adult and community education

Monday: Went to the office with that hazy feeling after a long Sunday night. Checked appointments diary to find that I am half an hour late for a meeting. This meeting is important as it is a follow on from a meeting last week which had to be abandoned to enable four of the six people present to rush to another venue for another meeting.

Rush out to catch latter part of the meeting in progress. Arrive at that part of the meeting when decisions are being made. The following decisions are agreed:
a) There is need for a further meeting to discuss issues that have arisen in the course of this meeting, to progress issues that are ongoing and to provide for issues that are likely to arise in the near future (short term), the foreseeable future (medium term) and that may never arise (long term)
b) The next meeting will be extended from two hours to four to ensure that all issues can be discussed in full.

It is now lunchtime and we must consider whether we can continue with the business and convert this to a lunchtime meeting. The difficulty is that by the time the decision has been made to defer, lunchtime has passed and it is time to proceed to another meeting.

Lunch is postponed to facilitate a meeting which is scheduled for early afternoon. This meeting is attended by three of the four of the six participants already referred to above. This presents an exciting prospect because it is intended to be the last meeting of a series – the meeting to end all meetings. The project has come to an end and there are concerns to be addressed. After the first hour, we have dealt with apologies and are half way through matters arising. After two hours, we have moved to item three on the ten point agenda. It is already decided that we will meet again as it is essential to reflect on the progress and the process – in the first instance, to decide if there was any and in the second instance, to decide how we arrived at it if there was and how we

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managed to avoid it if there wasn't. If you see what I mean. We need to look at the outcomes, the strategies, the impact, the opportunities offered and not taken. We need a SWOT analysis, that's wot! We are all really excited about this, not because we will all meet again but because there will be another meeting.

Just remembered on the way home that I had promised to meet with a community group. This is an informal meeting and the purpose really is to set up a formal meeting so that we can discuss formally what we have just spent an hour and a half discussing informally. The meeting is the message. Unfortunately, someone suggests brainstorming which in itself makes the most unwarranted assumption. The result is that we spend an hour listening to an individual in search of a brain who recites the litany – the transport system, the lack of chilcare facilities, empowerment, consultation (lack of), suitable accommodation (lack of), perceived needs and felt needs, windows of opportunity, glass ceilings and closed doors, imposed solutions, inherited solutions, top down and bottoms up and 'may I say, probably the most important of all', the need to listen – 'and now if you'll excuse me, I must be off, as I have another meeting to go to'. After the good listener departs, it transpires that this is a really useful meeting and some very practical decisions are agreed. The problem is that we don't have a record so now we will have to meet again to put it on record.

Home where a meeting has been arranged with the partner. There is a long agenda and this too will give rise to other meetings – the bank, the schools, the painter, the plumber, the residents, the visitors. All in good time.

And so to bed. There perchance to dream – in fact, to have an horrendous nightmare, finding oneself trapped in one unending meeting, listening to long unending speeches, all of them through the chair and, most distressing of all, preparing an unending schedule of… meeting… meetings.
And that's only Monday.

Refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland – a population in search of educational options?

máiríde woods

Over the last thirty years Irish migration patterns have turned around. From being a poor and peripheral island offering few opportunities, Ireland is now a prosperous part of Europe and as such attracts – and needs -workers from abroad. And because of its democratic institutions and its respect for individual rights, it also attracts people fleeing persecution. The arrival of substantial numbers of asylum seekers has implications for Irish society both in terms of how statutory and voluntary agencies respond, but also in terms of configuring a new identity: Ireland is no longer a poor, rural, single-colour world. Our history should make us sensitive to the experience of the immigrant. We should understand better than most the importance for the newcomer of education, particularly second-chance education. The stories of aunts and uncles who built up their credentials in the night-schools of Britain and America should show the way.

In order to respond to a new situation, accurate information is required. **Lives on Hold** describes part of a research programme on refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland, undertaken by the Social Science Research Centre in UCD under the Applied Social Science Research Programme. Its aim was to provide baseline data on asylum seekers in order to increase knowledge and awareness among policy makers and the general public. The study was funded by the David McDonald Trust through the Irish Red Cross. **Lives on Hold** has three sections; the first situates asylum seeking within a European and global context; the second uses Health Board figures to generate base line data on the asylum seeking population in the Eastern Health Board area in November 1999; and the third documents the situation, experiences and perceptions of 85 people who were either seeking asylum or who had refugee status in Ireland.

Terminology causes some difficulty; refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants are often confused, and indeed the boundaries can be fluid. Ireland

subscribes to the UN Convention of 1951 (on the Status of Refugees); and is thus bound to grant refugee status to anyone who, *"owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country…"* (UN Convention 1951) Such individuals are Convention refugees and must first have requested asylum. While that demand is being processed, they remain asylum seekers with limited rights. They can appeal a negative decision and the judicial review process is also open to them before they can be deported. Some asylum seekers get leave to remain on humanitarian grounds; others achieve residency rights on the basis of their relationship to an Irish citizen; most often their Irish born child who, because of his/her place of birth, qualifies for citizenship. Programme refugees are those invited to Ireland by the State usually in response to a UN request, and they receive a good deal of State support.

International definitions attempt to secure uniform treatment for refugees, but in practice there are different interpretations of persecution. The UN Convention definition belongs to a time when the refugee was usually fleeing State persecution (rather than persecution by religious, ethnic or other armed groups). The Department of Justice Equality & Law Reform believes that Ireland fulfils its international obligations, but, like other European authorities, it perceives many asylum claims as ill founded and one of its concerns is to reduce the numbers of asylum seekers through the introduction of stricter controls. Since 2000 a number of failed asylum seekers have been deported. Ireland is just beginning to put together an immigration policy for those from outside the European Economic Area – with work permits becoming somewhat easier to obtain, but failed asylum seekers are not facilitated in switching to regular immigration channels. Such "failed" asylum seekers are sometimes referred to as economic migrants, though it is salutary to remember that the "undocumented" Irish in the USA of the 1980's would also have fitted that description.

Ireland is a relatively new destination for asylum seekers. Globally however, numbers of people leaving their countries in search of safety have tripled over the past ten years. Europe receives less than one third of the total, while Ireland in turn receives about 3% of the European total, in line with percentages for other outer European countries. Its ratio of asylum seekers to inhabitants is about average for Europe. The reasons for this large-scale movement of people seem to be war, civil conflict and the gap in both security and prosperity between Europe and its periphery. The rise in the number of asylum seekers rather than refugees reflects the reluctance of developed countries to grant refugee status, with the result that more people spend longer with their status unresolved.

Full refugee status is granted comparatively rarely in Ireland and more often on appeal than on first instance. Just 13% of decisions granted refugee status in 1998 and in 1999. Ireland's recognition rates are lower than those of the EU countries where the average recognition rate in 1999 was 26. Until 1996, the numbers seeking asylum in Ireland were very small. Since then numbers rose significantly with more than 7,700 applications in 1999 and over 10,000 in 2000. This is part of a European trend which has seen numbers of asylum seekers in 'outlying' European countries rising. In Ireland the majority (almost two thirds in 1998) come from Romania and Nigeria.

Baseline Data on Asylum Seekers in Eastern Health Board

The second part of the research project involved an analysis of baseline data for November 1999 from the Eastern Health Board. At that time more than ninety per cent of those seeking asylum in Ireland lived in the Eastern Health Board (subsequently the Eastern Regional Health Authority). The data covered age, gender, family type and place of residence. There were 5679 non-national claimants of Supplementary Welfare Allowance from the Eastern Health Board in November 1999. These claims covered 9412 asylum seekers - 7132 adults and 2280 children.

Table 1: Number and gender of non-national claimants and dependants

Category	Totals	Males	Females	%male	%female
Claimants	5679	4508	1171	79%	21%
Adultdependants	1453	279	1174	19%	81%
Children	2280	1140*	1140*	50%*	50%*
Asylum seekers	9412	5927	3485	73%	37%
Adults	7132	4787	2345	67%	33%

Child dependants estimated as 50% male and 50% female

The majority of claimants were single and childless, though women were more likely than men to be married. Six percent of claimants were single parents. Almost half of the EHB claimants were between 24 years and 32 years. Ten percent were over 40 and seven per cent were under 21 years, with 65 of the latter being under 18. Claimants came from seventy eight different countries with the largest groupings from Romania and Nigeria. They were likely to live in three Dublin postal districts – Dublin 1, Dublin 7 and Dublin 8. These areas of residence reflected the fact that most asylum seekers were single and were confined to the private rented sector for accommodation.

Table 2: Main nationalities of claimants in November 1999

Main nationalities	Number	%*
Romania	1636	29%
Nigeria	1234	22%
Algeria	340	6%
Ex-USSR	312	6%
Poland	198	4%

Percentages refer to overall totals

These data show that the average asylum seeker is a young man – most probably a Nigerian or a Romanian – aged between 24 and 35, single and without children. They provide a macro-context for the third part of our research, the social survey.

Survey of People Seeking Asylum

The social survey of asylum seekers captured a greater range and richness of data and focussed on people's own experiences, perceptions and hopes as they sought asylum in Ireland on the eve of the new millennium. Eighty five people took part in face to face interviews between November 1999 and May 2000. Although a representative sample of asylum seekers was not possible , the methodology ensured that the main groups seeking asylum in Ireland were included. On most of the demographic details the interviewees mirrored the profile of claimants in the Eastern Health Board area in November 1999.

The fieldwork process was slow and complex as many asylum seekers are reluctant to be interviewed, and while it was taking place, there was a major change in official policy with services for asylum seekers provided separately by the new Directorate for Asylum Support Services which introduced direct provision[1] and dispersal. Three contact sources were used – hostels and centres offering emergency accommodation; voluntary agencies and community organisations providing a service or resource to asylum seekers; and a local Health Board office in Dublin city. A semi-structured questionnaire was used with two thirds of the interviews conducted in English.

The majority of those interviewed lived in Dublin in emergency accommodation and had arrived within the previous year; two groups from outside Dublin also took part. Reflecting the EHB data, the two largest groupings were from Nigeria and Romania. Almost half were between 19 and 30 and about half were single. Three quarters were male and more than 50% had no family members in Ireland- women were more likely to have children or a partner with them.

Persecution by the government, civil conflict and persecution on religious grounds were the most common reasons for leaving their country of origin.

We had religious problems…We ran a small church… and tried to do what was good for the people but were targeted by others. They started killing and attacking brothers and sisters in the church and then started coming after me…Had to find a way out fast. If you don't pay the police you get trouble

Just over one third said they had been ill-treated in their home country with another third mentioning intimidation. Fewer than half had specifically chosen to come to Ireland – for most it was simply a secure European country.

Ireland's a civilised country
I could be at peace here

Participants recounted stories outside the experience of people who live in stable and prosperous countries. Documentation on countries of origin would in general corroborate respondents' stories, though, the existence of conflict can make it difficult for an asylum seeker to prove the truth of his/her story.

The results of the survey challenged the stereotypical impression that asylum seekers are likely to be poor and ill educated. Overall, those who participated in the study came to Ireland with high levels of education and vocational skills. Almost 70% reported they had eleven years of schooling or more. Less than one in ten were without formal educational qualification with proportionately more men than women in this category. Almost half (46%) reported they had completed some third level examination or acquired a vocational qualification or diploma at third level. Higher proportions of respondents from Eastern Europe were represented at both extremes of the qualification continuum. Participants from the countries of the ex-USSR were clustered more at the upper end, while those from Africa covered all parts of the spectrum.

The majority (55%) reported they had either fair or excellent English while 28% said they had very little spoken English or none at all. Overall, more than half of those from Africa reported they had excellent English in contrast with less than one third from countries of the ex-USSR and just 10% from Eastern Europe.

Some of the respondents expressed frustration at the non-availability of English language classes or the haphazard nature of the tuition offered. While these classes fulfilled an important social function, they had limitations because of the shifting composition and the disparate levels of students. The Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform is now providing some funding for English classes.

Previous occupations as described by respondents were categorised using the Irish census classification. More than one fifth fell into the higher managerial or lower managerial and close to one fifth into the intermediate non-manual category. A further one fifth were classified in the semi-skilled category and 7% in the unskilled. A quarter of respondents were not classified – a high proportion of these had been students.

Table 3: Estimate of social class group based on previous employment of respondents

Social class category	Number	Percent
1 Higher managerial/professional	3	4%
2 Lower managerial/ professional	15	18%
3 Intermediate non-manual	16	19%
4 Skilled manual	6	7%
5 Semi-skilled manual	19	22%
6 Unskilled	6	7%
Other/ No information	20	24%
Total	85	100%

When asked about employment in Ireland people said they would be open to anything. They consistently emphasised their flexibility and their desire to contribute to the Irish economy. But two thirds acknowledged that further training or support would be required. The restriction on working during the processing of the asylum application caused considerable frustration- the majority of those who took part in the study were not eligible to take up employment despite their experience and skills.

Just 16% of respondents had the type of status that allowed them to seek employment in Ireland. This sub-group reflected some of the other barriers to employment. Non-recognition of qualifications resulting in underemployment; abrupt removal of ancillary benefits (such as rent allowance); and lack of basic English; were all encountered. There seemed to be an optimum 'window' for finding employment, highlighting the crucial importance of appropriate training, support and assessment of competencies. The experience of the FAS Asylum Seekers' Unit in responding to a cohort of one hundred asylum seekers with the right to work has been a positive initiative in this area.

The biggest problems these asylum seekers experienced in Ireland concerned work and accommodation. The small number receiving direct provision were unhappy with it, mainly because of lack of choice over food and mealtimes. Most respondents found emergency accommodation unsatisfactory, the main reason given being lack of space. Many asylum seekers were sharing a room with up to five others and had no place to store possessions. Some hostels had no cooking facilities, some had inadequate bathroom facilities.

There are so many people using the toilet and bathroom that even when they are cleaned they get dirty again almost at once.

The general shortage of private rented accommodation in Dublin, coupled with prejudice against people on rent allowance, against refugees, and particularly against black people meant that the asylum seeker in search of accommodation had to make many fruitless telephone calls and journeys – all on a Supplementary Welfare Allowance. One man from Africa had spent thirteen months looking for a place of his own.

When they hear an African accent, they tell you the house is gone.

Asylum seekers' major focus tended to be the outcome of their case, which hangs on the determination interview conducted by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/Refugee Applications Commissioner. In day to day matters, it is the Community Welfare Officer who adjudicates on Supplementary Welfare Allowance, rent allowances and requests for exceptional payments. Although Irish welfare provisions catered for the asylum seekers' basic needs, integration measures at the crucial 'first impression' stage seemed inadequate.

Nobody likes to go away from their home if they have had a good life… Department of Justice officials haven't the perfect system to make decisions … they don't seem to understand about asylum seekers, and see them as dangerous or criminal. A few may be but some have high skills useful for Ireland.

It all depends on Justice. If they grant me asylum it will change my life and I can settle down in Ireland –stay here. I can't go home.

Many asylum seekers were isolated and suffered considerable boredom. One fifth reported having no social contact and another quarter only had contact with other asylum seekers. The majority of these are young men without family in Ireland – a group already at risk of psychological problems. The Irish way of socialising – the pub and club scene- presented difficulties because people had limited incomes and - for Muslims- because of the way it centred on alcohol. This arena also brought up the issue of discrimination, which was spontaneously raised by one third of respondents. Black, recently arrived asylum seekers with higher than average socio-economic status were most likely to mention it. One or two described racial attacks while more mentioned verbal abuse and the refusal of service. Though Roma respondents were often targets of discrimination, those in the study found less prejudice in Ireland than in their countries of origin. These reports of discrimination clearly underline the need for anti-racism measures in Ireland.

I try to make friends here but am taken up with problems with the baby, looking for accommodation and following up the application for residency… I don't know where to start with making friends. I feel I really need to get a job before I start to make real contacts and to get a place of my own.

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It is quite depressing – boys point at me and shout: Black man! It is very sad.

Why do you (Irish people) do it? You have been subjected to abuse for so long- why do you do it to others?

Respondents were asked about their hopes and fears. One quarter gave their major hope as 'papers' or (Irish) citizenship, while a similar proportion gave their major fear as forced return to their country of origin. The granting of status led to enormous relief. Employment was the second most frequently cited hope, with unemployment or idleness the second fear. Peace or security was also highlighted, while concern for family members left behind, and worries over the situation in the home country often surfaced as fears. The suspended situation of the asylum seeker and the difficulty of making a life under such circumstances were also mentioned.

I would hope to settle here because of the bad experience at home and maybe go back to school.

I feel I have no identity here… If I marry and have a family here, I think I would integrate.

People are stranded here waiting for decisions.

It's nasty to be an asylum seeker – one has no rights, no home. We are people who have lost everything. I had a good life in my country – a car, a summer house, a good job, friends.

What are the implications of this piece of research for Irish education? Although children can attend primary and secondary school and receive some language support, adult asylum seekers are precluded from most educational opportunities. This is partly because Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform policy is to provide only basic services to this group, in the belief that extras will swell numbers. However, since the determination period can last anything from six months to three or more years, some fruitful way of filling this empty time must be found if asylum seekers are to avoid dependency and psychological problems.

English language fluency has been pinpointed in most studies as the major key to integration (O'Regan, 1998, Begley et al. 1999) and some progress has been made in that English classes are now funded. However, by no means all asylum seekers are poorly educated; many have reasonably good English and need access to the type of class which will provide certification, and may allow them eventually to exercise their trade or profession. Asylum seekers' educational needs do not begin and end with English –they need the same spectrum of classes as others; some asylum- seekers also

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need the opportunity to obtain third-level and distance learning qualifications at low cost. Unaccompanied minors and the children of asylum seekers need some third level entitlement. The establishment of scholarships for refugees and asylum seekers would be an initial way of recognising this need.

A second key area highlighted by other researchers (Joly et al, 1997) is an accreditation scheme for qualifications and the establishment of "topping-up" courses. Such schemes have been introduced in the medical area, but they are needed across the board, if refugees and asylum seekers are not to be confined to "yellow-pack" employment. The support of professional bodies and trade unions would be important here.

The final challenge is to encourage the new minorities to put down academic roots in Irish society. Asylum seekers are not just learners, some of them are teachers too. Their cultures and languages of origin need to be on our third level map and could contribute to a broadening of our academic curricula. Already there are Migration and Ethnic Studies modules in different University programmes, and dedicated centres in at least one Irish University.[2] Last year saw the setting up of an African Studies Association of Ireland.[3] If we are serious about valuing diversity, such initiatives need to be properly funded and Leaving Cert. curricula in Romanian, Yoruba, Arabic and Russian should be under consideration.

Some may ask why we should do this. In a time of prosperity such measures could be seen as a gesture of reciprocation for what earlier Irish emigrants received from education systems abroad. The most compelling argument however, is the need to prevent the marginalisation of ethnic groups. It is in nobody's interest to have a society where non–EU citizens are confined to sweeping and serving. Asylum seekers are like most immigrants; predominantly young and with better than average education, skills, ambition and courage. They are unrealised capital – unrealised by both host and sender countries during the years when the asylum process effectively puts their lives on hold. Education must be part of their opportunity to start again.

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Footnotes

1   Since April 2000 arrangements for asylum seekers are made by the Directorate for Asylum Support Services (DASS). Asylum seekers arriving after that date receive food and accommodation directly at centres around the country along with a payment of £15 per week per adult.

2   Centre for Migration Studies in UCC, Racial & Ethnic Studies within Sociology in Trinity

3   Conference organised December 2000 in Trinity College, Dublin

Loving You Knowing You

elizabeth connors

As I look at them asleep at night
Knowing I created them fills me with delight,
Their little faces flushed and red;

They are my life joy and everything I ever wanted in my life.
As I gaze out my window thoughts come back to me
of days when I was younger and carefree.

When you are younger you're full of life
You haven't a care
And everything seems right.

Sometimes I wish I were a child again not to have pressure
on my mind; there's nothing better I would rather than hold them
close and tell them I love you, knowing they love me too.

It's all coming together now; they're all for me and me for them
The best is ahead; I expect the best, I am a good person,
I deserve the best;
I have a great future
We have a great future.

Elizabeth Connors is a participant in the education programme for traveller women at Sandyford, Co. Dublin

'But the problem was reading and writing'… and childcare

aminata meite

I am from the Ivory Coast. I didn't have any education in my country. When I came to Dublin on 12 March 1998 I didn't have any English.

My husband has a different level than me because I didn't have an education but he did. We went to the library and my husband asked if they could find a class for me. They gave me the address of the Refugee Council, and I went there.

It was difficult for me because the other people knew reading and writing, but I didn't understand. My teacher knew I didn't understand any reading and writing, so at the end of each class she took 20 minutes to practise my ABCs. Then classes there finished.

I then went to classes in St. Peter's Church in Phibsboro. I thought it was difficult but I stayed just to listen. When these classes finished I asked the teacher if there was a class for reading and writing and he gave me the address of the Adult Learning Centre. I went there but they said they couldn't take foreigners; they only took Irish people for reading and writing.

After that I went to the Refugee Council again to see if I could go to classes. At that time I didn't have my green book. They said I need a green book to take classes (at RLSU), so we applied for one. When I got my green book, I went to RLSU (Refugee Language Support Unit) and they gave me a class.

I started that class in October 1999. But the problem was reading and writing. There were different levels in the class because the other students could read and write but couldn't speak English while I couldn't read and write but I could speak. I had a problem with numbers but the other students knew them, so we only did them quickly.

Then in March I went to a different class for reading and writing where nobody could read or write, and that was good. It was my second class and I didn't have too many problems listening and speaking. Some people were beginners, so that was a little easy for the speaking and listening, but the reading and writing was good for me. The next term I went to a harder class for speaking and listening and the easier class for reading and writing, which was good, and I learned computers. I liked this, but we didn't learn that for very long because all these classes were closed down.

In September the class finished and I went back to the regular English class. It was very difficult because it was the same problem with reading and writing; people there had a higher level as they could read and write. We didn't do too much practice and the class was too quick.

My husband and I were sharing childcare; before that, a cousin was babysitting our son, but that was not permanent, so my husband would go to school one day and I would go the next day. My husband was taking a training course (FÁS) and he had to be there every day for the last two weeks of his course because this part was very important, so I told my teacher I had to be absent for two weeks. The teacher said it wasn't a problem.

The first week I was absent I went to the Adult Learning Centre because I heard they have a creche and I thought I could leave my son there and go to my class nearby or I could go to classes there. They said to check with RLSU to see if I could transfer.

I went to RLSU and the secretary called the Centre and said they be in touch with me. I didn't hear from them, so a week later I went back to RLSU and talked to the Programme Co-ordinator. He called the Centre, but there was no answer, so he gave me the RLSU number to give them. I went to the Centre and gave them the information. A few days later, the Centre called me, they said that the Centre only had classes two days a week, and RLSU wanted me to attend five days a week, so I couldn't take classes there or use the creche. I made an appointment with the Co-ordinator at RLSU, he said I could have a second chance if I could go every day. I told him I couldn't because of my son, and he said he couldn't do anything about that.

Then I got a letter from RLSU. It said my classes were finished because I had been absent a long time, two weeks, and if I wanted more classes I had to go on a FÁS course. I don't have the English for that.

I went to Spiritan House to see about classes. They said I couldn't bring my child, but maybe soon they could send someone to my house. I started to take a writing class at Spiritan House three nights a week, and that was very good because we did a lot of spelling and word sounds, but I could not go for long, because there was no one at home to take care of my child.

So now Spiritan House sends a teacher to my house {Outreach} but that is only one hour a week. That is not enough for me to learn.

I think they should have a long class for reading or writing. Three years would be great, because for us, everything is the beginning: reading and writing, even the alphabet. I think if we could have classes 5 days a week in reading and writing with people at the same level, it would be great.

If they give a class to us, they have to take responsibility because if they say they will teach us how to read and write and we have to attend the class every day and we have problems attending because of childcare, they should help us. If my husband is working and I want to go to school, and I can't go to school because I have a child the school should understand.

My reasons for learning are, first, if I want to go to an office I have to go with my husband and if he is working, I can't go to my appointment because even if I go, I can't do anything. The second reason is for my child; if I have a child I can't help him with his writing or reading or if he is going to school I have to help him with his homework. If I can't read I can't help him, and I can't read a story with him anytime.

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If he brings one home to me and says, "Mommy, read me a story," I can't.

In the future I want to work. If I can speak, read and write I want to work. I want to work in computers but now it is difficult because I cant read or write. That means I can't work in computers so I feel disappointed because I want to go to learn but I can't. I want someone to help me learn how to understand what is happening around me.

Adult Education: Teaching English to Asylum Seekers and Refugees

genevieve halkett and nick mulloy

This article sets out to discuss some of the issues involved in the provision of English language courses for refugees and asylum seekers in Dublin.

We have been working in this area for the last two years. During this time, we have taught five distinct needs groups; Survival English, Pre-vocational English, Academic English, Short-term Stay, and Literacy.

Survival English

This, the largest group, is usually composed of refugees and asylum seekers who lack a basic knowledge of written and spoken English and who need a basic language framework for day-to-day living and as a stepping stone for further learning.

There are two categories: those who have recently arrived in Ireland who have not received any previous (or very little) English instruction and those who have been residing in Ireland, but who have had little contact with the language (for various reasons, including lack of childcare facilities, denial of the right to employment, mental or physical illness, injury or trauma, the care of elderly or infirm family members, and the lack of information as to where to obtain English classes).

For this group, we found that the traditional exam-based language pedagogical methodologies of practising grammatical structures, learning lists of vocabulary by rote, and writing compositions largely irrelevant to learners who needed to effectively communicate in day-to-day survival English in Dublin.

Instead, we adopted a functional approach to language learning, devising a series of modules based on real-life situations in which they would have to use English. These included:
- Exchanging personal information
- Filling in forms
- Recognising times and dates and making appointments
- Shopping for food and clothes
- Asking for and giving directions
- Asking about prices and weights

- Describing symptoms and illnesses to a doctor or dentist
- Finances-Cashing cheques and paying bills
- Posting letters
- Finding accommodation
- Dealing with landlords and utility bills
- Public transport and taxis
- Speaking on the phone
- Children's education- dealing with the Irish educational system and homework
- Cultural Interaction-accepting and giving invitations,cultural comparisons with Ireland
- Self-Study – organising own study programme, accessing educational resources, recognising own educational needs

These functional modules, of course, did not exclude the grammar and lexis that are the necessary foundation for learning any language. Rather, they became a subliminal element instead of an explicit part of the entire educational process.

Inherent to the "Exchanging personal information" module, for example, would be the grammatical structures of pronouns, possessives, question forms, the present simple tenses of the verbs "to be" and "to have", and the regular verb forms of the past simple tense, as well as the vocabulary of family, numbers,dates, and nationalities.

The classroom dynamics that best suited this method was a cooperative process in which the learners would have the confidence to raise their own specific language needs in the classroom, and the tolerance to accommodate those of their peers. Such a process also helps to overcome two potential problems in working with learners from such a diversity of backgrounds as this group represents,namely; learners who come from an educational culture in which all learning emanates from the teacher to the exclusion of themselves and their peers, and ethnic tensions that could arise from learners who have escaped from the opposing sides of the same conflict.

There are many ways such a class bond can be deliberately fostered. For example, we introduced a "word box" into our classrooms. Into this box, any student could place a slip of paper on which they had written a new word they had come across in the course of their daily activities. Before doing so, however, they had to explain its meaning to the rest of the class. The students could consolidate the vocabulary in the word box on a regular basis, either as a class activity or on an individual basis.

Even such a simple idea as this illustrates four clear benefits that can be applied to the overall English language programme:

1. It gives the learner responsibility for their own learning
2. It places an emphasis on a communicative rather than a passive learning process

3. It reinforces the importance of solidarity within the classroom
4. It focuses on the specific language needs of the learner

This philosophy clearly sets out the teacher's role as guide, or facilitator, rather than an authority figure who determines what the class should learn or do; such a set-up leaves the students with a knowledge as to how, or what to study once the class is over or when the learner must be absent from the class. Although the teacher still retains a "last word" authority, it is the authority of a facilitator who takes all learners' spoken and unspoken needs into consideration, thus allowing them to determine a part of their learning process.

Pre-Vocational English

This group consists of learners who have the right to work (those with refugee status or asylum seekers who entered Ireland before 26 July, 1999) and have a basic knowledge of English, but lack the specific language and perhaps some skills needed to enter the workplace directly or pursue vocational studies in a FÁS or similar course.

Again, we applied functional modules to address the specific requirements of learners seeking employment. Modules included:

- CV Writing
- Researching Job Markets
- Application Procedures for Employment
- Interview Techniques
- Workplace Vocabulary
- Workplace Documentation
- Employment Conditions and Responsibilities
- Company Etiquette and Hierarchy

Particularly useful was the integration of IT tasks into this syllabus, which also provided basic computer training, which could be validated by the ECDL (European Computer Driving License) examinations.

A difficulty that had to be overcome was the diversity of vocational experiences and objectives that the learners brought with them; at times, learners needed to acquire the English equivalent of the jargon particular to their skills area, especially if their qualifications had to be revalidated within the Irish system.

This meant an individualised course of study had to be undertaken by each learner, for which they took personal responsibility for attaining the language they needed in their future career. For this aspect of the course, it was necessary to familiarise them with research methodologies and self-study techniques. For the most part, learners revelled in the opportunity to take charge of this aspect of their own learning.

Academic English

Some learners needed to prepare to obtain academic qualifications. A colleague of ours (Norman Simpson) took on this task by giving a course in the Cambridge University IELTS (International English Language Testing System) exam, which is designed to instil academic skills such as: taking lecture notes, listening for gist, analysing graphs and writing compositions.

Apart from the IELTS curriculum, he also prepared them to follow specific study and research programmes appropriate to an academic setting. Having each student organise a self-study programme and self-assessment techniques was also an integral part of this class.

Short-Term Stay

A group that had exceptional requirements were the Kosovar programme refugees who obtained temporary leave to stay in Ireland. Although some families returned to Kosova within three months of arrival, most remained from six months to a year.

The most vital needs of these learners, the majority of whom had little or no English, were to integrate into the Kildare community, obtain employment, communicate with schools and hospitals and carry out day-to-day activities, such as shopping. Many of the modules developed in both the Survival English and Pre-Vocational English classes were piloted with this group.

The largest initial obstacle was forming a sense of trust and security, as most learners suffered the traumas of recent bereavement, violence, eviction and dealing with illness, injury and post-traumatic stress syndrome of children and other family members. This was achieved by a flexible class environment, in which shopping trips in English, regular tea breaks and visits to individual homes were essential components.

Lack of childcare facilities limited the number of learners (mainly women) who were able to attend classes; therefore, on-site classes and a Mothers and Toddlers class were set up. This also catered to those who had to look after ill or injured family members. For learners who obtained employment but who still wished to study, new evening classes were introduced.

The success of this programme was exemplified by the facts that
- All those seeking employment found it
- Learners successfully integrated into the local community
- Many learners made Irish friends
- Upon return to Kosova, many learners were in demand for jobs requiring a knowledge of English

If similar classes were to be established in the future, we would recommend the following:
1. Teachers should have training in dealing with Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome

2. Learners should have the same access to resources and vocational training as other refugee groups
3. Teachers should have access to support or counselling networks to deal with the non-academic requirements of learners

Literacy

Among the learners with literacy needs we taught, we have identified five distinct groups:

1. L1-Learners who have little or no spoken English and are illiterate in both English and their native language
2. L2-Learners who have little or no spoken English and are unfamiliar with Roman script, but literate in their own
3. L3-Learners who have a highly-developed spoken English ability, but no literacy skills in either their own language or in English
4. L4-Learners who have a highly-developed spoken English ability and who are literate in their own language, but not in English
5. L5-Learners who are have learning disabilities (such as dyslexia or dysphasia), which hinder their progress in literacy in their own language and in English
6. L6-In rare cases, learners who have learnt written English, but cannot attribute sound values to it and therefore cannot communicate orally

We found that most of the learners in L1 and L2 had the same functional needs as those in the Survival English group, so the Functional Modules were adapted to include a Literacy component. It was also understood that each module would run over a longer period.

For L3 and L4, the learning process was more similar to literacy training for native speakers, although material had to be developed which would focus on improving their oral structural and lexical English as well as their written skills. A module that focused on developing dictionary skills was added.

Groups L5 and L6 were rare in number, and required individualised learning programmes.

For all of these groups, we found that specially designed CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) programmes were an invaluable asset, in both boosting confidence and allowing learners to identify problem areas and determine a study programme to address these.

It is essential that people with literacy difficulties should be identified at an early stage, so that they will not be demoralised by learning English in a literate class.

Most of the students we received were originally from Survival English classes, and were very self-conscious and ashamed of their inability to read and write. Once they realised they were in an environment with similar learners, they were able to articulate their needs, gain confidence, peer teach, interact in more public activities

and attempt to use their newly-found literacy skills outside the classroom and accelerate their learning process.

We would, therefore strongly recommend that initial language assessments of learners incorporate a written component to delineate those with literacy problems, as an oral screening procedure fails to identify groups L3 and L4.

We initially developed a syllabus for and taught a group of 15 learners from groups L1 to L5 and found that it took at least a year for motivated students to progress to a level at which they could join a mainstream English course.

Unfortunately, this class was closed down due to a lack of funding, and most of the students were placed in general English classes with literate learners. At the time of writing, there is no provision in Ireland for refugees and asylum seekers with literacy problems.

We therefore advocate, in the strongest possible terms, the rapid implementation of the proposals in *Learning for Life: The White Paper on Adult Education* that priority is given to "the need to provide specific tailored programmes and basic literacy for all immigrants".

For refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland, the ability to read and write in English is the key that opens the door to integration into Irish society, and the absence of educational opportunities is the ultimate form of disempowerment.

Genevieve Halkett and Nick Mulloy teach English writing classes to refugees and asylum seekers in Spiritan House. They have previously worked for RLSU (Refugee Language Support Unit) and Get Tallaght Working (FÁS Tallaght).

Book Reviews

Women and Education in Ireland Vols 1 and 2

Edited by Bríd Connolly and Anne Bridget Ryan

Mace, Centre for Adult and Community Education, N.U.I., Maynooth, *1999*

Not since 1987 has there been a collection of writing dedicated to the topic of women and education in this country. That was entitled 'Girls Don't Do Honours' and edited by Mary Cullen. In that context this publication is timely and, given the participative prominence of women in many spheres of Irish education, one could argue it is long overdue. Therefore, it was with great interest and anticipation, given my longheld view of the need for us to theorise our practice, that I embarked on this contemporary review of women and their educational endeavours on this the cusp of the new millennium.

This is a collection of articles primarily by women academics on a range of educational issues, experiences and practices which affect women in Ireland when they seek to enter a variety of education spaces. The articles cover the experiences and discourses which impact on women from the university, professional, community and school sectors as well as exploring and making explicit the assumptions and processes which underpin much of our practice. It does so from a feminist post-structuralist perspective with the aim of encouraging "explicit debate among feminist educators regarding the implications and usefulness of the particular approaches which they take" (p.1). This is essentially a snapshot of the multiple spheres in which feminist educators are striving to bring about change towards gender justice in a variety of education frameworks. It is a feminist analysis employing a variety of theoretical frameworks and a range of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to theorise current practice.

The first task of the editors is to contextualise their favoured post – structuralist stance. This they do by setting out the central themes of the feminist agenda which place a high value on the study of women, recognise the need for social change and accept the subsequent political nature of feminist education. Of particular relevance is the explicit recognition of feminism as a diverse body of theory and practice. The feminist post-structuralist approach, suggest the editors, provides a basis for creating "really useful knowledge" (in Thompson 1996) by offering "a view of gender as constructed in social relations" and supports the view that "change does not occur at the level of discourse alone" (p.3). Feminist post structuralism recognises that girls and

women are positioned in discourses of ethnicity, class, ability, race, age and personality as well as sex and "that these multiple positionings and the ways they shape individual subjectivities and pedagogical practice must be taken into account in work towards change…" (p.3). This theoretical framework enables the contributors to explore the positions of women in the education framework and provide a means to challenge the liberal humanist discourses upon which much women's education and adult education work is premised. It allows for the possibility of creating new discourses and new knowledge.

Much of the debate about equality in Irish society has been premised on the assumption that our problem has been one of access. This, coupled with the notion that change is a resulting inevitable, natural development, has underpinned an approach which equates access with equality. The first article in Volume 1 Women in the Academy: A Problematic Issue? by O'Connor explodes this myth in the context of higher education and particularly the university sector which purports to operate from a gender neutral base. Here, exploration of the academic staff profile in 1993/94 shows that only 21% of full-time academic staff in the universities are women with only 4% holding professorial status. While the situation is slightly better in the non-university sector, it is evident that, while women are increasingly occupying positions of 'expertise', their access to positions of 'authority' remains limited. The startling reality is that nothing much has changed since the mid 1970's and that it will be "at least 3,000 A.D. before the staff profile is broadly similar to the student profile" (p.42). O'Connor explains what these patterns mean and raises questions about their implications in institutions which are seen as creators and transmitters of knowledge, and argues that the processes which maintain the present gender profile are likely to exist at the level of organisational procedure and culture as well. In this context she argues for initiatives at the level of policy, culture and process which would begin to reverse this trend.

This clash of culture and prescriptive genderised view of particular occupations is also examined by McAuley and Looney (Vol 2.) in their article on *Women and Engineering* and Hyde and Treacy (Vol. 1) in their contribution on nurse education entitled *Negotiating a New Education Space*. The latter looks at the process of negotiation with the state and with academic institutions. The attempt to construct and credentialise a new knowledge base for nursing with nurturing as its central theme has been a struggle and entailed compromise, a debate very much positioned within the context of the value placed on the profession by powerful stakeholders in medicine, academia and the State. The result has been a blurring of lines between the educational and clinical component and a dual system of examination itself marginalizing nurse education within the higher education sector. This is a debate which pivots on the value which this society places on the nursing profession and the fact that it is a feminised profession grounded in an ethic of care and nurturance. These are not prioritised values within our education sector. McAuley and Looney trace a similar debate in their examination of women's participation in the engineering sector and

its implications. The number of women entering the profession has stabilised at a very low level, 5.1% in 1998. This, it is suggested, is because of a number of issues:the subject choices available to girls in the second level sector; the uncertainty among parents and teachers about the profession; and the stereotypical image of engineering as an unsuitable career for a girl. In combination these articles serve to illustrate the ideological base which is so ingrained in our thought processes and institutions as to condition the nature of debate in these areas to such an extent that they appear gender neutral. Given such a scenario education is seen as a process of socialisation or 'fitting in' and this is why the Real Life Rita's of Leonard's article (Vol.1.) are so few in number and are in her estimation at greater risk academically, psychologically, financially and socially than any other student group. Her analysis of *Mature Female Students in Higher Education in Belfast* rests on an illumination of what happens in the merging of the public world of higher education and the private world of women's lives. Her findings that mature women students are older, married/living with a partner and most likely to be studying Arts or Social Science are consistent with others in the field. Significantly, she found that, "it was the presence of a male within the household rather than the presence of children that had the greatest impact on opportunities to find time to study" (p.54). McGinn (Vol.1.) in her article similarly explores the experiences of a group of women who took part in an Access Courses in the N.C.I.R. and describes what she calls the situational, institutional and dispositional barriers facing them on their return to learning. These findings raise questions not only about funding, access and admissions but also about the structures which need to be put in place to support mature students who return to learning.

The work of Smyth and Hannan (Vol.1.) suggests that the foregoing interplay has its origins in a schooling system which, again under the guise of gender neutrality, replicates the gender segregation of the workplace by creating 'appropriate' knowledge bases for girls and boys. In an article called *Girls and Second Level Education* they explore the debate on academic performance and subject choices in single sex and co-educational schools and argue that this gender differentiation has a significant impact not only on the occupations that young women are likely to pursue but also on their self-image. Quinn (Vol.1.) develops this argument further in her examination of the perception of twenty-two disadvantaged young women of the schooling process. She argues that a system predicated on the concept of competing to succeed operates from a knowledge base, which is middle class and patriarchal, where growing credentialism has created barriers for those who experience educational disadvantage. Because the system fails to validate their personal experience, they internalise the expression of exclusion by opting out. In such a situation, the school process becomes a vital component in internalising traditional gender roles and the underachievement of those from marginalized communities where "daring to hope for more than the socially acceptable and locally expected is too much to ask" (p.195).

It is this discourse of marginalisation and exclusion which women articulate

when they return to community based education programmes and strive to participate within the wider community context. In an article entitled *Basic Education in the Community: Women's Experiences,* Kiely, Leane and Meade (Vol.1) present a narrative analysis of a small number of women who have returned to basic education programmes. Their findings suggest that community education programmes create a more supportive learning environment characterised by accessibility, personal attention and relevance. However, in this context the movement from personal development to political action cannot be presumed. As the authors point out, these courses are not "politicising in their intent" (p. 149). The critical importance of story and narrative is further unravelled by Rath (Vol. 2.) who contends that women's participation in community is forcing a redefinition of participation, democracy and representation. It offers an understanding of women's life stories in terms of resistance and resilience themes and, in introducing the concept of the counter-voice, seeks to reframe educational failure as a form of cultural resistance. The failure of these programmes to take on "the long agenda for social change" (p.74) is borne out by Costello (Vol.1.2.) in her examination of the *Challenges Posed by Local Development and Local Government* and its implications for Women's Community based education. She identified what she refers to as a "gender gap" in the higher echelons of community organisations, with women as only minority players at decision making level. She argues that activism is not equivalent to gaining power and achieving fundamental change. In the absence of more radical reform, she concludes that "women will have to 'live with' the state structures at local level and challenge them from within" (p.81) and thus strive to take their ways of working into the public sphere.

Anne B. Ryan (Vol.2) argues strongly for the need to reconstitute personal development education as a radically politicised practice which challenges the location of women's problems within the individual. This, she suggests, provides us with the tools to examine the assumptions which underpin our practice and to address the "political climate in which learner subjectivities are construed" (p.22). This argument is predicated on her belief that personal development education needs a theory of how gender differences are produced and reproduced. In the final analysis she argues that "while seeing how the personal is political is crucial, it is not enough" (p.24), the nature of the political requires acknowledgement and exploration also. This changes the focus of the debate and requires an avowedly political stance on the part of educator to read the world as a contested political space. This theme is taken up by Connolly (Vol.1) in her article which identifies the need for educators to exhume the assumptions and values which underpin their work so that they can make them explicit and challenge them. In an article entitled *Groupwork and facilitation: A feminist evaluation of their role in transformative adult and community education,* she traces the traditions which have given us our concept of self and group and contends that when individuals act alone to change their worlds, systemic and structural issues remain unchallenged. Such critical reflection is necessary if women's education and, indeed, adult education is to claim a wider social agenda.

In a further article focused on the issue of process, Gilligan (Vol.1.) contends that social transformation will never be realised unless "imagination is accepted as the faculty that empowers new ways of being and more ways of understanding our world" (p.201). Using Ricoeur's notion of metaphor and Irigaray's concept of the 'imaginaire', she encourages a concept of the learning space as a site where women can give voice to their identity and suggests that an education which has change and transformation at its core must marry critique with creativity. Action is central to this feminist educational model which she outlines. This relationship between the intellectual and the political is at the heart of the Women's Studies teaching agenda and is played out most forcefully within the confines of academic institutions. Byrne and Lyons (Vol.2) explore the intricacies of employing feminist pedagogical approaches which privilege egalitarian, participative co-operative methodologies in what purports to be an apolitical system. The aim of such a politicised education is to "strip women of their naivete of decision- making structure, power and politics" (p.84). These issues of content and process highlight the need for a redefinition of the education space in a politicised context where the pedagogical challenge facing the educator is to provide the means to interpret issues of power, oppression and equality at community level.

This kind of radical agenda can be difficult to progress and is extremely challenging in the pejorative context into which feminism has been written in Irish society. Connolly (Vol.2) in her article *Don't Blame Women* explores the challenges facing feminist academics. The backlash discourse is, she argues, premised on a fixed concept of feminism which argues alternately that the women's movement is "dead", has 'Gone too Far' or undermines the position of many women in Irish society, in particular women in the home. She strongly voices the need to create a public space in society for "the plurality of views that in reality inform feminist activism and feminist interpretations of contemporary Irish Society" (p.115). In this space, feminism as a transformational ideology and politics premised in a vision of reaching beyond its own boundaries can be explored and challenged.

These volumes set out to provide a link in the chain of feminist educational endeavour and encourage debate among feminist educators. Do they do that? I think so. The collection provides an overview of women's experiences in various strands of Irish education. It does so at the level of the personal and the political and is concerned with challenging the distance between. Its feminist post-structuralist stance enables it to explore what this means at the level of discourse as well as process and content. It illuminates how women have been positioned in the context of dominant discourses and assists in the promotion of a discourse of difference based on complementarity rather than conflict.

As someone who has worked in adult education for the last fifteen years and someone who has a particular interest in women's educational issues, I feel very strongly that this kind of analysis needs to be done. As educators we must continually

examine what we are doing, how we are doing it and why. Work like this enables practitioners to situate their work in a theoretical context and critique it and wonder about the future agenda for education, in particular women's education. If we don't theorise our practice and take this debate into the public sphere in this way, we run the risk of losing that which we consider so essential to our way of being in the world.

This collection is an important landmark, but further research needs to be done, I hope that it is accessible enough for all practitioners to make a difference to what they do. I came away from it enthused but somewhat dismayed wondering how, and indeed if, this change agenda can be progressed. Read it and see what you think!

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Feminist Ways of Knowing: Towards theorising the person for radical adult education

Anne B. Ryan

NIACE, The National Organisation for Adult Learning, 2001.

'Casting off' – can refer to the creation of an edge on a knitted garment or to the freeing of a boat from its moorings. Anne Ryan used this vivid image towards the end of this book when she summarises her work. I use it at the beginning of this review to illustrate her remarkable achievement. Arising from her own personal engagement with feminism, she journeys forth to challenge the reader on a whole series of issues relating to the way that feminist women produce knowledge about themselves and about feminism. In the process, she casts on stitches and knits them into an array of intricate patterns to describe the process through which feminist subjectivities and knowledge are constructed. Rather than relying on mainstream psychology, Adult Education needs to re-cast itself by taking on board recent developments in feminist Post-structuralism. The object of the book, then, is to advance thinking on adult politicisation.

Certain key terms are used extensively throughout the work but with a very specific meaning. 'Subjectivity' refers to the "conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the world". 'Agency' is an individual matter in which any individual conceives of a line of action, knows how to achieve it and has the power to execute it. 'Cathexis' describes the construction of emotionally charged social relationships. 'Discourse' means a historically, sociologically and institutionally specific structure of statements, categories, beliefs, habits and practices. These specific meanings are relevant in the manner that adult education is linked with social justice as part of a tradition in radical adult education which seeks to act politically and culturally to change history.

As politicised adults, feminists have played their part in changing history. Anne sets out to discover how feminist subjectivities are constructed and how we can engage in personal development in ways that construct politicised and agentic feminist subjectivities. The basic argument of the book is that "feminist women's experiences of politicisation and resistance in Irish society have not yet been identified or adequately researched". We need a new theory about the person for adult education. This requires "the study of resistance ways of knowing and the taking into account of cathetic structures and discursive forms of power".

In my own involvement with feminism, I have often wondered at the over simplistic dualism of a clear opposition between men and women. Anne shows how this

dualism arises from an uncritical acceptance of mainstream psychology's models of the person. Since adult education is grounded in the idea that change is possible, we as adult educators need theories to help people to act in ways that challenge dominant discourses and to construct more liberating ones. I was impressed with her critique of the pedagogical approaches which promote dominant psychological assumptions about the self, and thus tend to be reductionist and essentialist. She demonstrates, on the contrary, how feminist post-structuralism uses all the tools of post-structuralism but at the same time remains grounded in the politics of everyday life.

There is an extensive and wide-ranging analysis of how the human subject has been constructed in other radical political traditions on which feminist post-structuralism has drawn (and which forms part of a vibrant Women's Liberation Movement as experienced by the author). Radical feminists from the 1960's viewed men as a group who dominate women and benefit from their subordination. In consciousness raising groups, women came to believe that nothing is not political. Subjective experience is thus socially reformed. Marxist feminist analysis regards inequality in gender relations as resulting from capitalism. In psycho-analysis, the psychological differences between men and women are reduced to biological differences, with the implication that women's subordination is natural and inevitable. These are only a few of the social movements described in the book. But all such social movements for change rely on theories of the human subject, whether they are explicit or otherwise. What is needed, Anne concludes, is "a theory which transcends dualism because it conceptualises the individual and the social as being produced simultaneously".

In my reading of Part 1, with its critique and rejection of mainstream psychology's models of the person, my curiosity was aroused as to what model or insights would finally emerge. Part 1 uses very academic, formal and technical language (not leading to an easy read) in setting out the theoretical foundation. On a more practical level, Part 2 begins with a study of how feminist subjectivities were constructed in Ireland in the 1990's. This is done through an analysis of case material from twenty self-defined feminist women. Such an approach is well grounded in the need to have some kind of theory of how feminist subjectivities are constructed, as well as how transformation and movement in subjectivities can come about or can be achieved and lived. This also applies to other kinds of political subjectivities in adult education.

One of Anne's aims in writing this book was to investigate ongoing instances of feminist social practices, especially instances of successful feminists. She wanted "to research effective resistance, rather then to map oppression". She succeeds in this aim in the section entitled 'Discourses and relations in the present: the content and strategies of feminist knowledge'. Arising from references by early interviewees to the importance of the emotional work of feminism, new participants were then surveyed regarding the emotional work they had done in connection with their feminism.

Such self-analysis, in relation to emotional investments in certain discursive positions, forms the content of Chapter 6.

This analysis refutes the idea that psychic life is a purely intrapsychic and individual phenomenon, but rather shows how it is relational and social. It also shows that the person who would be traditionally characterised as victim has power to change position or to take up new positions. And this is its relevance for a philosophy of adult education based on transformative learning and action towards change. More specifically, a really useful outcome in the practice of personal development education is the way that attention to contradictions (as arose in the discourse in question) can be a starting point for alternative practice.

With her experience of facilitating personal development courses over several years, Anne exposes her practice in "trying to work from a feminist poststructuralism perspective in a field dominated by liberal-humanist discourse". She demonstrates the crucial aspects of politicised personal development education. Some of these aspects are:

- Locating resistance and constructing agency
- Naming power and facilitating women to take action in their lives
- Challenge and empowerment
- Life stories and narrative
- Communicating a belief that women can be agentic
- The beginnings of a pedagogy of the body

All of the above needs to be underpinned by a realisation, on the part of the facilitator, that her power is considerable and that personal development is not a neutral endeavour.

Anne tries to be as aware as possible of the values she expresses. A thorough understanding of the factors that shape women's lives and behaviour is of vital importance to a facilitator. This includes issues on the social, political, economic, cultural and biological levels.

The second part of the book reveals the justification for all the theorising in the first part. A very convincing argument is made for the need to theorise in order to inform our practice. Otherwise, "our work is open for colonisation by the dominant discourses of the self".

In my work as an Adult Education Organiser, I have often worried about certain aspects of traditional personal development courses, that is, to what extent should a facilitator promote consciousness raising in a group of women where personal depths are revealed which cannot then be dealt with in such a course? What is the responsibility of a facilitator in this regard? What are the limits that should be established in such a context? It has largely remained a grey area. In the model presented in this book we are given an alternative which has the potential to include a nurturing dimension, as well as support for women in working on feelings of guilt and ambivalence. "Drawing on

feminist post-structuralist theory, it is capable of challenging the gender *status quo* by demonstrating that gender differences are produced and thus available for modification".

For both practitioners and learners in the field of adult education, I recommend this book. It is particularly useful for anyone involved in personal development education. My only criticism is the effort involved in trying to understand the concepts and terminology involved. The research is very wide-ranging, extending to 360 references in the bibliography. With the valuable insights it provides into adult education theory and practice, it would benefit from a simpler, more readable format, while keeping its essential truths. However, it is well worth the effort involved and makes a significant contribution to the central role that adult education should play in the emergence of new knowledge and thus in social change itself.

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The Political Economy of Adult Education and Development

Frank Youngman

NIACE, Leicester, Zed Books: London and New York. 2000

Frank Youngman, professor of adult education at the University of Botswana, has written an impressive book that should be of great benefit to students and teachers, not only in the sphere of adult education but also in development studies. A clear writing style, and extensive usage of chapter summaries and case-studies, ensure that the contents are exceptionally accessible.

His starting point is to examine the role of adult education in society and to ask: 'Does it really empower marginalised groups…? Does it genuinely contribute to democratisation?' (p. **2**). In effect, this is a plea to adult educators to 'take a critical stance towards their work and its impact on people and society' (p. **2**). The tools for adopting such a critical stance then become the central foci of the book. Specifically, 'the book aims to provide adult education policy-makers and practitioners with an approach to social analysis that they can use to investigate the role of adult education in development' (p. **3**). The approach in question is a Marxist political economy one that focuses on the economic base of society – how capitalism moulds structures and people, and in turn how this may be countered or subverted by acts of educational resistance.

Rather self-deprecatingly the author describes the book as 'primarily a work of theory' (p. **3**), which is true but might divert readers' attention away from the substantial body of case-study evidence that is also deployed in later chapters. Equally welcome is the fact that 'a wide variety of adult education activities are considered, ranging from adult literacy, agricultural extension and trade-union education to home economics courses, radio learning groups and political consciousness-raising' (p. **5**), ensuring the book's relevance to the widest possible readership.

Chapter **2** delineates the central tenets of the political economy approach in order to fulfil the overall objective of the book – 'to provide adult educators with conceptual tools for analysing the contextual factors which influence the nature of adult education policies and programmes…' (p. **9**). While favouring an undogmatic version of Marxism, the centrality of modes of production, class analysis, etc. is retained. This chapter also reviews some critiques of Marxism – such as its alleged economic determinism – but concludes with an argument that the Marxist approach is still the best guide to understanding the world and the role of adult education within it. For readers unconvinced by this argument, the rest of the book may lose some (though by no means all) of its value.

Chapter **3** moves on to a discussion of the political economy of adult education, with special reference to what the author terms the 'radical tradition' within it. Not surprisingly, Paulo Freire's ideas feature strongly here, though Youngman notes that it was only with the **1978** volume *Pedagogy in Process* that Freire paid significant attention to 'concepts such as the mode of production, material conditions, social relations of production, and so forth'. (p. **37**). The broad conclusion is that 'adult education provided by the state and the organisations of civil society constitutes an area in which struggles for ideological hegemony are carried out' (pp. **47–8**).

Chapter **4** analyses the relationship between adult education and development theory, discussing in turn different theories and their implications for the practice of adult education. For example, modernisation theory is shown to be still influential in agricultural extension programmes (p. **59**) while the influence of dependency theory is shown to be mainly mediated through the agency of Freire i.e., insofar as dependency theory influenced him it influenced adult education more generally. Neoliberal theory's influence is seen in the way in which much adult education has moved, as a is noted in a later chapter, towards 'meeting the needs of business and industry' (p. **156**). Populist theories of development – including feminism and environmentalism – are seen to have pushed adult education towards the adoption of 'themes of empowerment, participation and grassroots organisation' (p. **81**).

Chapter **5** deals with imperialism, of which 'globalisation' is seen as the current stage. Youngman wisely avoids, however, claiming that this simply means business as usual: globalisation, to him, 'denotes a new period in the development of the world capitalist economy' (p. **96**) in which, for example, the powers of national states are significantly circumscribed. The role of aid within imperialist relationships is analysed at length, emphasising that 'Foreign aid agencies are inserted in the dynamics of a particular national economy, and advance a certain set of interests within that context' (p. **118**). A country case-study of aid and adult education in Botswana proves the point, demonstrating 'how aid significantly influenced the formulation and implementation of adult education policies' (p. **136**).

Chapter **6** turns to social inequality (in terms of class, gender and ethnicity/race) and adult education. Given that I teach a course in ethnicity myself, I was particularly pleased to see the author adopt a flexible and fluid conception of ethnic identity: 'the salience of ethnic differences varies by time and place, definitions of ethnic identity change, and the boundaries of ethnic groups are permeable' (p. **149**). Once again, a Botswana case-study usefully casts light on 'the role of adult education in reproducing and resisting the social inequalities of class, gender and ethnicity' (pp. **196–7**).

Chapter **7** takes up themes of state and civil society. It is particularly welcome that Youngman resists fashionable depictions of civil society as an unqualified source of all things benign. Instead, to him, 'civil society is not apart from the class structure and other social divisions; it is therefore a site of inequality and conflict' (p. **204**). For example the way in which 'neoliberalism uses the concept [civil society] to justify its project of reducing state intervention' (p. **210**) is helpfully highlighted. As with earlier

chapters, a case-study of state and civil society makes concrete the notion of inequality and conflict being played out within these contested terrains.

Some readers may find the focus on the countries of the South (and especially Botswana) a little alienating – few examples are drawn from Europe and North America. But, as Youngman himself concludes, 'the political economy approach should enable systematic inquiry into the historical and structural influences that shape adult education' (p. **246**), and it is up to others to adopt that approach and explore the history and structure of adult education in other countries. Such a study applied to Ireland would, I am sure, be very illuminating.

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Appendix

Schemes of Grants for Initiatives under the Anti-Racism Awareness Programme

Two schemes are available. Details of the schemes are as follows:

Scheme A consists of the standard grant amount ranging between £500 and £2,000 which is available to community groups and non-government organisations who wish to develop new or existing antiracism and interculturalism projects or activities. The following are indicative of the types of initiatives that will be considered for grant funding under this scheme:publications/resource materials,seminars, exhibitions, workshops,creative events,cultural events, policy work and research work. Where possible, events should involve the participation of minority ethnic persons or groups.

Scheme B consists of a larger grant amount not exceeding £7,000, which is available to community groups and non-government organisations for a small number of demonstration projects, which are innovative and capable of being replicated or developed by other groups or agencies.

The criteria for a successful application are the development of projects for activities which:
- stimulate public awareness of racism
- affirm cultural diversity as a value in our society
- help create the conditions that make it more difficult for racism to exist and/or
- promote an inclusive approach to minority ethnic groups including refugees and asylum seekers.

The High Level Steering Group for the Anti-Racism Awareness Programme will decide the outcome of the applications. The Steering Group will also ensure that there is an adequate regional and interest focus in the spread of the grants.

nb Groups receiving funding must acknowledge the support of the Anti-Racism Public Awareness Programme in all publicity and publications relating to their initiatives funded under the grant schemes.

Applicants must undertake to provide documentary evidence at the end of the year for the expenditure on the initiative undertaken and certification that the money was spent on the proposed project. Applicants are not required to be a limited company or a registered charity. Applications from individuals or statutory organisations are not eligible under these schemes.

An application form common to both schemes and information are available from:
The Secretary
Antiracism Public Awareness Programme Grant Scheme
Room 502
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
43 – 49 Mespil Road
Dublin 4.
Envelopes should be marked "Grant Application".
Phone: 01 6632694. Fax: 01 6670366. E-mail: Kathy_A._ Fagan @justice.ie

Three copies of the completed application should be submitted. The deadline for the receipt of completed applications in this phase is 16 July 2001. Further calls for applications will be announced later in the Autumn, the deadline for which will be 16 October 2001.