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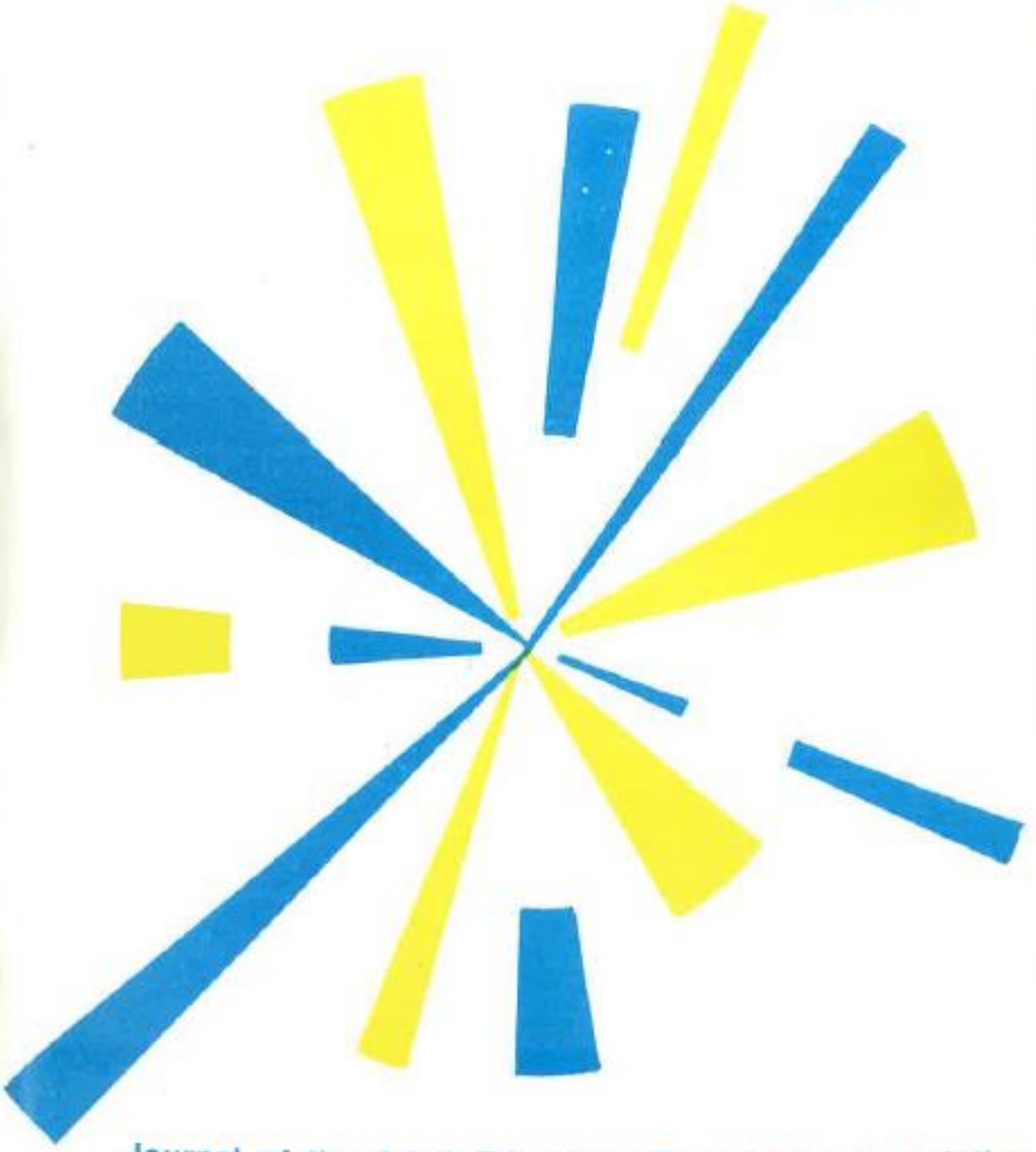

Journal of the Adult Education Organisers' Association

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Editorial Comment

We have always argued that the most exciting and progressive initiatives in Irish education to-day are occurring in the area that is poorly financed and badly under-resourced — Adult and Community Education.

The latest edition of **The Adult Learner** offers further proof of this thesis. We have focussed on the work of adult educators in the institutions and the programmes being offered in our prisons, and hospitals demonstrate the effectiveness of education which is attempting to respond to the real needs of learners. These programmes also show, as indeed do the courses on offer at unemployment centres, how teachers and learning groups can function in most effective and original ways when given freedom and, particularly, flexibility. It is the lack of these and the rigid adherence to set curricula which render so many school and university programmes so often uninspiring and irrelevant and, worst of all, boring.

There has been a good deal of talk over the past few years about unemployment and the need to provide relevant education and training programmes. There has been a good deal of talk but not a lot of action. Now, unemployed people have themselves taken the initiative and should be given the support which is so well deserved. It is obvious that the Community Education and Literacy Fund, which had been put to such good use in recent times, must now become a permanent feature and must be increased to accommodate these new developments. We are encouraged, too, by the announcement earlier in the year that the Minister for Social Welfare, Dr. Michael Woods, intends to expand the Educational Opportunities Scheme, which enables unemployed people to return to education without loss of entitlements.

Finally, I wish to thank our subscribers and contributors and I am particularly grateful to my colleagues on the Editorial Board, who have worked so hard to bring you this fourth edition. Do read it. We hope you enjoy it and your comments will be welcome.

Liam Bane, Editor,
College of Commerce,
Main Street,
Dundrum,
Dublin 14.

ADULT EDUCATION AND THE INSTITUTIONS

ADULT EDUCATION IN PRISON

KEVIN WARNER

INTRODUCTION

Compared to some other areas of adult education in Ireland, prison education in this country is relatively well-developed and well-resourced. This article describes some of its main features and I hope that readers will see that, although there is much in prison education that is particular to the prison context, there is also a great deal which may be of general interest to those concerned with adult education. Essentially the aims, methods, courses and activities of prison education are the same as those of adult education in the world outside. What we aspire to is to apply the best practices in adult education generally as far as possible to our particular situation.

Although there were important precursors as far back as the last century, prison education in its present form dates from 1972 when C.D.V.E.C. teachers began work at St. Patrick's Institution. Subsequently, V.E.C. teachers were invited into all other places of custody in the country. Now a teaching force of about 130 teachers (or 97 wholetime equivalents - including provision for summer teaching) from 8 V.E.C.'s provide the major part of the education service to prisoners. But other agencies are involved also, among them The Open University, The Arts Council, UCC (who cater for two postgraduate students) and a Sister of Charity (at Shanganagh Castle). A Co-ordinator of Education based in the Department of Justice has an overall responsibility for monitoring and developing the services provided, in conjunction with the agencies concerned.

The last survey of participation in prison education (taken in November, 1987) showed that 49% of all prisoners took part in education. This involvement is voluntary and could range from one class a week to full-time study. Vocational training is not included in such figures as in Irish prisons, unlike those in some other countries, this sector is administered separately from education per se. At present the prison population is about 2,000, of whom approximately 40 are women.

This article will look in turn at the kind of education available in prisons, including The Open University degree programme, at some of the difficulties encountered, at the support structures that have been developed to help teachers and concludes with some remarks placing our prison education situation in a European context.

EDUCATIONAL PROVISION IN PRISONS

Adult Literacy: Good adult education work anywhere is shaped by the needs and wishes of its students. About one-quarter to one-third of all prisoners have serious problems with reading or writing; less than half of all prisoners went beyond primary school. Thus, the greatest priority in prison education work is to help this large group of men and women who have literacy or basic education needs. The difficulties inherent in being unable to read or write very well — both the 'technical' difficulties and the 'non-technical' aspects relating to confidence and self-esteem — are likely to be just as severe for somebody in prison as they would be for somebody outside. Indeed, there are ways in which imprisonment can accentuate the problem: letters to or from family or friends are an important lifeline for those in jail; lock-up time can weigh far more heavily on people who cannot read; and the vulnerability felt by those with reading or writing problems may be every bit as severe in the environment of a prison as it would be outside.

Our response to these needs is to try to apply the same principles and good practices that should apply to adult literacy provision in the community. The ideas in NALA'S Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Provision (1), would be an important benchmark. There are, of course, some features particular to the prisons; for example, problems such as the rapid 'turnover' of population in some prisons, or achievements such as the full-time Basic Education Course which had been running in the Training Unit, Glengarriff Parade, since 1980. The Department of Education's Discussion Document on Adult Literacy, (2), issued in 1986, observed that a number of features of the approach in prisons might provide useful models on the outside. They referred to the design and presentation of courses in general subjects in such a way that literate and non-literate students can attend together. They also noted the planning mixture of one-to-one and group tuition. And, thirdly, the strong emphasis on student writing as a means of self-development was seen as important.

Writing: Writing certainly has been a central part of basic education work in prisons. The words of the student can be reproduced in typed form from tape, dictation or script. This writing is then both teaching material and a means by which those learning overcome stigma and reach an awareness of potential in themselves. Some material of more general interest is reproduced in text form and several of these have been published by NALA for use outside prisons.

Extensive writing arises from other sources also. There is, indeed, a tradition of autobiographical and poetry writing in prisons that is independent of the formal education sector, although it is encouraged and developed by teachers. Such writing is usually written by prisoners for themselves or for a small circle of friends. But there is also writing that aims

at a wider audience, either within the prison or in society at large. Much of this begins in "creative writing" classes run by teachers or in the writing workshops which are run in prisons by writers from the Arts Council, through an offshoot of their 'Writers-in-Schools' Scheme. Outlets for this writing range from prison magazines, now extensively produced in prisons either on an occasional or regular basis, the special prison writing competitions run annually by Listowel Writers' Week, as well as open public competitions — the P. J. O'Connor drama-writing awards promoted by RTE being one in which prisoners have featured very successfully in recent years.

Creative Activities: Writing, however, is but one of a number of creative or expressive activities that have become a major part of prison education during the 1980's. Art, music, drama, video-production and photography, as well as writing, now comprise about 30% of all teaching time within prisons. It is one example of how a curriculum quite different from that generally found in schools emerges when there is freedom for teachers and students to develop new forms and take new directions, following the needs and wishes of the students. Such an increased role for creative activities reflects the growing awareness of how, through them, adults with very little previous education can find they grow as people and gain a sense of their own value and potential.

As mentioned above, many of those in prison have had very limited educational opportunities and, indeed, have had few enough breaks in other ways either. The "arts" have been found to be a good means towards beginning to redress that inequality of opportunity. But there is another consideration also. There are some grounds for seeing much of criminal behaviour as creative energy "gone wrong", where powerful individuality has not been able to avail of more constructive outlets. This certainly is the view of Jimmy Boyle, once (but no longer) a violent criminal in Scotland. He speaks thus of his discovery of sculpture within prison:

> *"It was tremendously exciting to discover this latent talent, especially in art as this had been poofy stuff for me in the past. The nearest I had ever been to an art gallery was when we found a way of stealing empty bomb shells from the museum part of Kelvingrove Art Gallery . . . . . I began to pour all my energies into this new means of expression and was knocked out by the depth of feeling when I completed a piece of sculpture. The only thing I could compare it to was when I won a victory when fighting in the past or beating the system in some way. The difference was that I was using the energy, knowing I was just as agressive, but creating an object that was a physical symbol, yet perfectly acceptable to society. I worked at a prolific rate with most of the work based on the expressions of my soul with pain/anger/hate/ love/ despair/and fears embodied in it. This was very important for me as a person because it allowed me to retain all these very deep emotional feelings but to channel them in another way – sculpture". (3).*

The case of Jimmy Boyle is, of course, exceptional in both the extent of his past criminality and the quality of his later art-work and writing. But the essentials of the point that he makes can be true for all who are in prison even if in less dramatic fashion.

Other Courses and Activities: The focus on literacy work and creative activities above will hopefully indicate something of the priorities and style of work in prison education. Obviously there are other important areas also: conventional examination courses; Home Economics, including vital associated areas such as social education and general personal development work; physical education and (in two open centres) outdoor pursuits; woodwork and metalwork; computer studies. It is seen as important to offer a wide-ranging programme, for different individuals have interests in, and find they can develop through, different subjects.

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

In 1985 prisoners from six prisons began Open University degree-level study. This was a milestone for prison education, but it was also of wider significance in that it represented the first occasion the Open University made its degree courses open to people in the Republic. The provision was made available by the Open University following a request from the Department of Justice.

The Open University courses have a number of features which make them particularly suitable to the prison situation. The core of the Open University system is well-written and attractive study units, specially designed for private study. Essentially, it is a distance education system in which tutors correspond with students, and additional help is obtained from radio and T.V. programmes. However, this is supported by regular tuition sessions, which take place monthly on Foundation Courses, and student counselling whereby each student is given initial and on-going advice and information on courses and approaches to study. Many of the prisoner-students, although widely-read, have limited previous schooling and so these elements of tuition and counselling are vital in making the system work for them. Also important, however, has been the support in this new venture which many prisoners have been able to give to each other. Another advantage of the Open University system is that a prisoner can continue studying when transferred to another prison and is also free to continue with the Open University after release. Of particular importance is the very wide range of courses available throughout the various faculties of Arts, Social Science, Technology and Mathematics, so that those studying can pursue courses that meet their needs and interests.

There are no formal entry requirements set by the Open University — an important consideration for most of the 'mature students' in prisons who have been admitted. The selection procedure is a relatively informal one in

which teachers and a member of the Open University staff discuss what is involved with prospective students over a period of time. Although the Co-ordinator of Education has the final say in relation to entries, as far as possible those applying are given the benefit of any doubt as to their suitability.

We are now in our fourth year with the Open University and at present 51 men and women in prison are following the degree courses. At first, Portlaoise made up about half of those involved, but more recently more and more prisoners from Mountjoy, Arbout Hill and Cork Prisons are proving they are ready for academic study of this nature — indicating that once the doors of educational opportunity are opened, many with limited past formal education will strive to make use of that access. That development is a testament also to the V.E.C. teachers in the prisons who prepare and encourage prisoners toward this university-level study, and who work closely all the time with Open University staff.

PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS

The Whitaker Report located education, along with work-training and the welfare and psychology services, as being directed towards "the personal development of prisoners", the vast majority of whom "are relatively young, with multiple convictions, guilty of offences usually against property, and no more successful at crime than they were at school, at work, or at anything else" (4). It is asking a great deal of education, or any other service, therefore to come up with profound answers to such intractable problems. All the more so when the context within which the educators work is that of imprisonment, which of its nature inhibits, restricts and often depresses the individual concerned. That context needs to be borne in mind, especially as it is not uncommon for those unfamiliar with the realities of prison to glibly remark that inside there is "all the time in the world to study". The physical realities of prison may be hard enough to take, but even more so is the separation from family and friends and the psychological "pain of confinement" (5). These pressures can often be overwhelming for prisoners. In such circumstances, the fact that so much successful education takes place at all speaks a great deal for the resilience and creativity of both students and teachers.

Another problem teachers in many prisons have to contend with is the rapid and irregular 'turnover' of their students, as prisoners are committed, released or transferred. One response to this had been to keep group sizes low, usually no more than seven, so that individual work within the group can be carried out. Another adaptation has been the development of short modular courses, often no longer than four weeks.

SUPPORT STRUCTURES

The special circumstances of the prisons and the prisoners mean that much of the education provided must be designed by teachers themselves, in consultation with their students, rather than follow set syllabi. It is estimated that over 80% of prison education involves this high level of curriculum development. This represents both a challenge and (paradoxically, given the prison context) a degree of freedom for teachers. But, if the Prison Education Service is to respond to the needs of those in prison and if teachers are to adapt their methodology and their courses in the appropriate way, it has for long been recognised that particular supportive structures are vital.

In 1984, the Department of Justice issued a Policy Document on Prison Education, following detailed consultation with prison teachers and their employing agencies. The purpose of this document was to give a broad sense of direction to the work, and it set out the aims and priorities of prison education. It emphasised the appropriateness of an adult education methodology and stressed the importance of student participation and the drawing of the learner's experience into study and activities.

The adult education orientation, as much as the special circumstances of prisons, can be demanding on teachers whose formal training will usually have been geared towards the very different work of school-teaching. Consequently a great deal of attention is given to in-service support for prison teachers. This takes two broad forms: sponsorship of teachers who undertake external courses that are seen to be particularly relevant to prison teaching, and internally organised courses. Fees and other expenses are paid for teachers who undertake external courses and almost all of these are taken in teachers' own time, i.e. at weekends or in evenings. Maynooth College's Diploma in Adult and Community Education and the RTE/Maynooth distance education course in Adult Education are examples of longer courses of this kind. Shorter, usually weekend, courses are more common, however, and these are often specially arranged with external agencies to meet the needs of prison teachers. Examples of these include courses in drama, sex education and word-processing.

More important, however, have been internally organised in-service courses. Recently these courses have been run for prison teachers nationally by an In-Service Team, although for a two-year period previously a teacher had been engaged full-time in this work. Courses are structured very much on the basis of the requirements expressed by teachers and may be exemplified by the following: a two-day course for new prison teachers (run annually), adult literacy methods, group facilitation, addiction studies, developing materials, adult numeracy, art therapy, etc.

Another supportive element is the Resource Centre for prison teachers nationally based at Mountjoy, which contains a considerable amount of material developed internally by teachers as well as externally-produced resources. However, the exchange of ideas on course developments between teachers is seen as integral to the successful exchange of materials, and so, in conjunction with the Resource Centre, there is a Committee which co-ordinates ideas and experiences on course developments between prison Education Units. The Prison Education Council, convened by the Co-ordinator of Education and consisting of senior education staff from various prisons and agencies, meets on a termly basis to oversee the whole field of prison education.

A EUROPEAN CONTEXT

In Ireland prison education had benefitted from officially having equal status with work and work-training: it is mainly a day-time activity and prisoners do not lose out financially by taking part. This may seem unremarkable to many, but it is, in fact, unusual enough in comparison with many European countries. Elsewhere, prison education is often marginalised to "evening classes", although this is beginning to change as unemployment in society has reduced the opportunities for both work and work-training in many prison systems. Recently the Council of Europe (the one representing 21 countries, i.e. wider than the EEC) adopted new European Prison Rules which significantly upgraded the position of education in the context of many prison systems. Rule 78 states:

> *"Education should be regarded as a regime activity that attracts the same status and basic remuneration within the regime as work, provided that it takes place in normal working hours and is part of an authorised individual treatment programme"* (6).

Another important development was the establishment in 1984 of a Select Committee to survey prison education in the countries of the Council of Europe and make recommendations. That committee is due to complete its work later this year. An interesting general trend would appear to be the gradual detachment of education from a subservient role to narrow concepts of 'rehabilitation' or 'resocialisation' — concepts which can arouse suspicion in both prisoners and teachers — and the assertion that education should be offered to prisoners primarily in its own right. This has for long been the Scandinavian position: adult education is seen as the entitlement of all in society and those in prison should have access to it just like those on the outside. Our long standing emphasis on an adult education approach to prison education in Ireland is in tune with that trend, even if the wider recognition of adult education is society remains to be fulfilled.

Kevin Warner is Co-ordinator of Education for prisons and places of detention. Previously, he worked in adult education in Manchester.

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3. Jimmy Boyle, A Sense of Freedom, Pan, 1977, pp. 250 - 1.

4. Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Penal System ('The Whitaker Report'), The Stationery Office, 1985, Chapter 11.

5. This phrase is from the title of another book by Jimmy Boyle, The Pain of Confinement, Pan, 1985.

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ADULT EDUCATION: THE MEDICAL PROGNOSIS

PROINSIAS Ó DRISCEOIL

The idea that education is not a privilege but a right has almost universal acceptance. However the idea is poorly developed in the conciousness of the public and, more particularly, of state planners. At what age does the right to be educated cease and the need to earn one's livelihood take over? Is the right to education an absolute one — or can it be charged for, in accordance with the individual's ability to pay? Is free third-level education a right? should books, transport etc. be charged for?

The response by Irish governments to these questions has been dictated by pragmatic economic factors, specifically the availability of state revenue and the educational needs of business and industry. Thus free secondary education was introduced at the end of the nineteen-sixties in response to the growth of free trade and the industrial expansion brought about in Ireland by the multinational corporations. These companies required an educated workforce and the state, through the new scheme of free secondary education, sought to provide one. Similarly, when the economy declined in the nineteen-eighties and the supply of educated labour greatly exceeded demand, governments reduced investment in education and introduced paying elements such as charges for school transport, heavy examination fees and prohibitive fees at third level colleges. Career guidance, significantly, was almost eliminated.

A RIGHT TO ADULT EDUCATION

Whatever strategical concessions may have been made to the concept of second-level education as a right, the idea of a right to adult education has hardly even begun to be debated. Yet if a right to education exists and if, simultaneously, we concede that an individual should continue to learn throughout life, then surely a right to adult education exists as does a right at every other level of education. More specifically, a most convincing case exists for a right to second-chance education — a second chance for those whom the system failed to educate earlier in life through inappropriate teaching, through forcing individuals prematurely into the workforce or through a myriad of other factors.

Few greater concentrations of need for second-chance education exists than in psychiatric hospitals. In the absence of research, it's not possible to quantify the extent of educational deprivation in hospitals or to demonstrate a connection between levels of education and personal breakdown, but it is

generally conceded that what has been called "an incomplete map of the world", a failure to understand the world because of educational deprivation, is a causal factor in breakdown.

EDUCATION IN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Can one expect the need for adult education in psychiatric hospitals and among out-patients to be seriously considered in the mania for what are euphemistically termed "cut-backs"? Given the political power of the doctors and drug companies, it is unlikely that the two most blatant forms of over-expenditure — the payment per visit rather than by salary of doctors under the medical-card system and the failure of the state to manufacture and package its own drugs — will form part of the expenditure reductions. Thus economies will be achieved at the expense of nursing staff, junior clerical staff and, above all, at the expense of service to people who are really suffering.

Thus the political and economic factors which have traditionally dictated the extent to which the right to adult education is conceded provide a bleak background to any attempt at developing a system of adult education for those attempting to recover from breakdown.

Yet few social groups have proved more receptive to adult education than psychiatric patients, whether it be programmes in literacy, the arts, social skills or general education. A body of practical experience now exists as a result of programmes of co-operation between a number of V.E.C.s and Health Boards and it is imperative that these initiatives not founder and that the educational needs of these adults, like so many of their social needs, not be medicated into a drugged oblivion. The time may not seem apposite for such initiatives — but then they never were.

Proinsias Ó Drisceoil is Arts Education Organiser for the South East and is based in Kilkenny.

THE EDUCATION PROGRAMME AT THE CENTRAL MENTAL HOSPITAL, DUNDRUM

PAT QUINN

During 1980, Dr. Liam Daly, Director of the Central Mental Hospital, in consultation with staff members, wrote to Co. Dublin Vocational Education Committee seeking assistance in establishing an education programme for our patient population. The V.E.C. responded positively and a meeting took place in early December between officials from Co. Dublin V.E.C. and the Central Mental Hospital to discuss the patient population, their educational needs and the therapeutic value of such a programme. The meeting agreed that the V.E.C. would co-operate with Hospital staff in designing an Adult Education programme, which, if approved, would commence in September 1981.

Prior to this, the only educational facilities available to patients at the Hospital were provided on one or two evenings a week by the Dundrum Literacy Scheme. Teachers came to the Hospital for sessions lasting one and a half hours and taught basic English on a one to one basis. However, the needs of the patients were changing. The Hospital was receiving more and more referrals from the prisons and a bigger percentage of our patient population belonged to the younger age group.

Confirmation of V.E.C. approval was received in May 1981 and teachers were recruited to assist in the provision of an education programme. This was the outcome of much work that had gone on behind the scenes — negotiations, discussions and, perhaps most difficult of all, getting acceptance of the plan from staff and patients. I can well remember the teachers' first tour of the Hospital. I had been appointed to take charge of the programme and, although I was quite used to working in the Hospital, I was now looking at it in a different context. It struck me that this was not just an ordinary school. Somehow books and learning seemed very far removed from most of the faces and places we saw.

Our programme started in September 1981. At that time we hoped to provide classes in the following subjects:— English, Maths, Physical Education, Music, Crafts and Domestic Science. We began with English and Maths and by December, we had added Music, P.E., Crafts and Dressmaking/Sewing. During 1982, History and Geography were included in the programme.

We began by assessing participants, trying to discover their particular interests and needs. To avoid causing undue stress, we did not make use of standard tests, but simply asked if patients could read and write reasonably well and, in general, what they thought of the idea.

Two Groups

It was obvious that there was a fairly even divide as far as literacy was concerned. One group was in need of remedial help and the second group could read and write. The latter group mainly wished to improve spelling and accuracy while the first group had real difficulties in literacy. We made use of basic materials — workbooks, readers, exercises which were suitable. But at this stage, it was very much experimental, as we were guessing at their hopes, aspirations and expectations.

While the aim was to educate — offering an interest, a skill, an outlet — it was another matter to translate this into practice. In fact, mainly we worked with them individually, making up exercises that dealt with points as they arose. We used some Montessori ideas, some primary books and some adult literacy material, all specially adapted to fit our particular needs. As the participants are also inmates, their lives, by necessity, are dominated by routine. This leads to dependence, which seems to dull initiative and will. Most patients had difficulty in specifying what they wanted to say or do, as this was new to them.

The second group was more inhibited about working and talking. Perhaps being older, they had become accustomed to suppressing things. They wanted to be told what to do and then it was never right. Criticism was good, it showed that we were making an impact, but unfortunately, it was mostly negative, rarely constructive, so that it was very difficult to measure the effects of the programme. In the beginning, this was disheartening and only the hope that one day we would get it right kept us going at this difficult stage.

Student Centered.

One of the procedures that the teaching staff found strange was the number of meetings required, where so many parties are involved — medical, welfare, staff, management and teachers. Gradually they came to accept that this is what is unique, that the relationship is not purely a pupil-teacher one, but also involves doctor, social worker and relationships with other parties and staff. The point of the programme is not just education in the sense of achieving goals like exams, but rather to see the patient as the centre of the process and that to have him or her attend, once or often, and marginally change or broaden the outlook, is success. For the time the learner is there, he/she has another identity as a student and so is on a par with people on any level who study. For some patients, to be in this role is enough and, though they may seem to be doing very little, for them it is a transformation.

Indeed, we had one patient who attended class once a week for a number of years. His intellectual level had hardly been raised a fraction although he did recognise more letters than ever before. But when he burst in the door and got his folder of books, he was at class and doing his work, and the fact that he might not learn a thing did not matter to him at all. To be there was an end in itself and he was so proud of his role as student that no one could say that he has not benefitted greatly.

Others benefit in more obvious ways and have greatly improved their literacy skills and their confidence. They have also developed new interests as a result of attending classes.

Examinations

Over ths past few years, several of our patients have taken state examinations — Group Cert., Intermediate Cert. and Leaving Cert. Despite achieving the most remarkable results, the programme here is not, and can never be, exam oriented. From a caring point of view, we must never exert undue pressure on patients, especially something as stressful as study for examinations. The decision to sit examinations must always be the decision of the patient.

During this time also, we have produced three issues of our booklet, ECHO. A number of our students have entered the Short Story and Poetry sections of the special competitions held in conjunction with Listowel Writers' Week. While we have yet to discover another John B., our efforts were highly commended and they have proved a most useful exercise in other ways. Our music group have progressed to the point where they have performed at parties and concerts at the Hospital from time to time. Achievements such as these are important in providing momentum and encouragement.

In our case there must always be continuity and flexibility. Classes must take place as programmed and there must be flexibility in the classroom for those patients not following examination courses. We must allow patients' interests to dictate what goes on as much as possible while sustaining an underlying current of work.

Difficulties and Compensations

Naturally this work is not without its difficulties as, for example, dealing with sudden changes of behaviour and attitude in class. The students do confide in us and, as time goes on, a personal relationship is built up and they will write or tell personal details that are helpful.

There have been times down the years when I have wondered what I have got myself into. However, these occasions are far outnumbered by the good times, such as when the examination results are known or seeing the joy on

the faces of those who have made the breakthrough to learning or watching patients who have been morose and quiet opening up and becoming involved in classroom discussions. It is moments such as these that make it worthwhile.

Our programme has seen many changes in personnel and activities over the years. As our patient population changes so do their needs and we must change with them.

Recent cutbacks have affected the programme in certain ways and we have no finance to expand or purchase equipment. In fact, since 1984, our entire programme has been funded by the Eastern Health Board and but for the generosity of the Board, we would not be continuing with the classes. We live in hope that the overall financial situation will change and we will be enabled to offer a more varied programme and improve our facilities.

In closing may I offer my sincere thanks to our entire staff at the Hospital, to Liam Bane and his colleagues at the V.E.C., to our wonderful teaching staff and , lastly, to Terrie Kearney and staff members who recognised the need for an education programme in the first instance. Long may it continue.

Pat Quinn has special responsibility for the administration of the Education Programme at the Central Mental Hospital Dundrum.

GROW TO MENTAL HEALTH

MIKE WATTS

I work for an organisation called GROW which is concerned with the promotion of mental health in the community.

BEGINNINGS

GROW began in Australia thirty years ago. It has evolved from the recorded findings of groups of people who have overcome immense personal problems and who have combined together to achieve a state of mental health and wholeness. Over the years GROW has had people from every conceivable walk of life taking part in its meetings and contributing to its development. Breakdown is no respector of persons and as we say in our programme, 'A sobering first premise for anyone entering a mental health programme is — No one gets out of this world alive'.

In the founding group was a priest named Con Keogh. Con had received thirteen years of intensive third level education in Europe and had doctorates in Divinity and Philosophy. He suffered a breakdown and found himself among the discarded and rejected of society. It was, however, the discipline that so much study had instilled in him, plus his own unique spirit, that was largely responsible for the manner in which the GROW programme has evolved.

Thirty years on, GROW is now at a point where the principles that have enabled individuals to become whole again are being seen as applicable to society itself and especially to groups working together.

BASIC PHILOSOPHY

GROW quickly discovered that there are three vital ingredients for health and human fulfilment — truth, character and friendship.

Human beings need to hear the truth. By nature we are imperfect and one of our imperfections is an almost limitless ability to delude ourselves about the nature of reality, especially the reality of ourselves as individuals. To be able to accept truth about oneself requires character. As Churchill said 'No one is a hero to his valet'.

To hear the truth can build or destroy character. To ensure that it builds, it must be offered in a spirit of friendship.

Character can be seen as something that is built gradually over time. We therefore, offer GROW as a school of life or living. It is a place where character is valued more than social position or academic or material

achievements. So, friendship in terms of society we offer through the GROW community.

GROW MEETINGS

GROW and its group meetings provide a forum where people meet at a very intimate level. It has advantages over the genetic family, which, in many cases, can contribute to the problems rather than help to resolve them. GROW offers a choice of people to fulfill the necessary role in family members.

The GROW meetings are highly structured and geared towards catering for the individual needs — as a person, as a leader, as a responsible member of a GROW team and as a member of a multidisciplinary society. All these meetings provide tasks to promote growth along these lines. They help all of us, firstly to maintain our own wholeness and then to move out towards others, to become a live yeast among the community at large and to invite others to become friends for the work we are all involved in.

THE KILKENNY PROJECT

My own work with GROW began four years ago, following an eight year period as a person putting his own life together. The work is mainly concerned with operating a day centre in Kilkenny, which acts as a focal point for the whole South Eastern Health Board area, where there are twenty GROW groups. The centre also offers a curriculum of activities for five days a week from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

The idea for the centre began in St. Canice's Psychiatric Hospital, more particularly in that institution's long term wards. Following a meeting with Proinsias Ó Drisceoil, Adult Education Officer with Co. Kilkenny V.E.C., it was decided to hold a creative writing class in St. Canice's.

The purpose of the class was to bring the principles of GROW philosophy to these people in a practical rather than an intellectual manner. We say that mental health is caught, not taught, something that is learned together and we felt that a class like creative writing should make it possible to overcome the problem of 'us' and 'them', encountered in institutions. Here I would not be staff but just another person sharing a common interest.

The initial project was very successful and led to classes in Art, Drama and Music. The Art and Drama classes were run by members of GROW. Within eight weeks, we succeeded in publishing a magazine, which was reviewed on R.T.E.'s Appraisal. By the second edition, members of the hospital group had taken on the whole production work from editing to typing, including visits to the V.E.C. offices to do the photocopying. Gabriel Rosenstock and other writers talked to the group. We began to see the truth of GROW at work. Here we had become connecting links in a big

way. Everyone's sense of personal value, security and sense of purpose took a turn for the better. One member who joined the group from the locked ward had written a play. This was staged by the drama group, and this group was run by two women, one of whom had herself been several times in locked wards. The play was recorded on video by an enthusiastic if sometimes incredulous staff.

Since the centre opened many of this original writers group are regular attenders and three of them have been employed under various government schemes. We now offer at the centre a tremendous range of activities. Initially, these were concerned mainly with the arts. Since then, we have broadened our horizons and all talents are encouraged. All the time we continue to stress the need to learn. What can I learn from what I'm doing? Do I need to concentrate more? Do I readily seek help? Can I have any responsibility and challenge others? How can I overcome my fears? These are some of the questions we ask and we believe finding answers to these is the real stuff of adult education.

In the centre we have an average of thirty people a day coming through. These come from various sources. Some are from the long term wards of the local hospital, including people who have been there for thirty years. The probation service sends up people with a long history of petty crime. We also provide training programmes for student nurses and we have school students involved as part of their work experience during the transition year.

We have many volunteers who wish to help build community, we have many who fear that they are breaking down. Some people refer themselves and we have a team of freindly consultants who give their services free. It is through this multi-involvement that the meaning of the word institution has begun to change.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING

To a greater or lesser degree we are all institutionalised and it is only through community that the walls of 'mental institutions' can really be brought down. While traditionally the ward institution conjures up images of the down and out of various kinds, in GROW we have found quite often the bigger problem is 'up and out'. The person who is highly 'educated' has the resources to resist change. Adult education has thus a dual role — to educate up the down and out by the realisation that personal value is possible for all and that struggle and effort is the lifeblood of true adulthood, and to educate down the 'up and out' by the admission of human weakness. Community concerns us all and must be living and constantly changing to retain vitality. Individuals can only learn to fulfill their own needs through involvement in community. It is impossible to maintain a sense of personal value or identity in total isolation.

At the GROW Centre in Kilkenny we have made a promising start in helping people through the painful process of returning to a fuller life.

In sense world
Is it not now time
To mole away the mountains
That politically lie.

Mike Watts is director of the GROW Centre Project in Kilkenny. He worked at various trades before taking a degree in Psychology.

ADULT EDUCATION AND MENTAL HANDICAP

JODIE WALSH

'Mental Handicap is a thorn in the flesh of 'modern man'. People with this disability have none of the qualities which advanced societies treasure – intelligence, initiative, self-sufficiency and good looks. They are an embarassment and an encumbrance. Modern men and women will happily live without mental handicap. But those who have to live with this disability, be they the disabled people themselves, their families or professional staff, are forced to live by another set of values – compassion, kindness, gentleness and patience. I would argue that more than ever, modern society needs mentally handicapped people to remind them of what it means to be human'. — Ray McConkey.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Resolution (1975) states that "Disabled people have the same fundamental rights as their fellow citizens of the same age; first and foremost to enjoy a decent life, as normal and as full as possible". In the past, persons with a mental handicap were taken out of the mainstream of society. Stereotypes based on ignorance, inexperience, folktales and stories are, in some cases, all that is known of them. Today most mentally handicapped adults live at home and within our communities (Census on Mental Handicap 1981) but all studies show that they are not partaking of it. "*There is a glass wall separating the able and the disabled*", wrote Christy Brown who, being handicapped himself, penned his autobiography with his left foot. This glass wall is every bit as daunting as the brick ones it replaced.

Since the early 1970's, 'Community Care' had been in vogue as being a more desirable mode of service provision for mentally handicapped persons than institutional care. The notion of community care includes care, not just 'in' the community but care 'by' the community. There is sufficient evidence from research conducted in Ireland (Walsh 1986, McConkey and McCormack 1984) to show that there are many people in the community who would like to get to know about mental handicap and to help in attaining the goals of community care: integrating handicapped persons and facilitating a normalised lifestyle for them and their often overburdened families. But is this happening?

THE NEED FOR EDUCATION

The picture emerging from studies of adults who have a mental handicap conducted in the Eastern Health Board area of Ireland in 1983 and again in 1987 (McConkey and Walsh) show that they are living a very sheltered life within the community. Most of their leisure activities are passive and solitary in nature — watching T.V.; listening to records — nearly half of the sample did not take part in any activity outside of their family; only one third took part in any community activity and only one fifth were reported to have a non-handicapped friend. This data is very similar to that obtained by Cheseldine and Jeffery (1981) in a survery of young adolescents attending special schools in England but is in marked contrast with the leisure activities of non handicapped persons. For example, the most frequently cited activities of 16 to 24 year olds in Irish society were — watching T.V. (87%), listening to radio/records (87%), attending dances (53%), going to pub or hotels for drinks (46%), physical exercise (44%), cinema/theatre (32%), hobbies (28%), evening classes (25%), indoor games (21%) (source Health Education Bureau, 1979). By contrast in the above studies, social activities such as dancing, going to the pub, evening classes were rarely mentioned.

The notion of adult education is education that might be available to all adults in the community. But is it? People who are mentally handicapped have been isolated from the community but equally the community has been isolated from them. The Independent Development Council for People with mental handicap (1982) in Britain states that '*Excessive reliance on seperate, specialist services is both expensive and wasteful and serves to segregate people with mental handicap from community life*'. A contributor to the Snowdon report put it this way: '*Bringing people into more personal contact . . . . . at least makes them more aware of the individual character of the disabled child or adult . . . . . they will eventually get . . . . . to see us as people first and as disabled second. (Then) they will have begun to see that we are also the products of our social backgrounds and environment just like anybody else and not just a disability breed*'. The public and persons with mental handicap meet now as strangers — so who is going to perform the introductions?

How then can the public and mentally handicapped persons come to know each other? The features of community education programmes which have produced positive changes in additudes can be summarised as follows:

- Meetings should be in a positive context, where the status of the people who are handicapped is enhanced rather than devalued.
- The skills and abilities of people who are handicapped should be emphasised rather than their limitations.
- There needs to be some personal contact between participants who are handicapped and those who are not, for example a shared activity, so that participants who are handicapped can be seen as individuals by others.

- Contact is best centered around structured events rather than competitive or laissez-faire activities.

- The apprehension felt by participants who are non-handicapped can be reduced by:
  — supplying guidelines on interacting with people who are handicapped.
  — offering opportunities to view people who are handicapped without breaking social conventions.
  — ensuring that the meeting is enjoyable for both parties; for example, they could be centered around leisure pursuits.

THE ROLE OF ADULT EDUCATION

There are a variety of different ways and many levels at which adult education could involve itself in helping the goal of integrating handicapped persons into their local communities. Here are just a few suggestions:

1. Why not help the public learn about persons who are mentally handicapped by running an adult education course on mental handicap? There is a readily available package programme and there are experienced tutors to run it — CARA - Getting to Know Mental Handicap.

2. Why not include mentally handicapped adults in our adult education colleges? Marc Gold says mental handicap is a condition which refers to *'a level of functioning which requires from society significantly above average training procedures and superior assests in adaptive behaviour, manifested throughout life'*. In essence mentally handicapped persons only need more of what we all need.

3. Why not offer courses specifically geared for mentally handicapped persons?

1. CARA — COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TO RETARDED ADULTS — AN ADULT EDUCATION COURSE ON MENTAL HANDICAP — CARA Getting to know mental handicap.

The need to educate the community about people who are mentally handicapped is frequently stressed but rarely attempted (Nittler, 1978). In 1980, the Health Education Bureau and St. Michael's House (a large Dublin based mental handicap service) launched a two-year research programme which aimed to develop educational packages on mental handicap for use in secondary school and as adult education courses. The central feature of these courses is the meeting between course participants and adults who are mentally handicapped. The experience from these courses shows that the public's unease at the prospect of meeting people who are disabled can be quickly and effectively dispelled through a well structured personal meeting.

This evening course is usually run by a tutor who has lived or worked with mentally handicapped adults and who has attended a workshop on running the programme. These courses have been run successfully throughout the country. If you are interested in including this course in your college you could contact your local mental handicap centre and enquire if there is anyone familiar with the CARA Adult Education Programme and who would be available to run it.

The course itself is intended as an introduction to mentally handicapped persons and is for all interested members of the public: neighbours and acquaintances of families with a mentally handicapped member, those living close to services for mentally handicapped persons, those interested in doing voluntary work or choosing a career in the mental handicapped services and those whose work brings them into incidental contact with mentally handicapped person (e.g. postman, shopkeeper). Enjoyment and variety are the key elements in the presentation; making participants relaxed, getting them involved and maintaining a friendly, open atmosphere. It is offered as an eight week evening course-two hours per week — and is centred around a series of video programmes about various aspects of the life of people who are mentally handicapped, such as work, recreation, living away from home, and relationships. The fifth session is an opportunity for participants to meet some adults who are mentally handicapped, residents from local community hostels. Some of these residents have invited groups of two to four participants to join them for an evening meal and to stay for a chat; other have chosen to meet in the local pub and share a game of darts. Usually, participants visit the local club for people who are mentally handicapped. Participants usually rate these sessions as being the highlight of the course. The author ran this course when her collegues (Roy McConkey and Bob McCormack) were piloting it back in 1983 and again in 1987 in the Dun Laoghaire VEC. On both occasions, there was no shortage of persons interested in taking the course and the courses proved to be very successful and enjoyable.

There are also a number of other package courses available. The Open University of Ulster has developed an excellent distance education course on mental handicap: 'Mental Handicap: Patterns for Living' (p555) (1987). This package is geared both for volunteers and for parents who have a handicapped child or adult. Thus it has a slightly different orientation than the CARA pack and is perhaps a little more demanding of participants. This course could be easily run by any adult education tutuor who has even a little experience of mental handicap.

2. INCLUDE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS IN EXISTING EVENING CLASSES

Classes on almost every conceivable subject, are, in recent years, becoming available in our Adult Education Colleges. People enrol for a variety of

reasons: as a social event, to do something they might enjoy, to get an evening out, to meet new people, to learn a little about a subject, to develop new hobbies or interests. Why exclude persons with a mental handicap from our courses? Existing outlets can be made available to many mentally handicapped persons, given that the necessary level of support is provided. The support required will vary, depending on the degree of mental handicap from those who require a great deal of support to those who require little or none. Here are a number of possibilities:

- A handicapped person could go along as a spectator or as an assistant to a particular class. This might provide an alternative to sitting at home, and they would feel useful in helping out in some of the activities and in joining in, so far as they could.
- Other mentally handicapped persons could join in if there was another person willing to go along with them as their individual tutor. This person could be a brother or sister, a cousin, a neighbour, a friend or an existing class or club member. This person would not have a personal interest in learning the activity.
- Other mentally handicapped persons could be linked with another class or club member who would agree to take on the specific task of 'keeping an eye on Mary'.
- For some mentally handicapped persons all that would be required would be to inform the class teacher that 'Mary' wished to join and would be a little slower than others, and that the teacher might have to keep a benevolent 'eye' on how she was getting on.
- How far off is the day when mentally handicapped persons can just go to classes and be accpeted in the same way as we now accept other people who have considerable handicaps like selfishness, jealousy or meanness?

In Britain, MENCAP started by setting up pilot schemes in two locations in London, based on the above ideas and clearing the schemes with the individual class teachers: these schemes have now extended themselves to other areas in Britain. There are many benefits that can acrue from them:

— Rather than teaching the same activities in mental handicap centres, in costly isolation, they can be learned through the existing structures in Adult Education Colleges and can, at the same time, provide an opportunity for mentally handicapped people to meet others, develop new interests and abilities to cope in evening class settings and to be active rather than sitting passively at home.

— In settings like these, the qualities mentally handicapped persons often have can complement those of other members of the public. Their enthusiasm, patience, realiability and willingness to repeat and repeat (e.g. stitches in knitting), will be matched by few others and can compensate for the finer points they may not be able to appreciate.

— Mentally handicapped persons may be given the opportunity, not easily available, to learn from seeing an excerise done 'perfectly', while members of the public can benefit from seein how handicapped persons overcome and deal with their disadvantages.

— The teacher can benefit too, by having to present his or her material in a way that will include all pupils. With the initial commitment to include people who learn more slowly and with a spirit of co-operation, it will be soon realised that the class is not limited by the presence of a handicapped person and that all are helped to express their maximum potential.

3. SPECIAL COURSES FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS

This year, 1987/1988, in Dun Laoighaire VEC the notice of special classes for mentally handicapped persons was launched. Two separate courses were offered: a cookery and a speech and drama course. Nine moderately and severely handicapped adults who were living at home in the Borough attended each of the classes. One of the classes was run by a tutor who had some limited experience in mental handicap while the other tutor had none. Staff at the centre the adults attend during the day, Dunmore House, reported positive effects of these classes as: participants felt more like other people; having something to do; learning new skills; baking and bringing something home and perhaps for the first time starting to do some cooking at home. One of the learnings of this experience was that the tutors might feel more comfortable when they are well prepared for some of the extra difficulties they might encounter: dealing with medical issues, epilepsy, etc.; helping the participants find their way around the building, and making special allowances for the fact that the participants learn more slowly. The inclusion of these courses meant that handicapped persons were going along to their local community facilities rather than needless duplication of activities in special centres.

St. Michael's House and the D.A.T.E. Centre at the College of Commerce, Dundrum have in recent years been experimenting with the notion of locational integration. Staff from St. Michael's House have been running courses on Communication and Personal Development for Mentally handicapped adults. A helpful rapport had been established with the members of the Dundrum Active Retirement Association and several of the mentally handicapped adults now participate in the daytime adult classes.

A similar project had been running at Colaiste Dhulaigh, Coolock and again, mentally handicapped adults have been successfully integrated into the programme of adult education classes and activities such as hill-walking.

CONCLUSION

Due to changes in policy in recent years, there are as many mentally handicapped persons living withing our communities as there are people living in Cork city. It makes no sense to exclude them from our adult education centres. I do not wish to pretend that including them will be easy, it will involve some compromises, some special arrangements and some courage to try it out. Adult education has a vital role to play in improving their impoverished lifestyles, which none of us would choose to live for ourselves. It is becoming more and more evident that there are considerable resources within the community which can be tapped in helping mentally handicapped persons integrate into the community and in supporting their often overburdened families. It is clear that the way to educate the community is not to tell them about mental handicap but to offer them opportunities to get to know and support handicapped people in the community. When handicapped persons and the public begin to be at ease with each other all kinds of possibilities are opened up for friendships etc. Not only are the handicapped persons enriched and their horizons widened by the experience but so also are those who come in touch with them. Courses in the area of mental handicap may have never or perhaps need never impinge on your life or on the curriculum in your adult education centre. I suspect, however, you and the public you serve will be the losers.

'I don't ask for your pity but your understanding – not even that, no. Just for your recognition of me in you, and the enemy, time, in us all'.

– Tennessee Williams' Sweet Bird of Youth.

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Jodie Walsh has worked for seven years researching, evaluating and setting up innovative services in the area of mental handicap principally with St. Michael's House and the Medico-Social Research Board. Her recent book LET'S MAKE FRIENDS 1986 (Souvenir Press, London), is based on Irish research and may be of interest to anyone – adult educators, parents, professionals, volunteers – who is concerned about integrating handicapped persons into their local communities.

ADULTS TEACHING — ADULTS LEARNING

a case study in initiating an Adult Education tutor training course at University College Dublin.

DESMOND SWAN

"Universities should regard adult education as an academic discipline and play a leading role in the professional preparation of adult educators." (Lowe, 1973).

The Historical Background

The submissions which the Irish University Colleges made to the Commission on Adult Education (1981-83) were interesting and revealing — high on aspiration, uneven on action. They did bear witness to a considerable record of achievement in a few areas, most notably the Evening Degree programmes in Arts and Commerce subjects, part-time diploma courses in a number of areas, and Extra-mural courses in a wide range of topics.

All these were proudly pointed out to the Commission together with the work of the Centre for Adult and Community Education in Maynooth College and the Department of Adult Education in University College Cork. But if the spirit of adult education or 'university extension' (as it was then called) was dear to the heart of the founders of the National University of Ireland and its forerunners, and was later to inspire important initiatives by Dr. Alfred O'Rahilly, it seemed to have lost much of its energy by the dawn of the 1980's. Little evidence of new dynamism was discernible at a corporate level — especially in the Dublin colleges, and little sign of awareness of the rapidly changing Adult Education scene outside the Universities themselves. The fact, pointed out in the Report of the Commission on Adult Education that thirteen Departments of State here were now directly or indirectly involved in adult education activities, the finding (in the same report) that seventy three per cent of adults here had not participated in any formal education since leaving school, combined with the vigorous growth of the Open University in the United Kingdom, and of the Magee College Institute for Continuing Education in the New University of Ulster, did not evoke any major response in our universities here. Whatever changes have occurred seem to have been initiated at the level of individual University departments and maintained very much at this level.

Request for a new training course

Against this background, the initiative of Mr. Michael Riordan, Adult Education Organiser for Dun Laoghaire Vocational Education Committee, in requesting UCD Education Department to consider initiating a training course for Adult Education tutors presented us with an interesting challenge. It is true that we had for many years offered an Elective course in Adult Education within the Higher Diploma programme, but this was an information-giving course rather than a training course as such, its aim being to sensitise and inform future school teachers about the existence of Adult Education and its significance for them.

Although the major thrust of our work as a Department was concentrated on pre-service teacher education, our two Masters programmes and the Diploma in Compensatory and Remedial Education could be seen as advanced courses of an In-service nature for adults who were mostly teachers. Nevertheless this new request, while quite legitimately placed in the field of educational studies, urged us to expand our remit in a somewhat new direction. Could we, as a department, mobilise our personnel and resources to meet this challenge and opportunity for professional education? After a careful process of reflection, and notwithstanding the strains imposed by limited budgets, we decided to try. Teachers, including teacher educators, must by definition be learners, and it was in this spirit that we picked up the gauntlet.

Planning the course

In fact is soon emerged that there were few if any of us who had not already had some experience in non-formal Adult Education at some level. Besides, in spite of the important differences between them, there must be some congruence between good teacher education and good adult tutor training, while it was accepted as a basic principle that our training course itself should be a demonstration of sound adult education practice.

But points of divergence would need careful attention and in the process of negotiation which followed we were persuaded that a minimum of "theory", with a maximum of "practicalities" would be deemed most appropriate by our clients. In a short-term course it is not possible to depart very far from practical skills of instruction anyhow and it was decided that the emphasis would be placed on these. In fact the subsequent feedback on the course itself produced a number of requests for a greater input of what can only be called theory, from several of the class participants themselves. So whether in the event we succeeded in whetting appetites that only theory could satisfy, or simply proved the age-old distinction between theory and practice (so deeply rooted in teachers' thinking) to be at best, a false dichotomy, I cannot say. The best theory is after all highly practical.

Nevertheless it was accepted in advance that this course would be far from a unidirectional "us" teaching, and "them" learning process. Indeed the double reciprocity of relationships suggested in the course title "Adults teaching — Adults learning" was quite deliberate. Of course there was the element of novelty for staff as well, but beyond this it was hoped that all, staff and participants alike, would work together as partners in a joint venture, the outcome of which would be positive for both. The very distance between lecturer and student that all too frequently characterises University teaching, would have to be instantly dispelled. What was needed now was leadership of a different weave and more subtle texture. Primacy would have to be given to the felt needs that these teachers themselves had been experiencing, perhaps for several years, in their own teaching of adults. *"The principle of the sovereignty of the learner must be given priority"*. (UNESCO, 1981).

All that could be anticipated about our teacher students in advance was that all would be teaching adults; but which subjects, with what qualifications, and for how long were as yet unknown, so it was not possible to plan with a focus on particular areas of interest, e.g. Adult Literacy. Success would therefore depend very much on our capacity to create an acceptant working atmosphere, within which mature, experienced adults could themselves feel safe to explore new techniques of teaching their subject to their particular students in response to the lecturer's communication of his/her subject along with them.

Course Structure and Content

This course lasted ten weeks from October to December 1987. It comprised two one-hour sessions each Wednesday evening separated by a coffee-break. The device of the coffee-break, the seating arrangements, the choice of room and location, were all calculated to serve the nature of the course in question, which as we have noted, must depend greatly on cultivating a relaxed working atmosphere. The decision to limit enrolment to twenty-seven likewise reflects the priority given to quality of work done here.

In the introductory session each lecturer and student introduced himself or herself, indicated their area of special interest and expressed their expectations for the course. This was followed by a discussion, in which each gave their views on adults as learners, the particular difficulties they present, and how these had been experienced by the speaker. Self disclosure to strangers need not be threatening when the atmosphere is safe. Even self-evaluation at this stage can be a useful primer for new learning, as well as bonding the group together, establishing the equality of the genuinely enquiring, and dispelling distance between strangers.

First encounters can have a crucial effect, for good or ill, on teaching and learning. If adult education sometimes becomes a matter of tired teachers

teaching tired students, this could only be prevented by building an air of expectancy and full involvement in the group — the expectation that their individuality would be affirmed, and that the course might help them, despite their diversity, to address their own personal experience in new ways.

In fact, apart from the common experience of teaching adults shared by all, a more heterogeneous group would be hard to imagine. True, about half were qualified teachers, mainly post-primary, with degrees in areas ranging from Fine Art to Agriculture, from Nursing to Arts, Science, Commerce and Secretarial Studies. Their very diversity of background, however, far from being divisive, proved to be a rich resource for all. Thus it became possible to draw on experiences of teaching adults in the following areas: Antiques restoration, Biology, Adult Literacy, English Literature, Cookery, Mathematics, Machine Knitting, Wine-making, French, Creative Writing, Photography, Social Science, Printing, and Pre-school education, from week to week.

Following the initial sensitization, the course topics addressed the general and specific preparation of teaching, sequencing of content, choice of strategy and medium of communication. Workshop sessions followed in voice projection and confidence-building, audio-visual media and micro-teaching, role-play and peer-group teaching. Peer evaluation and self-evaluation in turn merged with group discussion sessions.

Apart from general and particular teaching skills, two areas emerged as being of particular interest to several participants. The first had been termed "confidence building", and this seemed to be particularly helpful to those coming late to teaching, especially in the absence of formal teacher education.

Second was the area of audiovisual technology. This can defeat even the most experienced from time to time; to the novice it seems like a rite of initiation into a community of experts.

Reactions of the participants

Plans for a written evaluation of the course by questionnaire were somewhat overtaken by events, with the result that only twentyseven questionnaires delivered were eventually returned. The following analysis therefore suffers from this incomplete response rate but may nevertheless serve to give some flavour of the general reaction of the participants.

Perhaps the single most telling indication of satisfaction with any course for adults is their attendance rate; they are after all quite free to come or stay away as they choose. Four absences, all due to illness, were recorded out of a

possible maximum of two hundred and seventy for the combined class. This amounted to over ninety-eight per cent attendance.

Over half (52 per cent) of the respondents found the duration of the course too short, 48 per cent "just the right duration", while none of them reported finding it "too long". What then would have been the ideal duration? Twelve respondents (44 per cent) wished it were longer, seven of these opting for durations from nineteen weeks to a full year.

As to the mixture of "theory" and "practice" in the course, no respondent found it "too practical", eight (38 per cent) found it "too theoretical", and thirteen (62 per cent) felt it has "the right mixture of theory and practice for me".

It seems as though the appetite for more tutor training grows by what it feeds on —at any rate over ninety per cent (nineteen respondents) declared they would return to undertake another course in this area "if it were to continue where this course left off". This would apply particularly if it were to include areas such as micro-teaching, assessment/evaluation, and syllabus and lesson planning, but in fact over twenty other areas were specified, including adult psychology and the learning difficulties of adults.

Finally, an overall evaluation of the course was requested. Three negative notes were sounded in the responses. They were (1) that "more use could have been made of grouping together teachers of similar subjects"; (2) that lectures "sometimes covered too much too quickly"; (3) that lecturers "sometimes taught as if training future teachers of children" (rather than adults).

Among the more frequently used positive comments, on the other hand, were the following: 'enjoyable', 'successful', 'satisfying and enlightening', 'varied', 'very worthwhile', 'stimulating', 'interesting and most informative', 'inspiring and encouraging'. Some respondents commented on the "very friendly atmosphere" or on the participants — "very enthusiastic", a "well integrated group". Still other evaluations concentrated on the staff inputs — "well planned and organised", "excellent and suitably organised". One found the course "extremely valuable for a teacher who has not had specific teacher education"; another found that "it gave me renewed enthusiasm for my teaching, while a third who found it "a learning experience for all concerned" hoped it was a kind of warm-up prelude for many more to follow! In general therefore the reported levels of satisfaction with the course were very high.

Conclusion

This article reports on a new Adult Education Tutor training course held at the Education Department, University College Dublin in 1987. It was organised in response to a request from Dun Laoghaire Vocational

Education Committee in order to meet the needs of teachers in this area who had expressed a desire for such a course.

The response of Education Department staff, in spite of their already overloaded schedules, imposed by a climate of recession, was entirely positive. Following a series of planning meetings and negotiation with the client, a course of ten weeks' duration was presented, with a strong emphasis on student participation and discussion, on confidence-building and on instructional skills appropriate to the adult education context.

An overall student attendance rate of ninety eight per cent, as well as strongly positive oral and written feedback, testified to unusually high levels of satisfaction with the course among the participants. This was confirmed by the fact that none found the course too long, whilst many would have wanted a longer one or a "follow-up" to this one. (The returned questionnaires have been handed over to the Dun Laoghaire Vocational Education Committee, whose request for a repeat course it is hoped to satisfy in the coming year).

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Desmond Swan, M.A., Ph.D., A.B.P.S., A.P.S.I., is Professor of Education and Head of the Education Department at University College, Dublin. He was a member of the Government Commission on Adult Education which produced the report Lifelong Learning (1984).

COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROJECTS

THE VINTAGE YEARS — AN INVOLVEMENT PROJECT FOR OLDER PEOPLE

TOMMY MURRAY

The Vintage Years Project won an Aontas/Bank of Ireland Award in 1983. It is run by the Adult Education Service, Co. Roscommon V.E.C., with the support and co-operation of the Health Education Office, Western Health Board, Roscommon.

INTRODUCTION

"For age is opportunity no less
Than youth itself, though in another dress,
And as the evening twilight fades away
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,

Everyone is ageing. Oldness is a state of mind. This mental state is reinforced by society, which sees discontinuities, particularly retirement, as marking off middle age from old age. Society also labels people as elderly or old or aged or senior citizens and tends to see them in somewhat blanket terms as a body of people to be supported, entertained and benelovently tolerated as their lives slowly draw to a close.

Even if we accept the notion that retirement marks one off as elderly or aged, the fact is, that we cannot make one category of what for many is a twenty year life span. The aged are not a homogeneous group. The ageing process itself is very much related to the individual.

For most people, there is good ten to fifteen years of active life between retirement and inactivity or death; for some, this span can be even longer. All the evidence suggests that medical science will continue to prolong this period between retirement and death. We must, therefore, at least attempt to break down this stage into two sub-stages:

- the active aged
- the inactive aged

The latter can be further sub-divided into those who live at home or in the community and those who are living out their remaining years in institutions for the aged.

THE NEEDS OF OLDER PEOPLE

The needs of older people are as varied and diverse as the overall population of the aged. Such needs are also related to a given geographical area (such as Co. Roscommon), and to the aged living in this area. To attempt a project without first identifying these needs is somewhat akin to putting the proverbial cart before the horse. Nevertheless, researchers have indentified a variety of needs which aged people in many countries have in common. Our project attempts to take cognizance of these identified needs, while at the same time, it posits as one of its aims the identification of specific needs of the aged in the locality.

The following, gleaned from our research, is a outline of some of the identified needs and interests of the aged:—

- to be considered as part of the community and be accorded the same standing and respect as any other age group.
- to enjoy warm human relationships with all members of the community.
- to have their individuality as persons recognised and accepted by all.
- to feel that they are rendering some socially useful service or fulfilling a social role in society.
- to have opportunities for creativity and self expression and achievement.
- to have comfortable living arrangements and financial independence, together with adequate health protection, security and care.
- to have mental stimulation and suitable leisure outlets.
- to be able to cope with change, in particular the changes that come with retirement from formal work, or bereavement.
- to have knowledge of, and access to their rights and entitlements.
- to have spiritual satisfaction and peace of mind.

EDUCATION AND OLDER PEOPLE

Just as agening is a lifelong process, so also is education. In the past, the aged were regarded as neither interested in education, nor indeed, fit subjects for it. In more recent times, evidence has shown that it is perfectly possible to learn and become involved in new activities with a high degree of efficiency well into old age. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that constant and regular use of both physical and mental powers helps to keep the faculties in good shape and diminishes the effects of ageing. Likewise, active involvement in education and socio-cultural activities in later life reduces

the effects of various problems and personal difficulties in the final years of life. While performance may be affected in individual cases by such factors as fatigue, ill health, poor hearing or eyesight and colour discrimination, there is no evidence to suggest a serious decline in intelligence or the ability to learn.

Older people can benefit equally well from education programmes, if attention is paid to certain aspects of the learning process including the following:—

- The pace of learning should be geared to the learner.
- Early opportunity should be provided for learners to express their hopes and expectations for the programme.
- There should be ample time for discussion and question.
- Manageable amounts of material should be dealt with in any single presentation.
- Full advantage should be taken of the experience of the learner.
- New knowledge should be linked to what the learner already knows.
- Examples and illustrations should be as concrete as possible.
- If visual aids are used, they should be simple, clear, uncluttered and to the point.
- Where possible, the learning should be experiential i.e. learning by doing.
- The emphasis should be on learning, not teaching.
- The climate should be supportive for learning.
- Time constraints should be de-emphasised.

Historically, there has been a very poor participation rate by older people in adult education. Research from other countries suggest that there is only a 2% involvement on the part of those over sixty five years. It could safely be assumed that the figure for this country is at least equally as low. This figure poses a challenge to adult educators and emphasises the need to remove as many traditional obstacles and barriers to increased participation as possible.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

The Vintage Years is an involvement project for active older people. At a time of better social services for older people, there is a danger that the many things being done for them may produce a sense of dependancy on others and increase feelings of inadequacy and helplessness.

This project sets out to redress this tendancy and restore a strong sense of independence and self sufficiency amongst older people. The project is educational in nature and is aimed at raising consciousness and encouraging

the continual development of talents and abilities amongst older people. It sees older people as having a valuable contribution to make to society and the community in which they live. It recognises that this age group can continue to have self fulfilment and be actively involved in stimulating social roles appropriate to that stage of life. This project rejects the notion that education is symonymous only with earlier stages in life. The aims of education for older people differ only in emphasis from the overall aims of adult education.

In the past, many courses for older people have tended to be concerned mainly with imparting information, using the lecture as the chief medium of communication, and using "experts" in different subject areas.

Bearing in mind the needs of older people outlined above, we see the need to get away from this traditional formula. The aims of our project are to promote attitude change, encourage relationships, stimulate self esteem and self expression, strengthen independence, self confidence and self reliance. We also propose to develop leadership skills, supply information and increase knowledge of their rights and entitlements.

To achieve these aims, the following aspects of format are emphasised:—

(a) A discussion-centred approach is used.

(b) Talks (if and when used) are kept very brief.

(c) Group work, demonstrations, practical work, case studies and the use of clear visual aids are used frequently.

(d) A person-centred format is implemented, where relationships are encouraged and the insights and experiences of the members are utilised.

(e) In so far as possible, contributors and resource people are drawn from the older age group. The talents of the members of the group are sought out and shared.

(f) Red tape, ritual and jargon are deplored.

Project Details

The project is aimed at active older people in selected locations throughout Co. Roscommon. It provides a mid-morning-early afternoon course, one day per week for eight weeks.

Each three hour weekly session consists of a period for learning or sharing a suitable craft or leisure activity, a social hour to include lunch, and an information/coping skills/personal development hour. The social hour is seen as of equal importance with the other two periods.

The course is seen as a "launching pad" to prepare the group for further initiatives. It aims to equip the participants with motivation, enthusiasm and basic leadership skills, so that when the course proper is completed, they will continue as a Self Help Group with the purpose of identifying and attempting to cater for their own social, educational, political and survival needs. This follow-through dimension is regarded as a significant feature of the project.

If the participants undergoing the course indicate that they are interested in continuing as a Self Help Group, they are encouraged to elect their own officers and committee, and name the date of their first meeting to take place in the week subsequent to the completion of the course. From this point on, they are regarded as an independent organisation, free to make their own plans and draw up their own programme of activities. They are free to seek support and assistance from whatever source they wish, including, should they so desire, further adult education courses under the Community Education Budget.

Getting Started

The average attendance at these "pump priming" courses had been twenty participants. Initially, the aim is to find about six older people (men and women) in a locality who will act as a core group. This small group is briefed on the aims and objectives of the project and each member is then asked to recruit at least two others for the course. In this way, involvement of older people commences from the very beginning and the group grows through this personal contact at local level. Care must be taken to ensure that the group does not become a middle class phenomenon. The core group need to be made aware of this danger during their recruitment drive for the wider group.

Research indicates that involvement in adult education on the part of older people is related to the length of time spent in early education. Some individuals may need a lot of encouragement and support to participate. Emphasis should not be placed on the notion of a "course" or an adult education programme in the formal sense.

Some older people lack confidence in their learning capabilities and feel too old to learn. It should be one of the aims of the project to help overcome this personal reluctance which society has helped to reinforce. The core group are encouraged to be supportive and sensitive to the anxieties and fears of some of their fellow participants.

The course is overseen by an anchor person/facilitator and each week certain resource people (not lecturers) are invited to share their experiences with the group in a group discussion setting. The anchor person is needed to link the events of each week together and to build warm relationships with

the group. It is the aim of the anchor person to make him/herself redundant by the end of the course. This is done by gradually passing on tasks and duties to members of the group e.g. introducing or thanking resource people, running the session, acting as M.C. for the Social Hour, etc. In this way, self esteem, confidence and self expression are fostered throughout the eight week programme. In addition, a whole series of new relationships are formed within the group.

Situation to Date

Having offered this project in nine locations throughout the county over the last give years, there is now eight Self Help Groups in existence. Each group organises its own activities, but keeps in contact with the other groups through a central committee which meets six times a year.

Some groups organise outings and holidays for themselves. One group has given public performances of two one-act plays. Set dancing classes have been started. Groups have applied for, and been granted classes in Local History, Upholstery, Flowercraft and Self Expression. Old pastimes, hobbies and leisure activities have been rejuvenated. Informal activities such as visiting each other, "rambling" and playing card games in each other's houses are further spin-offs from the project. All groups are now involved in Active Age Week.

Each year, the groups meet at the annual summer school (one day) held at a central venue in the county. Themes explored over the last four years include Loneliness and Isolation, Folklore and Local History, Leisure and Recreation and Old Time Sports and Pastimes.

Co. Offaly Adult Education Service has taken up this project and two Self Help groups are now established there. Links have been made with these groups and exchange visits have already taken place.

Challenges and Difficulties

One of the critical factors for a group is the availability or otherwise of a post-course premises where the group can establish some type of drop-in or resource centre. Without a warm, comfortable environment, they are unlikely to want to continue.

Another difficulty can lie in finding suitable resource people for the course. Most people want to talk or lecture to the group. We have found this style of intervention unsatisfactory. Speakers rarely take account of the needs of the group and tend to cram as much (often irrelevant) information as possible into their talk. This approach does nothing for the self esteem and independence of the participants. By using the group discussion method, the needs of the group can be dealt with to a much greater extent. As the

project grows, we can now call on a pool of contributors who are in the same age range and who may have undertaken the course themselves on a previous occasion.

In the initial stages, one of the biggest barriers to a person-centred approach and format may well prove to be the expectations of the participants themselves. They may have to be helped to appreciate that learning is a two way process and that the didactic approach can impede growth and development.

We are still in the process of learning and will continue to adapt and impove the project in the light of ongoing feedback from the participants and our own insights as members of the support team.

Tommy Murray is Adult Education Organiser, Co. Roscommon V.E.C.

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THE GREATER BLANCHARDSTOWN PROJECT

MARY HARDIMAN and SR. PEGGY McARDLE

COMMUNITY PROFILE

The greater Blanchardstown area situated on the outskirts of North Dublin, consists of six newly developing parishes, namely, Blakestown, Mountview, Hartstown, Huntstown, Corduff and Ladyswell. It has an estimated population of 55,000 people with an overall average rate of 60% unemployment. (1) There is a mixture of public and private housing with a majority of young families. People who have moved from Ballymun, Finglas, Inner City and rural areas have found themselves isolated and lonely with limited opportunities for meeting others. The problems of moving to inadequately prepared housing estates are many. Though loneliness and isolation are the apparent problems, underlying all this is a basic lack of self esteem and self respect.

IDENTIFIED NEED

In 1984 the Catholic Social Service Conference, being aware of this situation, employed two people to assist in the development of these six areas. After an initial period of research, unemployment and its impact on the individual, their family, and community, presented itself as the major issue. In an attempt to address this problem a local group emerged consisting of Parish Sisters, personnel from the V.E.C., Eastern Health Board and Co. Council. This group was assisted and co-ordinated by two full-time Development Officers from the C.S.S.C.

RESPONSE

The greater Blanchardstown project is an attempt to meet the felt needs of the people through experiental learning, by initiating a process of Personal and Community Development programmes. The ultimate aim is to empower local people, through a process of participation and development, to establish supportive networks (formal and informal), to own the project and develop it according to the specific needs of their areas.

The project is based on the following assumptions:

(1) That each individual has the potential and resources to grow and change.

(2) That bringing people together creates support and solidarity, releases new energy and effects change.

(3) That the project will maximise resources at local level in creating a process of learning, support and integration.

(4) That those who participate in the project will in some way contribute to the development of others within the project.

In 1984 the project began by offering Personal Development programmes to people in the six areas. These courses operated in each local area for five weeks four mornings a week and included sessions on personal development, parenting, child management, home management, general and mental health, community awareness and adult education opportunities. A maximum of sixteen people attended each course and creche facilities were provided. A panel of outside personnel, most of them professionals, were recruited to give the inputs. At the end of each course an evaluation took place with the participants. By 1987 four hundred people, the vast majority being women, had participated in these programmes. At this point it was felt necessary to do an overall evaluation of the project involving almost all of the four hundred participants. Its purpose was to evaluate their needs, to help them on the next phase of their development and to ascertain how best we could improve the existing courses. In the absence of a strict evaluation provess in the initial years, the main conclusions were that people in disadvantaged areas are very open to adult education programmes. The programmes had a positive impact on all involved, on a personal level they enhanced the quality of people lives by reducing loneliness and a sense of isolation. The following comments of two participants speak for themselves.

> *"I felt terribly cut off, inside, my mind was going mad. Now that I have done the course I have seen a whole new me".*

> *"There was no life before the course, I felt that nobody needed me. I seemed to be just dead, but now I am alive".*

There were also spin offs at a community level. Many participants initiated local projects, e.g. swap shops, knitting and sewing co-ops, ladies and mens clubs, mother and toddler groups, community play groups, clean up campaigns, street parties, drop in centres and the publication of a directory of local services. From our evaluation we became aware of the on-going need to assess and revise our programmes. It also became clear that the courses were just the first phase in the overall development programme.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

There was an expressed need from the participants for further support, guidance and training. As a result we have now identified and implemented three stages in the project.

STAGE 1: Personal Development courses for people who have not previously been involved.

STAGE 2: The provision of follow up courses. These include eight different options:—

(1) Personal Development.
(2) Home makers.
(3) Parenting.
(4) Spirituality.
(5) Adult Education.
(6) Adult Literacy.
(7) Community Development.
(8) Community Enterprise.

STAGE 3: The training of local people to enable them to run their own courses in:

(1) Personal Development.
(2) Home Management.
(3) Parenting.

At this point we endeavour to train local people in counselling and course facilitation.

The three Development Stages would aim to bring the target groups into the planning, evaluation and delivery of programmes.

We have presently designed a new model for Stage 1 courses. Briefly each course has a team of four consisting of Course Leader, Parish Sister, and two local trainee facilitators. Each member of the team is given standard guidelines regarding their role. The Course Leader has overall responsibility for the direction and co-ordination of the course, the provision of on-the-spot training of the local facilitators and the referral of participants requiring individual counselling. The termination process has been built into the course from the beginning and emphasis is placed on enabling people to integrate their learning experience on the course into their natural support system. We have recommended that this new design be used on each course and that guidelines be adhered to in order to be able to evaluate effectively. We have aslo drawn up a directory of personnel whom we recommend as resource people for the project. We have a small panel of local counsellors who provide a back up service for stage 1.

Stage 2 offers individuals follow up options and provides us with the opportunity to identify local people with leadership and training potential. Stage 2 is a crucial phase in the development of the project particularly in

the light of our ultimate aim — which is to enable local people to own the project and develop it according to their on-going needs.

To date a total of 600 people have participated in the project. The revised stage 1 course design has been used in four areas and has proved very successful. Stage 2 is well on the way to completion as follow up courses have been offered in all of the six areas. Stage 3 has begun in so far as local people have received training in facilitation skills and in the presentation of a parenting resource pack.

MANAGEMENT OF THE PROJECT

The project is managed by two full-time C.S.S.C. personnel, parish sisters and representatives from the V.E.C., Eastern Health Board and Co. Council. An Executive Committee representing this larger group was recently formed to monitor and co-ordinate the on-going development of the project. We hope in the near future to recruit some local people on to the Management group.

FUNDING

To date the project has been funded by the C.S.S.C., V.E.C., Vincent de Paul, Co. Council, Combat Poverty, Americal Ireland Fund, N.S.S.B., Dept., of Social Welfare, private donations and local fund-raising. Due to current cutbacks the contributions from some of these agencies have been either drastically cut or totally withdrawn. Because we rely on so many sources of funding, with no one agency taking overall responsibility, it is often difficult to plan for and implement our programmes. The whole question of funding has serious implications for the future of the project. There is a danger that the process now begun, of involving local communities in the planning, participation, evaluation and delivery of community education programmes in their local areas, may not be able to continue if statutory bodies are either unable or unwilling to resource them.

THE FUTURE

The project has reached an exciting and crucial stage. There is no doubt about its positive effects on the individual, family and community. However our experience to date has shown that it is very difficult to get men to come forward for development type courses. This whole question of adapting our courses to make them more attractive to the particular needs of men will have to be given serious consideration in the future. The project is an excellent example of statutory and voluntary agencies working together, maximising local resources, sharing expertise and information.

In March 1988 the greater Blanchardstown project was chosen by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions as one of the two national projects presented at their International Conference. Due to the success of the project we have

received many enquiries from groups involved in similar developments. We believe that this project could be used and adapted as a model for other areas and are currently preparing an information pack.

Mary Handiman and Sr. Peggy McArdle are Development Officers, C.S.S.C., Blanchardstown.

THE BALLYBEG PROJECT

SR. REGINA O'SULLIVAN

Background

St. Saviour's, Ballybeg, Waterford, is a relatively new Corporation Housing Estate, comprising 720 local authority houses and 60 private houses. The residents are mainly large, young families. Unemployment is extremely high.

The women, particularly, are most burdened with poverty related problems. They are very confined at home with young children, and have not the resources to enable them to develop any kind of social activities, or take part in suitable educational or developmental programmes.

Committee Formed

Over a few years many efforts were made to run courses for women, covering such topics as Child Care and Development, Home Management, Health Care, Cookery Classes, information on drugs, alcoholism, and related practival and social subjects. These had a certain degree of success, the weakness being that there was no long term planning and development. In April '87 a small committee was formed, consisting of community workers and residents from Ballybeg. This group organised a series of talks that would run one afternoon a week for four consecutive weeks. The aim was to bring women together in order to discern the felt needs and interests. From these sessions a group of women were motivated to meet regularly, and have continued to meet once a week. It became a support group. The objective is to give women space to share, and make sense of the difficulties in their lives, and to gain insight into ways to bring about change for themselves and their area. In September they embarked on a leadership course to develop leadership potential. This lasted for 6 weeks and helped them develop skills such as listening, sharing, getting in touch with their own gifts, and improving self-confidence.

Leadership Role

This group became motivated to take on a leadership role in the community, in order to help others to grow in confidence, and to cope with life's difficulties more positively, and also to work towards changing their lives. As a result of this a committee was formed, taking on the name S.T.E.M. The name was chosen as the committee say themselves as a small group that was very life giving, a group from which many flowers of hope, and growth and beauty would be produced. Four of the members are women who are young mothers in the area, one being a single parent to represent the needs

and interests of single parents. The other four members of the Committee consist of a voluntary social worker for the area, a voluntary youth worker, public health nurse, and a group-worker and facilitator.

At this stage of development, the Combat Poverty Agency allocated a once off grant to the Group. This was so very much appreciated at the particular stage when the time was ripe to move into further development, and to reach many more women in the area.

Open Night

Although the Committee had ideas as to suitable programmes for the area, they decided first to run an open night for women. The purpose was to discern the areas of the greatest felt needs and interests and to plan accordingly. The content of the 'Open Night' was firstly informing the women on the progress of S.T.E.M. including the aims and objectives. Five small groups were then formed to discern the main interests, followed by a plenary session to report from the Groups. A general discussion followed. The night ended with refreshments. That night, which went on from 7.00 p.m. to 11.30 p.m., convinced us that we were really going ahead with enthusiasm, and the full backing of the 40 women who attended. The response was very positive. The participants expressed their feelings of togetherness, their hope for suitable activities locally, and their willingness to participate. There was a very positive response to local people organising the projects.

PROGRAMMES.

In all five programmes have been undertaken. Four of these have now been completed and one is on-going.

The following are details of the programmes.

Programme A. WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP

This programme was aimed at particular women in the area who have in the past, shown interest in and support of various activities. These were people who had expressed a desire to have suitable activities for women available locally.

Programme B. LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL

This programme developed from the Women's Support Group. As confidence developed the women became willing to take on a more definite leadership role in the community.

Programme C. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

At the 'Open Night' for women many expressed a desire to engage in a programme which would enable them develop a better self-image, and a greater expertise at self-expression and communication.

Programme D. PRACTICAL SKILLS

This also developed from the 'Open Night' for women. At that meeting there were clear expressed needs to develop practical skills.

Programme E. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SINGLE PARENTS

A large number of single parents live in the area. While they are part of the other programmes also, it was considered that they have pressures of their own, which would be met in specially designed programmes.

Future Plans

During the programmes which have just ended, we kept a watchful eye on the way interests were developing. Having discussed the possibilities, and planned realistically, we are now ready to start off on three more programmes, which will take us into July. Two of these are assertiveness courses, the number doing them being too great for just one and the third is a cookery course, with particular emphasis on providing nourishing meals for a family at low cost.

We consider our efforts and projects as having been a success. Firstly, local people have been involved in organising the programmes and are seen as being part of the area with the true interests of the locality at heart. These people have grown in confidence, and have a firm belief that the general morale of the area can be lifted, and that the only people who can really do this are the residents themselves. Secondly, the people themselves had complete say in what they wanted, and so full co-operation was achieved. Thirdly, the grant enabled us to get people from outside who had skills in group work and self development to facilitate the sessions.

S.T.E.M. are determined to keep on organising and planning. Our greatest difficulty is lack of finance, but this will be overcome once the enthusiasm is there. The people are taking part in the programmes and willing to contribute whatever they can. The sense of togetherness is now well established, as indeed is the conviction that the only people that can effectively help to raise the morale, in spite of difficulties, are the people, our own people.

Sr. Regina O'Sullivan is a Good Shepherd Sister and a Voluntary Social Worker.

ALTERNATIVE READING IN ADULT EDUCATION

Ad Hock.

1. The Greyhound Guide to Evening Classes.
   Definitely the fastest.

2. The Lexicographer's Nightmare.
   (Pocket Books).

   This is a first novel by Iseult McGonigle of the Creative Writing class (Beg.). An adult student finds herself trapped in a dictionary between Experiential learning and the Empowerment process. There follows a description of her many and varied attempts to escape until the final gripping chapter when she flounders about in the Quagmire of Terminology. I know that readers will be intrigued when I tell you that she is finally rescued by an A.E.O. on his way home from Module B. *"This book is a must for anyone interested in communicating in a positive, simple and direct manner since it does not preach, plagiarise, prioritise or polarise"*. (T.D. on Plain Speaking).

3. The Alsatian Guide to Evening Classes.
   Companion volume to 1. above.

4. The Flycatcher. Peter Write.
   (Published by Uisce faoi Thalamh).

   This is the book they said we dare not review. At the time of going to press, we are awaiting the outcome of a conjunction brought by the State. But . . . Peter, as is now well known, was for many years employed in the Adult Education section of the Department of Education. This meant that he was bound by the State Secrets Act, as the existence of an Adult Education section in the Department of Education has been the best kept secret since the foundation of this or any other state. Until these sensational revelations, the very existence of Peter Write has been a matter of intense speculation and it is a great relief to learn that he is, in fact, the one who appears as Peadar Scriobh at the bottom of many official circular letters, (cf. Dept. Cc. FI, U2, and FU2).

   Since its publication, this book has been at the centre of a storm of controversy and there has been a letter in the evening papers about it. It was also raised at Question Time in the Dail and one of the P.D.'s scored six marks.

However, this book does raise serious and fundamental questions which concern all of us who live in this or any other state. Firstly, how much information about adult education matters should be made public?

Secondly, what is the priority for a civil sevant who is oath-bound but feels conscience-bound to inform the public? And, last and definitely least, should a civil servant be bound?

One very disturbing piece of information to emerge is the revelation by Mister Write of the existence of a number of underground groups which threaten to undermine the Irish education system. They have names like DATE and MATE, KLEAR and TACT. There are even groups called RAVE and CAME, about whose activities the author is less than forthcoming, but he does hint strongly that he is open to offers from the tabloid newspapers. Furthermore, the author claims, there is strong evidence of 'networking' and, it is alleged, these groups are linked together by a central agency called IDEA, which is mistressminding the whole operation.

Finally, what do you make of this? On page 134 (classified), the author states: *"Since I was assigned to this section, my life has been HELL (Head of Education, Lifelong and Leisuretime). I have been paid at part-time teaching rates, my salary arrives the month after the month before, depending on the last Friday before the fourth working day of the last week in which classes were held; my wife thinks I am neurotic, but I know that her telephone is tapped".*

5. Fiche Bliain le FÁS.
(AnCO Research Department).

San leabhar beag suimiúil seo, tugann duine éigin cur síos ar na blianta a chaith sé ag obair le hAnCO, Manpower, YEA agus anois FÁS. Níl ann ach leabhairín beag, an dtuigeann tú!

6. The Lassie Guide to Evening Classes.
This is the one with the subtitles.

7. The Evening Class Guide to Dogs.

ADULT EDUCATION IN UNEMPLOYMENT CENTRES

NEW FOCUS FOR CREATIVE ENENGY

A number of Centres for the unemployed have been opened recently throughout the country, many of them offering opportunities for a variety of informal adult learning activities. In the following article **Michael Allen** from the Peadar O'Donnell Unemployed Centre in Galway gives an overall picture of the centres. He describes how they are becoming increasingly involved not only in campaigning activity but also in creative activity in their communities.

CENTRES FOR THE UNEMPLOYED sponsored by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) have been coming into operation, one-by-one, across the Republic since the middle of 1986. There are currently nine in full operation and in this short time they have an impressive record of achievement in provision of facilities and community activity. There are also longer established centres in Belfast and Derry both of which have strong links with the trade union movement.

The Centres in the South are run by the local Council of Trade Unions and are staffed primarily through the Social Employment Schemes. The core funding originates between that Agency and Congress. The centres in Belfast and Derry are funded by the EEC second European Combat Poverty Programme, and the Department of the Environment and Derry City Council as well as trade unions and trusts.

While they were seen initially as centres for advice, counselling and campaigning on social welfare activities, they have increasingly become a focus for creative and artistic energies as well. Music, photography, theatre, mime and craft workshops have become regular activities. There are three ICTU centres in Dublin: in Tallaght, the North Strand and Bonnybrook, and six are already set up elsewhere in the South in Limerick, Galway, Sligo, Castlebar, Waterford and Wexford. New Centres are being opened in Newbridge, Kilkenny, Drogheda and Finglas in North Dublin. There are still hopes of opening a Centre in Cork.

The centres represent a major strand of the trade uniom response to the problems of unemployment and their activities have brought the movement into a much wider role in the community than it has taken since perhaps the early 1900's.

Each of the Centres has developed activities which respond to the needs and existing facilities of its community; but all see themselves very much as a resource to be used by unemployed people in whatever projects they develop.

Some centres have set specific projects: The Limerick Centre has linked with Belltable to organise a Teamwork Scheme concentrating on alternative entertainment for young people. Activities so far have included videos, plays in local factories and street carnivals. The Larkin Centre was deeply involved in East Wall Community Group's production of 'The Selfish Giant' and has also put on regular mime and drama sessions.

Education at the Centres

Adult education has also been a major focus of the Centres with a number of the Centres, notably Limerick, Waterford and Galway securing teaching hours from their local VECs. Under these arrangements, the Centres set up, design and host courses in response to the needs of the unemployed, and the VEC pays the tutors involved. Similar links with Health Boards and AnCo have also been established. Courses range from typing to computer studies, to languages, art, weaving and literacy. Classes are free and usually take place during the day.

If we list Sligo's exhibition of Ger O'Leary's trade union banners during Sligo Arts Week, the Peadar O'Donnell Centre's involvement with a number of young rock bands, Wexford's full scale mural on the 1911 lock-out, Belfast's rehearsal and demo studio and Derry's exhibition space, we are only beginning to sample the range and energy of the projects undertaken.

Nevertheless, workers in the centres feel they are only scratching the surface of what can be done. The number of potential creative projects and the enthusiasm of unemployed people, young and old, underlines further (if anyone needs it) the cruel waste of the present unemployment levels. The pitiful level of state funds available for the centres also shows how little stress is put on allowing all members of the community to participate fully.

The positive aspect is the growing financial commitment from the trade union movement, both in terms of an ICTU resolution to campaign for affiliated unions to support the centres, and individual contributions from members who see the important role the centres play.

This article is reprinted courtesy of CAFE, a journal for the unemployed.

THE LARKIN UNEMPLOYED CENTRE

THE UNEMPLOYED WORKING AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT.

NAOMI BRENNAN

Unemployment is at crisis proportions. Emigration is running at about 30,000 per year. People on Unemployment Benefit or Assistance or Supplementary Welfare Allowance are on the poverty line. That's over a quarter of a million people.

In response to this and to the needs of those out of work, ten Unemployed Centres were set up under the auspices of the ICTU. There are now fifteen such centres throughout the country, of which the Larkin Unemployed Centre is one. Over two hundred unemployed people and part-time workers use the Centre every week. Some come for classes, some for recreation, more for information on social welfare and other issues. The Centre is a welcoming place and it helps people to break out of the isolation caused by unemployment.

When you've been out of work for a long time, you become depressed and despondent. You lose all feelings and selfesteem and begin to feel worthless. You lose all hope of ever again contributing to society and feel like an outcast. The Larkin Centre helps counter such negative feelings by providing people with the opportunity of coming together and meeting others in a similar situation. People come to realise that being unemployed is not their fault and they can overcome problems by sharing and discussion.

Origins

The Centre opened in December 1986 and by May 1987, fourteen staff were employed. This has now risen to twenty-six. By June we has organised ten classes, including Return to Study, Writing for the Media, Basic English and Maths and a Women's discussion group had formed. All of these arose from demands of local unemployed people. Since then, we have had Aerobics, Art, Irish Language, Mime, Personal Development and Assertiveness. Literacy classes are available at all times. Membership for the year costs £1 and all our members are part of the Larkin Concession Club. This entitles them to discount of between 5% and 50% in about sixty businesses in the Dublin area. It includes Hairdressers, Dry Cleaners, Health Clubs, Shoe and Clothes Shops, Snooker Halls and a Golf course.

Another very important part of our work is campaigning for jobs in the area. We have had meetings with the Custom House Docks Development Authority in the hope of securing a large percentage of the jobs for Dublin's North Inner City. We are also seeking training and apprenticeships. In the Bru, our monthly paper, we deal with issues which affect unemployed people and we carried out a skills survey which proved that over 33% of unemployed people who completed the survey are skilled.

We give support to groups coming together to form workers' co-operatives and community co-ops. The Centre runs a creche and recently two of the creche workers started their own child minding co-op. The creche caters for the children of all those who attend the Centre for advice or for classes. We have lots of things to do, so why not drop in and see us at

149E North Strand Road,
Dublin 3.

or give us a ring at 365544/365404.

Naomi Brennan is Co-ordinator for the Larkin Unemployed Centre.

THE DERRY UNEMPLOYED WORKERS' GROUP

MARTIN NELIS

Origins

The Derry Unemployed Workers' Group was set up in the Autumn of 1981 as the result of a joint initiative by a group of local unemployed people and representative groupings. Those represented at this meeting were the Institute of Continuing Education (I.C.E.) based at Magee University, Derry; the Workers Educational Association (W.E.A.) and local trade unions. The purpose of this initiative was to promote the development of educational courses for the unemployed of the Derry area. Following a series of meetings it was decided to offer a free five week course on a variety of subjects directed at unemployed adults. These courses were sponsored by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the I.C.E. Although the courses were originally seen as a "one-off", the demand for further provision led to more courses being planned and implemented over the following year.

One of the courses on offer was "Organisation and Communication Skills". The purpose of this course was to encourage personal and social development through promoting self-reliance and confidence building. To further this aim, a mock committee was formed to "role-play" an unemployed action group who would campaign on behalf of the unemployed of the city. From this simulation exercise the Derry Unemployed Workers' Group emerged.

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1982 the group developed further. Due to cutbacks in educational provision, the group had to raise its own funds to continue the course, which by this time had become a major success. This part of our work has continued since. Indeed, we are proud to boast that between the Autumn of 1981 and the Autumn of 1987 over 4,450 unemployed and unwaged adults have enrolled in the various courses that we have organised.

In August 1983, after much searching and many set backs, the group moved into its own premises. This new "Centre for the Unemployed" was based in an annex to a convent in Artillery Street, a side street off the city centre. Also during this period the D.U.W.G. was formed into a limited company with charitable status. It was decided that much more work would have to be done to support the unemployed and the unwaged of this area. Apart from developing more education courses for our target groups, the demand for

the urgent need to offer a Welfare Rights Information and Advice service became more apparent. The centre became the headquarters for "Combat Poverty", a local campaigning group, which had been instrumental in the fight against poverty in this area. A further development was the provision of a drop-in centre where those who used the centre could read the daily newspapers, avail of cheap meals and so forth.

Using the scheme of the Department of Economic Development "Action for Community Employment" (A.C.E.), the Centre employed several full time and part-time employees. During 1984 and 1985 the group developed in many ways. An environmental project was established and cultural and artistic activities were encouraged.

However, these developments were not achieved without problems and difficulties. Stagnation became evident. A change in direction was clearly a pre-requisite to development and changes in the management structure occurred as a result. A shift from the "tea and sympathy" approach was needed to allow the group to develop a more pro-active campaigning attitude and direction. More staff were employed in the Welfare Rights unit to satisfy the immense demands on the services. Our Environmental project had also responded to demands and increased its workforce and provision of training.

In 1986, we were selected as a project in the Long Term Unemployment theme group which would allow us to participate in the Second E.E.C. Combat Poverty Programme. Although, we had submitted a specific research project of our own, we were merged into a joint project with the Belfast Unemployed Centre. Both groupings then had to come up with a unified project which would be acceptable to the administration of the E.E.C.

By the Autumn of 1986, one of the main problems that the D.U.W.G. were now facing was not only the location of their premises but also the type of premises that they were. It was generally felt that the search for new premises was essential if we were to develop further. We came to the conclusion that the premises in Artillery Street had fulfilled their usefulness. Eventually, we located premises that would satisfy the needs of the group and the many groups and individuals that were making demands on us. In November 1986 we moved into the Union Hall, which is located in the main shopping area of the city and is accessible from every part of the city. This move was to be a catalyst for change; a change for the better . . . . .

THE UNION HALL

Since we moved into the Union Hall we believe that we have developed more quickly as a group, even more than we thought we would. The Centre for the Unemployed no longer offers simply a drop-in centre for "Tea and Sympathy" but now offers a more proactive response to the problems of

unemployment. It has become the centre for the majority of welfare and social campaigns in the city. The Centre is equally seen as a community and trade union resource centre offering services and facilities to support the unemployed, unwaged and low paid of this area. It is now offering support, advice and back-up to over 85 community, voluntary and single issue groups in this city. We have been responsible for the promotion of alternative community arts, forums, debates, meetings, exhibitions and so forth. It is currently the central nerve centre for the City Council sponsored Benefit Take-up Campaign. It is seen as offering administrative back-up to all these groups and activities and we would hope that this resource aspect of our work would continue to progress this year.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES IN THE UNION HALL

The activities of the D.U.W.G. are many and varied; however there is one common factor key to all activities of the centre and that is to encourage the development, and self-sufficiency of local communities. This objective informs all the work which the centre carries out. Thus, the Centre's Welfare Rights Unit does not merely fulfil the traditional role of helping those who come into the Centre to claim thier full Welfare Rights and Advice provision. Rather, the Unit also does "Outreach" work, setting up advice centres in local areas and - crucially - providing training for local people in Welfare Rights with the aim of actively involving the community itself in this type of work.

The Environmental Project works in association with the Derry City Council to improve the quality of local environments by transforming waste ground into gardens, walkways and green spaces in consultation with the local community. The workers on these projects are employed for one year under the A.C.E. programme. The centre has an on-going commitment to integrate training and education programmes, thus ensuring the best possible transferable skills for our employees. One excellent initiative to emerge from the environmental projects is the establishment of a co-operative. Under the title "Community Landscaping Co-operative" several workers from our environmental group have got together to start their own business. On behalf of the group we would like to extend our sincere best wishes to the co-op and bid them good fortune for the future.

The Social and Economic Unit (S.E.R.U.) was established in 1986 to monitor and investigate the changing employment and unemployment situation and to develop a picture of the economy of the North-West with the aim of identifying possibilities of job creation in the area. To this end, S.E.R.U. provides back-up research and information for local trade unions, co-operatives and community groups which have specific job creation proposals.

This role is supporting community employment initiatives is one to which the centre is committed. This, perhaps, is why the N.I. Co-operative Development Agency located their North-West office in the Union Hall. Over the last year the Derry Unemployed Workers' Group have been involved in the creation of three co-operatives. With another four in the pipe line it would appear to many in this area that co-operatives and community led initiatives may be one way out of the current economic cul-de-sac in which we have found ourselves.

Within the Union Hall premises itself, the Centre does its best to encourage the participation of the unemployed and the unwaged both in the Centre and in outside communities. Informal education classes are one way of encouraging participation. In conjunction with the Workers Educational Association, the Centre provides free classes for the unemployed and the unwaged. Courses over the last year have included Yoga; Cookery; Irish Language; Womens' Studies: Know your Rights; Creative Writing and Media Awareness etc. All of these courses aim to develop the confidence of the participants, decrease their isolation and thus help them to take as much control as possible of their own lives.

The DERRY WOMEN'S NEWS-SHEET is a professional looking news-sheet which is produced by a women's group operating from the centre. This publication contains articles, issues and information which is of immense usefulness to women living in this area.

The Canteen does its bit by the provision of cheap but wholesome food for the unemployed during the lunchtime club. A full meal is on sale for 85 pence. It is hoped that during the coming year we will be able to develop a catering co-operative which will emerge from the current workforce in the canteen. During the past year, our canteen staff have provided a full catering service to functions and parties for old age pensioners, children and the disabled.

Martin Nelis is the P.R.O. for the Derry Unemployed Workers' Group.

CENTRE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED CASTLEBAR

MICHAEL KILCOYNE

As unemployment was increasing in Castlebar, due to redundancies in Travenol and other small Companies in the town, Castlebar Council of Trade Unions and the Youth Employment Agency saw a need for a Centre providing services for people.

The Centre was opened on the 16th of June, 1986 and employed two people on an S.E.S. Scheme. It was officially opened on the 29th of July, 1986. Since then another person has started work on the S.E.S. Scheme and three people on a Teamwork Scheme. Over the past year and a half, the Centre has been of invaluable service to the public. During this time we have provided services which include:

A Register of unemployed and job vacancies.

Advice on Social Welfare and Taxation entitlements.

A free confidential service to help you find work offering such services as typing and photocopying C.V.'s, job applications and practical advice on interviews etc. . . .

A discount scheme for unemployed.

Information on emigration is available.

Meeting room facilities.

Telephone messages accepted.

Representation at appeals tribunals.

Counselling.

With regard to the area of Counselling, we have found that there has been an increase in problems related to domestic and social situations, which we now can deal with effectively, as a member of our staff has recently undertaken courses concerning the above problems.

Our Teamwork Scheme has proved very successful during the past few months, providing helpful and constructive ideas. The people employed on the Teamwork Scheme feel that the Centre provides a helpful service to the unemployed, but not all unemployed people are aware of our existence. With a little further publicity the Centre will become a focal point within the unemployed community. The

Teamwork Scheme is looking forward to visiting other Centres to see how they operate and we are hoping to incorporate some of their ideas with our own, to make our operation more viable. They have also expressed their views with regard to the future of the Centre, and envisage getting involved in the following during the coming months — greater Public Relations, better Liaison with employers, establishing co-ops and organising activities for unemployed people e.g. sporting, classes, etc.

The Centre is deeply indebted to the Mayo Vocational Education Committee, particularly Mr. Pat Staunton, Adult Education Organiser for the tremendous help that he has given to the Centre on Personal Development and Computer Studies. This role is to be increased and enlarged much further during the next twelve months. He paid tribute to the National Manpower Service, particularly Mr. E. Hoban and Mr. T. Cawley for their invaluable assistance. In conjunction with the V.E.C., we are also in the process of organising driving lessons and tests free of charge for the unemployed.

Michael Kilcoyne is Secretary/Treasurer of the Centre for the Unemployed, a project managed and operated by Castlebar Council of Trade Unions and funded by FÁS.

LIMERICK UNEMPLOYED CENTRE

GABRIELLE DANAHER

The Limerick Unemployed Centre has been in operation since January 1987. The measure of any public establishment is how much they the "Public" use it. Suffice, then, to say that in little over a year, we have witnessed up to 7,500 people of all age groups using the facilities available to them in L.U.C. The old adage "NEEDS MUST" has been very instrumental in deciding which facilities are needed most. Consequently, we have Advisory, Educational, Recreation and Administration services available from 9.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. Monday to Friday.

We in the Centre feel extremely fortunate that N.S.S.B. and certain organisations have made so much literature and pamphlets available that the staff in the Advisory section can help with most problems.

The Education and Recreation sections are more than lucky because the Limerick V.E.C. through the good offices of Ms. Deirdre Frawley, Adult Education Organiser, have afforded us 20 hours educational classes and very fine tutors. Thus we have divided these hours under the headings:— Basic Maths; Basic English; History; Social Studies; Return to Study; Guitar; Keep Fit; Photography.

The first five are what we call Winter and Autumn subjects because people prefer to be indoors in those seasons. These classes are not run on the active teacher/passive student situation. They are conducted in a democratic way. The Social Studies and Return to Study classes have proven that, even though people have achieved different levels of education, they still feel a need to keep up with the ever changing times. The History classes deal with modern history, e.g. the Vietnam War, and, consequently, the people attending can understand what they have seen on T.V. and read about in the papers in the last few years.

Photography and Art classes give people a chance to express themselves. They have good facilities, have access to Metal Sculpture and Ceramics which they would never have had on the normal school curriculum. In the past year, pupils also had Drama and Media Writing Clases. Resulting from these, one person has become a member of a professional theatre group and another has started his own photography business. The December issue of Hatch 33, our own Newsletter, which normally consists of eight pages, had a

four page supplement included which was edited and written totally by members of "Writing for the Media" class.

We now know that people who have done any of these courses immediately apply to do another and then another, so obviously they have a sense of achievement which counteracts what one could term the "DOLEFUL WAY". Instead of lingering on in bed or around the house, venturing out only when they have to 'sign on', their sense of purpose is get up, go to the Centre and learn some more. Thus they feel needed, dignified and, certainly educated.

On the recreational side we have Guitar and Keep-fit classes. These have proved very popular, especially as parents can get involved in them and leave their children in the very capable hands of our Creche supervisors who are available during all of the courses.

Our canteen has taken on the guise of a meeting place. Whether it is a cup of tea or lunch, the prices are so reasonable that day by day it gets busier. The staff are so obliging and friendly that one can certainly enjoy a break there.

We who work in the Centre realise that everyone coming in is our "livelihood" and consequently we are duty bound to give to them 100% help and assistance. At the conclusion of every ten week course, each person is awarded a certificate of merit and mentally we hope they envisage "GOAL not DOLE".

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF ADULT LEARNING

DR. MÍCHEÁL W. Ó MURCHÚ

Not unlike Irish society, adult education is a state of flux, reflecting the rapidity of societal change with its attendant uncertainties and restlessness, and clearly compounded by the accumulated lack of adequate resources in the statutory and voluntary sectors. But as a leading early Greek philosopher observed *"One cannot step into the same river twice"*, and so changes have been and continue to occur in Irish adult education. This note attempts to consider briefly a cluster of significant changes and their likely impact on future developments; in a real sense it represents an endeavour to take our bearings as adult educators, confront the issues of to-day and prepare realistically for tomorrow. No predictive value is claimed for the following list but I hope it will facilitate focus for discussion and debate on adult and continuing education in Ireland.

1. Decline in Provision

There is a proven decline in the provision of adult education based on a variety of inter-related factors such as the self-financing regulation issued by the Department of Education, and a continuing curtailment of disposable income. The non-filling of vacant positions of Adult Education Organisers in the VEC sector is exacerbating the situation. While sympathising with the VECs in the face of their financial cuts, it is essential to ask how soon the vacant positions will be filled?

2. Marketing

In spite of, or perhaps partly as a result of the decline in provision there is evidence of a keener sense of targetting courses and programmes at specific adult groups. Marketing is becoming a key strategy in this process. It must be noted, however, that marketing has always formed an important part of the adult education enterprise but now it is assuming a new urgency and application.

3. Day-time Provision

Unavailable in Ireland up to the mid-1970s, day-time adult education provision has expanded considerably in the interim.

Personally, I regard the Live and Learn Report (1988), based on a study of day-time provision of adult education in Coolock, Dublin and undertaken in collaboration with the participants themselves as being one of the finest

testament to the insuppressible will and indomitable spirit of a group of mainly disadvantaged urban women who persisted in overcoming the constraints of their situation. Reading their observations is tantamount to gaining a fresh set of insights and understanding into lives poised to take full advantage of adult education, when it is available in a sensitive collaboration and mutually enriching framework. Live and Learn is indeed a "pioneering and unique study" whose potential has yet to be fully appreciated and exploited.

If evidence is required to undergird the relevance of adult education in Ireland today, the Coolock study serves as an outstanding witness. Regrettably, the major significance and implications of the study seem by and large to have eluded the media and the politicians to date. Offshoots of the Coolock experience are beginning to emerge for the participants which I believe could lead to a follow-up analysis and report.

4. Certification and Flexible Assessment

The bulk of adult education courses in Ireland are in the non-credit arena and do not lead to the granting of educational awards. One of the strategic areas innovation and development is a system of certification for those adults wishing to have the option of acquiring appropriate certification. This tendency is likely to exhibit itself increasingly in the growth of credit courses in the years ahead.

The initiative of the National Council for Educational Awards in inaugurating a Single Subject Certificate Award facilitates an increased emphasis on the credit side. Concepts such as credit for work experience, work being defined on a broad basis, and experiential learning will, I suspect, assume greater relevance at the point of access to credit courses, in assessment procedures and as strong motivational measures for the participants.

The current examination of a Certification service for Adult Learning in Ireland by a cluster of educational institutes — the Irish Vocational Education Association, Vocational Education Committees, Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann, and the French, German, Italian and Spanish Cultural Institutes based in Dublin — reflects a growing need and demand and constitutes a further step to a wider certification process for adults who, in this instance, participate in language courses.

5. Emergence of Independent Learning Groups

In recent years local networks have been forming with a view to enriching and updating their members. These groups draw on the skills, experience, and resources of their members and predominate among Womens' Groups, Retired People and professions such as doctors and dentists. Each group draws up its own agenda and education programme while the Active

Retirement Groups approximate closely to the concept and practice of the University of the Third Age which is growing in popularity in Europe and North America. There are indications that such Independent Learning Groups/Networks will increase in popularity and location in Ireland as people, drawn together by shared purposes and/or careets, collaborate in furthering their educational goals through their own resources. This development represents an expansion of self-directed learning at group level.

6. Learning Resource Centres

Following the initiative taken by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, several Resource Centres for the unemployed with an integral educational dimension are in operation around the country. A feature in the current issue of The Adult Learner discusses this development. The notion of Resource Centres is gathering momentum and recent initiatives aimed at the adult population include Development Education, Hisrotical Studies, Irish, Adult Education, Media, Religious Studies and Poverty Resource Projects.

Libraries qua learning resource Centres, incorporating print, audio and visual learning materials along with their utilization for exhibitions and lectures, as well as extending their services to the house-bound and hospitalized people are a most welcome and exemplary example of the outreach approach in operation. Our museums and galleries have also become more active in promoting their educational role and, of course, serve as excellent resource Centres.

7. Forging Links with Educational Institutions Outside the State

This is occuring in two modes:

(i) On behalf of participants, Institutions are linking into educational institutions such as the arrangement between the Department of Justice and the Open University enabling prisoners to take OU Courses.

(ii) Educational institutions, for example, a number of Vocational Education Committees and third level Colleges are entering into collaborative arrangements with third level institutes in Northern Ireland and England with a view to providing a range of programmes up to and including degree level for participants in their administrative areas.

This development underlines the notion that the adult education participant, in pursuit of appropriate programmes, does not recognise boundaries or the territorial imperatives of indigenous educational institutions. Institutional collaboration of a trans-national nature in the interest of making educational provision for the Irish participant is destined to feature with greater prominence in the future.

8. Distance Education

Distance education provision in Ireland, via a multi-media methodology/ materials has arrived and is making an impact through a variety of educational institutions and organisations. The report due from the National Distance Education Council before the end of 1988 is expected to signpost major developments in this category over the next few years. The educational uses of satellite television are also in sight and we can anticipate an increasing application of this global resource within the next decade.

9. Continuing Professional Education

Drucker describes continuing professional education among already highly educated and achieving adults in the United States as the "growth industry" there in the last twenty years. A similar pattern is establishing itself in Ireland particularly via third level institutions and professional organisations. Based on a recent review of continuing professional education in Ireland I believe it is beginning to move into a major growth path here also. Should the third level institutions, which are already responding to this market, be unable for one reason or another to further respond, we can safely assume a strong competitive entry into the field from the commercial educational sector. Course costs provide no deterrent in this field and the profit may be substantial.

10. The Forgotten People

Particularly at the present time, the "forgotten people" are increasing in number, for example — the poor, and the unemployed. Their deprivation, suffering and alienation are mounting. One of the major roles of the adult education movement in Ireland today is to ensure that the interests of these deprived groups are kept in the public eye and on the political consciousness. In a related context, the continuing threat to further eroding the fragile base of literacy schemes and appropriate back-up services is ominous. A service which was painstakingly built up initially in the 1970s through voluntary effort, and later by means of voluntary-statutory collaboration, must not be allowed to be dismantled in such an unwarranted and cavalier manner.

11. Investment in the Future

No firm predictions are forthcoming vis-a-vis restoring the previous levels of government finances to adult education. Will those levels ever be achieved again? Hopefully yes, plus additional investment. Meanwhile, in the present fiscal climate if one were to identify a single target of investment, I would strongly advocate investment in human resources, that is the adult education practitioners; organisers, teachers, tutors, facilitators. Not alone would such a strategy help boost morale, it would also, I submit, enable the practitioner to face an increasingly diversifying professional role with renewed vigour and determination.

The case for the future development of adult education should be made now, and this case will be as successful as the concerted effort and planning engendered in the process. Familiarity with our political system and structures suggests that, unless some unforeseen transformation occurs, adult education in all probability will continue as a so-called "marginal activity" in terms of the education system and government investment. It is the political task of adult educators and participants to transform the status quo in this regard. The benefits would be felt at individual, community, organisational and institutional levels while our personal, social, cultural, economic and political well-being and vitality would be greatly enriched and renewed in the process. No mean agenda, no little achievement!

Micheál W. Ó Murchú has lectured and published extensively on adult education in Ireland and abroad. He was Director of Aontas, the National Association of Adult Education (1974-1982) and currently he is Head of the Education Division, Bord na Gaeilge. As an invited representative he participated in the international Salzburg Seminar on "Continuing Education", and in the Finland Seminar on "Current Priorities and Future Prospects in Adult Education in East and West, South and North" earlier this year.

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FÁS COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE PROGRAMME

EILIS MURRAY

As a nation we are becoming more aware of our individual responsibility and capacity to stimulate job creation activities in our communities. Such activity is being undertaken by a number of groups throughout the country, as they begin to recognise their resources and ability to contribute to their local economic situation. Such groups have embarked on a 'self help' approach to alleviate local unemployment problems. To complement such initiatives there is an increase in the provision of education, training and support to enable groups realise their objectives and develop worthwhile employment projects.

In the early stages, the Community Enterprise Programme of F.Á.S. sought to provide support to community groups through a system of development grants. Experience however, quickly provided a base for the view that the successful development of community enterprise is largely dependent on investment made in the total development of the group. The initiation and development of any business venture is not an easy task. This task takes on new difficulties when a group of people try to work together to achieve this objective. Many groups undertaking Community Enterprise activity need to learn how to work together and often lack the more practical business skills and experience. Indeed, it is fair to say that a number of groups have experienced severe difficulties, some leading to the total abandonment of their particular project because of the lack of group development activity and the inability to identify the need for practical skills.

Community Education Network

In response to this identification of the needs of groups involved in such enterprise activities, the Community Enterprise Programme of F.Á.S. developed a Community Education Network. Although this comprises of a number of key resources, the core has been the design and production of six support and development modules. These have been designed to match the various stages of development in the process of establishing a community owned and managed business enterprise. The objective is to enable the gradual development of business and managerial skills in such community groups. They are also linked to the financial supports now available from the Community Enterprise Programme.

The focus of the six modules can be summarised as follows:

Module A — Exploration — designed for groups who are interested in the idea of Community Enterprise but have devised no concrete plans or proposals.

Module B — Organisation Development — designed to enable groups to develop an organisational base, to link into the community and to further explore and develop their understanding of community enterprise.

Module C — Ideas Generation — designed to encourage the development of ideas for business and to begin assessing their feasibility. This module is linked to the business planning grant.

Module D — Enterprise Development — designed to help with the detailed planning and establishment of an enterprise, the development of a business plan, the management of staff and the development of key skills. This module is linked to the Enterprise Worker Grant.

Module E — Trading — designed to support established groups during the first year of trading. This is linked to the Commercial Aid Grant.

Module F — Consolidation — designed to provide a consultancy option to meet particular needs during the second year of trading.

The content of each module is broken down into easily absorbed units. In doing this they provide for the maximum flexibility, as a group may undertake to participate unit by unit or alternatively, for example, may work through the module by taking two units at a time. The key point is that the pace of delivery is largely dictated by the group and this is facilitated by the manner in which the content of the modules is compiled.

As an Adult Education Resource pack, the modules are targetted for the management groups of community owned businesses, whether they are established or whether they are still at the early stages of development. Again flexibility is the key in that they also provide the scope for the participation of employees of these community businesses. There is no set minimum number of people required to be in a group before they can participate. Again this is in recognition of the fact that every group is different and will have their individual make-up. One of the more important aspects in respect of participation is that the delivery of the modules takes place in the locality of the group.

Practical Approach

The material is very much action led with the focus lying very firmly on practical activity as opposed to a theoretical approach. This gives recognition to the local knowledge of the group, their skills and experience. Groups are encouraged to draw on this local knowledge by drawing in expertise from their own community in the form of business people — accountants, solicitors etc. A major emphasis is placed on the group undertaking a planning process and making their own decisions. It is very clearly an experiential learning approach with the end objective being one of making external interventions redundant.

The Community Enterprise Programme modules are a resource which have been welcomed by a number of groups to date and should always be seen as a resource as opposed to a means to an end. No doubt as we begin to evaluate their effectiveness more fully, their true level of flexibility will become evident as the process is further developed. They are a welcome addition to the supports available for groups entering the job creation area.

Eilis Murray is an Enterprise Development Officer with FÁS. Based in Co. Kildare, she is actively involved in the Community Enterprise Programme.

BOOK REVIEWS

Adult Education and the Unemployed.

Published by the Workers' Educational Association,
South East Scotland District,
Riddle's Court,
322 Lawnmarket,
Edinburgh EH1 2PG.

With technology improving all the time and jobs becoming scarcer, Adult Education classes for the unemployed are to be welcomed, in order to give meaning and a sense of purpose to people who find themselves on the scrap heap, usually through no fault of their own.

It is interesting to note that of the 31 people interviewed, there were 16 women and 15 men, so giving a balanced assesment of the views of both sexes.

The greatest demand was for help with writing, reading, spelling, grammar and punctuation, no doubt feeling that these particular skills would enhance chances of finding employment. Some stated that their reason for attending classes was to mix with people in the same situation as themselves, while others were hoping to find solutions to their personal problems. Others, still, came for the pleasure of learning and to gain confidence. Some admitted to feeling nervous about coming to the classes in the first place.

Twelve of the interviewees felt consistently depressed about being unemployed. Others complained that they had no friends or felt that their present situation could be attributed to a lack of education. Some blamed the Thatcher government and most of them referred to financial problems, rent arrears and electricity arrears. One mentioned an unemployed son who was in trouble with the law and one woman cried because she could not afford new clothes. One makes the comment, "It amuses me when people who have plenty of money say that money doesn't matter".

The book goes on to give individual case histories of the 31 people interviewed and it is worth noting that many of those whose marriages had broken had come themselves from broken marriages. Many complained about their unhappy childhood and their unhappiness at school when they felt at odds with their teachers. They felt that they had lost the respect of their families and referred to feeling frustrated, apathetic, powerless, isolated and generally under severe emotional strain.

The book goes on to give details of the various reactions from the different workshops and courses of study dealing with such topics as Politics and English Writers. All in all, it seems a good, positive approach and it gives a good insight into the plight of the unemployed. It is well worth reading for employed and unemployed alike. There is a special reduction in price for the unemployed.

Finally, as an afterthought, there is mention of those who felt bad because there were ten people chasing the one vacancy, whereas, here in Dublin, there is an average of about forty to fifty people after the same job.

Brendan McMahon.

Brendan is married with three small children and has been unemployed for a number of years. He is involved with Coolock Adult Learning, as well as being the voluntary facilitator for the Writing Group in Colaiste Dhulaigh.

Never Too Late.
(Published by National Adult Literacy Agency)

"This is the first time that people with difficulties in reading and writing have got together from all over the country to write a magazine. We see this as important, because unless we as adult learners become actively involved as a group in our own self learning, the question of adult literacy will keep being pushed under the carpet".

That publishing is an important part of adult literacy work has long been recognised and here NALA is fulfilling a very necessary role in encouraging and making possible the publication of the written work of adult learners. **Never Too Late** may be a slim volume in appearance but the achievement that it represents is massive.

This collection includes the poems, short stories and essays from adult learners who are involved in literacy schemes in different parts of the country. This, then, is the first such production which can be described as national and Pauline Hensey and her team are to be congratulated on what is a most significant contribution to the promotion of good adult literacy practice.

I was fortunate to be present on the day when this booklet was launced at the Dublin Institute of Adult Education. As contributors stood and read their pieces, there was first of all the realisation that this was the culmination of years of suffering, hard work and persistent endeavour. It was a day that will be remembered by all present. There was a definite sense of achievement; it was a day of emotion and it was a day of celebration. This book stands as a testament to courage and human dignity. There was also the realisation that those of us who, from the beginning, are blessed with the gift of reading and writing always take it so much for granted.

Another important aspect of this publication is that the team of learners was involved in its production right from the beginning. They collected and collated and edited and presented. What a shame and a scandal if the state grant to NALA is not restored at least to the level that ensures the continuation of the work so well begun.

Listen to what Gerry from Blanchardstown has to say: *"I am looking forward to the future when I will be able to read and fill in forms without embarrassment and read the newspaper just like everyone else".*

Liam Bane.

Live and Learn

A Report published by AONTAS of a study of Daytime Adult Education classes in Coolock, Dublin. Researched and compiled by Maureen Bassett and Tom Inglis.

The areas covered in the Report are:

— Living in Coolock.
— Development of Daytime Adult Education in Coolock.
— Profile of the adult learners.
— The experience of returning to education.
— The impact and benefits of returning to education.
— Method of survey.

The Report makes extremely interesting reading and is recommended heartily to all those interested in or involved in the promotion of adult education. It looks at the Coolock area describes what it is like to live there. The move to Coolock for people was traumatic and many felt isolated and lonely as a result. *"Coolock is like many suburban areas of Dublin which experienced rapid growth in short periods of time. It still has a relatively young population which, in comparison with the national average, is under-educated and under-employed"*. (p. 14).

People were determined to improve the quality of their lives. They looked at many areas, including daytime adult education. A group of women came together and, with the co-operation and support of Kathleen Forde, Adult Education Organiser, they offered a programme of daytime classes. The Report looks at the developent of this programme and it profiles those who became involved. It also looks at the type of courses which were run.

This is not just another one of these research projects that seem to appear on a regular basis. There is something about this Report that makes compelling reading. The openness and honesty with which the women interviewed reveal their different experiences of returning to education and the benefits which they have gained is most impressive.

This is a valuable Report and a review like this cannot do it justice. It must be read from cover to cover.

Breda Lymer.
Mervue Adult Training and Education,
Galway.

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