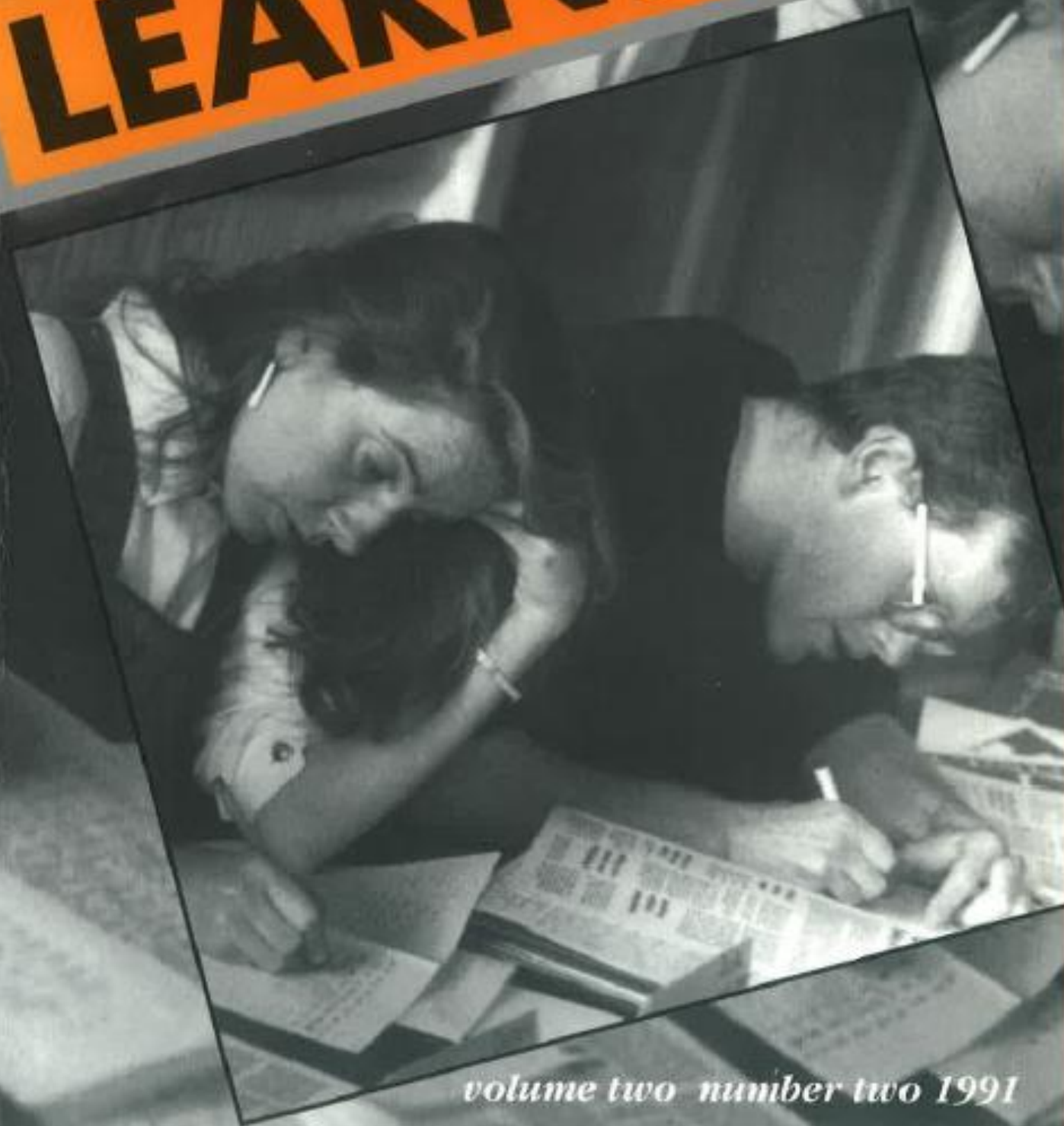


Adult & Community Education in Ireland

# THE ADULT LEARNER



*volume two number two 1991*

# Contents

<i>Adult Education and the Issue of Equality</i> .....	4
Kathleen Lynch	
<i>The Quiet Revolution</i> .....	10
Edel Teague	
<i>The Changing Landscape of Adult Education</i> .....	15
Cathleen O'Neill	
<i>To Educate is to Liberate</i> .....	17
Kathleen Maher	
<i>Adult Education and the New Act: Possible Structures</i> .....	19
Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh	
<i>Adult Education and the Unemployed</i> .....	25
Tom Collins	
<i>Eating Out at the Agencies</i> .....	28
Ad Hock (Liam Bittner)	
<i>CATS and Community Education: A Mechanism for Collaboration?</i> .....	30
Eilish Rooney	
<i>The Catholic Voluntary School and Community Education</i> .....	34
Teresa McCormack	
<i>Can Networking Work?</i> .....	39
Deirdre Rice	
<i>Adult Education and Travellers</i> .....	42
Fran McVeigh	
<i>Book Reviews</i> .....	44
<i>Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning</i>	
<i>The Women's Education Project - Northern Ireland: An Evaluation</i>	
<i>Community Work in Ireland: Trends in the 80's - Options for the 90's</i>	
<i>Writer to Writer - Studies in Community Education</i>	
<i>Adult Education as a Vocation: A Critical Role for the Adult Educator</i>	
<i>Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work - NALA 1991</i>	
<i>Adult Education, Community Development and Older People: Releasing the Resource</i>	
<i>Arts Action: A study of a community development training course in which arts activities were used as tools of learning</i>	

# The Centre for Adult and Community Education

## ST. PATRICK'S COLLEGE, MAYNOOTH

offers courses in the following areas:

*N.U.I. Undergraduate Diploma in  
Adult and Continuing Education*

\* \* \*

*N.U.I. Postgraduate Diploma in  
Adult and Community Education*

### Extra Mural Courses

- Group Facilitation Skills
  - Foundation in Counselling Skills
  - Community Development and Enterprise
  - Literacy with Young People
- and many more*

The courses are located throughout the Leinster area.

Enquiries: 01-628 5222 ext. 442, 430

# Editorial Comment

Welcome to the Adult Learner, Mark Two. This new journal is published jointly by the Adult Education Organisers Association and AONTAS, the National Association of Adult Education. The editorial board has been expanded to include representatives of both organisations and also representatives from the University of Ulster and the Women's Education Project, Belfast. This latest edition, then, can justifiably claim to be a genuine all Ireland production.

The new and experimental Adult Learner is obviously bigger and, hopefully, better. It is interesting to observe the similarities that exist for those involved in adult education in the North of Ireland. We here in the South tend to think of ourselves as the poor relations, certainly in the field of adult and community education. It is true that in terms of resources and finance we do lag far behind our Northern colleagues but, nevertheless, when the two situations are compared, it seems to me that there is more that unites than divides us. Adult education in the North, too, is undergoing change, not all of it for the better, and a close reading of the articles we have included here demonstrates that so many of the fundamental issues and problems to be addressed are very familiar indeed.

An Education Act is in the air and, although in the air it may well remain, we cannot ignore what seems to be a unique opportunity for the great breakthrough for adult education here. Those who work in this particular field are of two varieties, eternally optimistic or totally mad, and the standard example of the species is usually a mixture of both. Is it too much to hope that, at the very least, adult learning will now be acknowledged as a legitimate form of education and that official recognition will, in turn, lead to proper funding and a policy framework that will facilitate the development of a comprehensive adult education service? We have some suggestions to offer as to the shape that an Education Act should take and our contributions range from the kind of philosophy that should underpin the Act to the pragmatic considerations. In the case of the latter, we note that vested interests have been rather coy in discussions that might include taboo words like structures. At this point, we would prefer something more substantial than, say, the statement that structures should be appropriate.

Here's hoping that you find our new style Adult Learner interesting and enjoyable.

*Liam Bane, Editor*

College of Commerce,  
Main St.,  
Dundrum,  
Dublin 14

## Editorial Board

Emer Dolphin    *AONTAS Executive Committee*  
Tony Downes    *A.E.O. Co. Dublin*  
Kathleen Forde    *A.E.O. City of Dublin*  
Tom Inglis    *Director, AONTAS*  
Dick MacGabhann    *University of Ulster*  
Joanna McMinn    *Women's Education Project, Belfast*  
Michael Riordan    *A.E.O. Dun Laoghaire*

# Adult Education and the Issue of Equality

Kathleen Lynch

*Kathleen Lynch is Co-ordinator of the Equality Studies Centre at University College Dublin and author of The Hidden Curriculum.*

The Report of the Commission on Adult Education in 1983 defined adult education as follows:

Adult education includes all systematic learning by adults which contributes to their development as individuals and as members of the community and of society apart from full-time instruction received by persons as part of their uninterrupted initial education and training. It may be formal education which takes place in institutions e.g. training centres, schools, colleges, institutes and universities; or non-formal education, which is any other systematic form of learning, including self-directed learning (p. 9).

Given the all-encompassing nature of this definition, it is clear that adult education refers to any form of education which takes place after adults have completed their uninterrupted full-time education. As numerous research reports over the last ten years have shown, those who are most likely to terminate their full-time education at an early age are the children of parents who are unemployed, working class or small farmers (Clancy, 1982, 1988; Breen, 1984; Whelan and Whelan, 1984). In conjunction with this, Greaney and Kellaghan's (1984) and Clancy's (1982, 1988) research shows that while girls may outperform boys at the intermediate and leaving certificate levels, they are less likely than boys to enter higher education and when they do enter higher education, they are less likely to go on to pursue prestigious postgraduate courses (Clancy, 1989). Those who benefit most from the formal education system therefore, are the middle class (especially those whose parents are professionals, large proprietors or well paid salaried employees). Furthermore, when one examines the structure of opportunity in the paid labour market, it becomes quite clear that it is the male middle classes who ultimately become the primary beneficiaries of formal education at third level; they occupy the most lucrative and influential positions in the paid sectors of the economy (Blackwell, 1989). What are the implications of all these factors for adult education? First, it means that the target audience for adult education is most likely to be those whom the formal education sector has failed or ... has failed to serve. It means, in effect, that the issue of adult education can not be separated from that of equality in social class, gender, and indeed ethnic, terms. Adult education is, for the most part, about second, third and 'other' chance education.

In their report on Priority Areas in Adult Education, AONTAS have already identified some of the groups who are in need of that 'other educational chance'; these include those who lack basic skills such as reading and writing; those who are unemployed and unwaged; women; and those living in rural areas (1986, p. 29). When we look at this list a little more closely we can see it contains overlaps, and perhaps categorisations which are too global. A very large proportion of those who are unwaged are also women; for example, of the 682,100 persons who were classified as being on "home duties" in 1989, 99.2% were women (Labour Force Survey, 1989, Table 6). In addition, it is quite obvious that not all of those who are women,

are women in need of adult education. Neither is it true that all rural dwellers need adult education services. Privilege and income differentials are as evident in rural areas as they are elsewhere.

Bearing these considerations in mind, one can take a closer look at those who are most in need of another chance in education. In doing this, one is not suggesting that many middle class, and indeed upper middle class, men and women might not benefit greatly from further education. I have little doubt but that they would. However, because of their greater access to financial resources, they can, to a large extent, gain access to whatever education they need. They may need education, but they do not need second chance education in the same way that certain other groups do.

I would like to tentatively suggest therefore, that there are at least three groups who are in need of a second chance in education. Their need arises from a combination of social class, gender and minority considerations. Because each group experiences distinct forms of inequality, their interest in, and requirements of, adult education are bound to be quite different.

## **Social Class Inequalities and Adult Education**

The first group whose position I would like to comment on are those who are looking to adult education to overcome the inequalities they have experienced because of their social class. This group includes, among others, a very large proportion of those who are unemployed (as there is ample evidence from the annual survey of School Leavers by the Department of Labour that there is a close correlation between employment status and level of education, which in turn is linked to social class) and many of those who lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. It is obvious straight away, therefore, that those whose need for adult education may arise due to social class inequalities are by no means identical in their requirements. This being true, it is also true that the adult education needs of those who were so-called 'educational failures', or who left the education system before they received a credential and/or who were awarded a low grade credential, do bear some resemblance to each other; they have all been deprived of that educational currency which is required for both entry and mobility within the paid labour market.

Irish society is one in which educational credentials are a precondition for occupational success; this is true for everyone with the exception of that small minority who inherit sufficient material capital to survive. Many of those who are without educational credentials see adult education as a mechanism for acquiring them. This is why I would suggest that those who are unemployed, in particular, may see little point in attending a course which has no obvious labour market currency at the end of it. When we bear in mind that 77.5% of those who are unemployed are men (Labour Force Survey, 1989) one then begins to realise that male detachment from adult education may have its roots, not in some kind of inherent 'male' indifference to education, but rather in the irrelevance of many adult education options (including those offered by FÁS) to people who are basically looking for a credential which has real labour market currency. To offset social class inequalities in education therefore, we must begin by offering working class and unemployed people a realistic chance to obtain valued education credentials.

The view of adult education presented here may appear very far from the traditional liberal view of 'education for its own sake'; I make no apology for this, as I think there is insufficient recognition in educational circles of the simple labour market reality that educational

credentials are real forms of capital (they represent forms of credentialised cultural capital, Bourdieu, 1986) and without them one is seriously handicapped in terms of life opportunities. While this is not true in all societies, of course, it is certainly true in Irish society where the limited indigenous industrial and agricultural capital available has failed to generate much wealth and opportunity.

'Education for its own sake' therefore is a real option only for those who control sufficient cultural and/or economic capital to have the means to a comfortable existence. In planning for adult education, then, one must provide access to recognised credentials for those who need them. This is, I think, a minimum requirement in offsetting the inequalities arising from social class. Offering people certificates, diplomas etc., often based on short courses, which are not formally recognised by established accrediting bodies (indeed they are often not recognised by the very authorities which provide them) seems to me to be an insult to the persons who take the courses and a waste of limited resources.

## Gender Inequalities and Adult Education

And what of women? Working class women inevitably experience very similar adult education needs to their male working class colleagues. However, apart from this, they will have their own educational needs both as women and as working class women. Middle class women will also have adult education needs which are both specific to their social class and which are apart from it. Overall however, women seem to come to adult education with three types of agendas.

First, there are those who come to improve their skills as parent educators; these are people who may lack the literacy and numeracy skills they need to help their children with their homework, or they may be people who simply want to be better informed about what their children are doing in school. A second, and very important agenda for women is the one identified by Inglis and Bassett (1988, pp. 36-38) in their study *Live and Learn*; many of the women in their study were returning to "school" because they felt trapped and alone at home and without public respect. They were returning to education to establish an identity of their own apart from husbands and children. They wanted to be publicly respected and appreciated and they looked to adult education to achieve this. A third agenda among women is one also identified in the *Live and Learn* study; this is the agenda of women who return to adult education as a means of returning to, and/or of establishing, a career. These are women who have passed the 'confidence barrier', which seems to be built up among women who have been full-time homeworkers for years. They are the ones who are not afraid to seek paid employment even though they know the odds are stacked against them.

Women's approach to adult education is therefore just as instrumentalist as that of men although it takes different forms at times. Most of them see it as a mechanism for gaining power and control over their own existence. And for many that means, in the long if not the short term, getting access to paid employment.

I would like to make it clear that I am not suggesting here that work at home, in particular, caring work, is not valuable or not deserving of good payment. Quite the contrary, I believe it is essential to society and that it should therefore be highly paid. However, as long as it is unpaid, the women and men who engage in it will tend to devalue it as they can see that it is not rewarded in any substantive way in society at large. This means that when they are free to leave it, very often they will; and adult education in its various forms will be seen by many as a route out of unpaid housework and caring into a 'paid job'.

## Minorities and Inequality in Education

Apart from those who experience educational inequality arising out of their social class or gender, there are also those who are alienated from the system because their minority status is either ignored or insufficiently addressed.

Two very obvious groups who are affected in this way are persons with disabilities and Travellers. In the case of the former, very little account is taken of those who have major disabilities in the mainstream system. The attitude often is, 'if they do not fit in to the system the way it is then they should not be there!' This is evident in practices as diverse as failing to put in ramps in schools and Colleges, having no support services for those who fall behind, or failing to use the sign language of the deaf as a medium of communication with those for whom it is their first language. For Travellers the problem is one of failing to recognise their unique culture and nomadic life style; the result is that none of their stories, their images or history appear as subject matter in schools.

In what is written about adult education in Ireland, little reference is made to the interests of Minorities. Consequently, it is very difficult to establish what their adult education needs are. Because Minorities includes groups which are both strongly stratified within themselves (which people with disabilities, and others, such as the elderly, clearly are) and which are very different to each other, meeting their educational needs is by no means simple. If Adult Education is there to promote equality by giving a 'second chance' however, it must accommodate the needs of Minorities whose special needs may not be adequately addressed in the mainstream system.

## Conclusion

Much of what has been written here may seem to imply that adult education is all about fitting people out with educational credentials. Clearly it is not. Adult Education is also about empowerment and resistance, especially among those who have been dis-empowered by education at a previous time in their lives. The empowerment of oppressed groups however, is not something that is 'done by adult educators to those who are oppressed' (Zacharakis-Jutz, 1988, pp. 41-47). Rather, it is a more subtle, and indeed slower, process whereby people come to an awareness of their own oppression and develop the ability to do something about it. The role which adult education plays in this very specific kind of empowerment is difficult to quantify but is nonetheless very real. As Stanage (1986) points out, however, the realisation of empowerment is conditional on having an appropriate political context for it to happen. Many oppressed people may benefit from empowerment at a personal level, but may not be in a position to act on that empowerment in any broader political sense in particular contexts. All that any education process can do is to give people the opportunity to develop a critical capacity which generates empowerment. Educationalists cannot, and indeed should not, control the use to which the people go on to make of this capacity.

Some adult educationalists seem to believe that empowerment and the development of a critical capacity are impossible to achieve in formal systems of education especially when credentials are being offered. While I have little doubt that this is frequently the case, I do not accept that the giving of credentials precludes the development of critical thought. The willingness and ability to develop and encourage critical thought is not the prerogative of any level or type of education. It can occur in second-level schools, in Universities, in Regional Technical Colleges or in Adult Education programmes, or it may not. Also, it can occur in any given subject area or it may not. As Freire clearly states in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972)

the difference between 'education for domestication and education for freedom' is one of approach rather than one of subject matter. The pedagogical approach adopted in any subject or at any level can be one which encourages reflection and critical thought or it can simply be one of banking. As there are many different forms of human intelligence so there are many different forms of knowledge and understanding (Gardner, 1983). A critical orientation is not, however, the prerogative of any one of these in particular.

I do not see as great a conflict, therefore, between the development of a critical capacity and the empowerment of people on the one hand, and the giving of credentials on the other, as some seem to believe exists. What I do fully recognise, however, is that when the State controls the content or subject matter of formal education at first or second level, as it does to a large degree in Ireland at present, then the scope for the development of critical thought in certain fields of education is limited by the powerful interests operating in the State (Lynch, 1989, pp. 118-137). This is a problem arising out of the nature of control in education; it is not a function of the subjects in or of themselves.

Should people entering Adult Education want credentials which they have been deprived of, for whatever reason, earlier in life, I think they have the right to them. To say this is not to suggest that they should be offered an education which is identical to school children. They should not. As a number of adult educationalists have already suggested, there is need to develop an alternative system of credentialisation for adults. Possibilities would include a Leaving Certificate programme which took account of adults' existing knowledge and expertise; and, for those who are interested in what higher education has to offer, there could be a series of College Certificates introduced which were modular in form (so that they could be done on a part-time basis over a few years if desired) and which would qualify people for entry to a variety of types and levels of degrees and diplomas. Whatever system of accreditation is devised, it is important that clear systems of transfer from one level of education to the next be established. The system must be flexible and imaginative and recognised by all the established authorities however, otherwise it will become yet another barrier to equality.

Much of what is involved here is an act of will as much as an economic investment. On the will side, what is needed is a more open and flexible approach on the side of the Department of Education and the institutions of higher education. On the financial side what is required is substantial State investment in all types of adult education, including investment in alternative adult education programmes for those who wish to be re-integrated into the mainstream system. Indeed investment in this kind of education is quite likely to bring significant economic and social returns, if this is the measure of things. While I do not hold the view that economic benefits should be the determinant of education policy, it does seem strange that so little money is invested in the education of adults whose futures are so likely to be in Ireland.

## References

- AONTAS, 1986, Priority Areas in Adult Education, Dublin: AONTAS.
- Blackwell, J., 1989, Women in the Labour Force, Dublin: Employment Equality Agency.
- Bourdieu, P., 1986, "The Forms of Capital" in J.G. Richardson (ed.), Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education, New York: Greenwood Press.
- Breen, R., 1984, Education and the Labour Market, Dublin: ESRI, Paper no. 119.
- Central Statistics Office, 1990, Labour Force Survey, 1989, Dublin: Government Publications.

- Clancy, P., 1982, Participation in Higher Education: A National Survey, Dublin: Higher Education Authority.
- Clancy, P., 1988, Who Goes to College, Dublin: Higher Education Authority.
- Clancy, P., 1989, "Gender Differences in Student Participation at Third Level", in C. Hussey (ed.), Equal Opportunities for Women in Higher Education, Dublin: UCD.
- Commission on Adult Education, 1983, Lifelong Learning: Report of the Commission on Adult Education, Dublin: Government Publications.
- Freire, P., 1972, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, New York: Penguin.
- Gardner, H., 1983, Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligence, New York: Paladin.
- Greaney, V., and Kellaghan, T., 1984, Equality of Opportunity in Irish Schools, Dublin: The Educational Co.
- Inglis, T., and Bassett, M., 1988, Live and Learn: Daytime Adult Education in Coolock, Dublin: AONTAS.
- Lynch, K., 1989, The Hidden Curriculum: Reproduction in Education, an Appraisal, London: Falmer Press.
- Stange, S.M., 1986, "Unrestraining Liberty: Adult Education and the Empowerment of Persons" Adult Education Quarterly, Vol. 36, pp. 123-129.
- Whelan, C., and Whelan, B., Social Mobility in the Republic of Ireland: A Comparative Perspective, Dublin: ESRI, Paper no. 116.
- Zacharakis-Jutz, J., 1988, "Post-Freirean Adult Education: A Question of Empowerment and Power" Adult Education Quarterly, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 41-47.

## FROM THE PERSONAL TO THE POLITICAL

### *A Women's Educational Workbook*

## AONTAS Women's Education Group

*Please contact*  
**AONTAS**  
22 Earlsfort Terrace  
Dublin 2  
Tel. 754121, 754122

*Groups with low incomes and limited resources can avail of a reduced membership fee of £25.00 per annum. Individual membership is £12.00 per annum.*



# The Quiet Revolution

## *The Changing Nature of Adult Education and Training in Northern Ireland and Its Impact on Community Education*

*Edel Teague*

*Edel Teague is the Local Education Development Worker with the Women's Education Project. She has been involved in introducing education into local women's groups since 1985.*

**T**he 1990s in Northern Ireland will see what can best be described as a 'quiet revolution'(1) in the field of Further Education which will have an impact on education and training providers of all types. This change in Further Education is being forced by social, economic and political factors, from demographic change to the imminent arrival of the Single European Market. The vocational education and training field is affected most, with training providers, including community educationalists, grappling not only with new curriculum content but also with new individualised learning possibilities, new client groups, new patterns of attendance and, most significantly, new assessment methods.

Not surprisingly the impetus for large scale change in the field of vocational education emanates from central government, reflecting primarily its concern to ensure the supply of competent qualified workers into the labour market. Presently, while the number of teenagers becoming available for work is decreasing, industry is finding it difficult to recruit adequately trained workers even though unemployment rates are at their highest. However, regardless of industry's needs, many have criticised the education system, particularly in its failure to address the educational needs of working class students. Britain's record in education and training compares unfavourably with other EEC countries. Especially now with 1992 approaching there has been a growing pressure to create change leading the government to respond with the 'quiet revolution'. But what is this and what effect will it have on educational institutions, especially the more radical community education providers?

### **The National Council of Vocational Qualifications**

The establishment of the National Council of Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) in 1986 has been the lynch-pin in developments within the vocational education and training field. In 1986 NCVQ was charged with implementing a system of vocational qualifications to achieve the objectives of comprehensibility, relevance, credibility, accessibility and cost effectiveness. All vocational qualifications were to be brought together under a new national framework, the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) which embraces all levels of vocational training including professional ones. Each NVQ is a grouping of relevant standards called competencies which include not only the skill level required in the working environment but also the underpinning knowledge and understanding(2). Since the formation of NCVQ, Industry led bodies have been drawing up national competencies required by workers in their particular fields. Awarding bodies such as City and Guilds and RSA have been developing appropriate qualifications in response to industry's competencies and NCVQ has been establishing and enforcing the national framework. This process is ongoing presently with each vocational sector completing the establishment of competencies at different speeds; hairdressing, for example, is ahead in the field, whilst social and health care are substantially behind.

Several features of this new system exemplify the way in which the emerging vocational education and training system is different from that which it is replacing. The key tenet of the new system is competency based learning, which is independent of any particular mode, duration or location of training. A shift is occurring from learning inputs to outcomes — competencies demonstrated under working or work-like conditions. Vocational education and training will now be geared exclusively towards competencies with tutors no longer training for 'assumed needs'(3). Unlike the traditional system of accreditation, where students secure qualifications through participation in a learning programme only, under NVQ students may already be competent in certain fields through work or voluntary experience. In the future, education institutions may be required only to assess and accredit these competencies through student's demonstration of ability. For the first time adults will be able to receive qualifications based on learning they acquired elsewhere in their lives. According to Butler, (4) mature women will be able to have their domestic experience accredited.

### Assessment

However, it is in comparing traditional and modern assessment methods that the depth and breath of this 'quiet revolution' can be fully acknowledged. The assessment processes traditionally used in education and training served to highlight the ways in which the system was and still is flawed. Traditional assessment tends to be formal, norm referenced which means only a predetermined number pass and summative, i.e., held at the end of a period of study in an educational institution only. The essence of this system is that some are selected to pass and others to fail. It has instilled in many a deep rooted lack of confidence and encouraged in others a negative attitude to education itself. Traditional assessment processes often even act as a demotivator. In Northern Ireland a substantial number of people leave school without ever participating in an exam due to their intimidating nature. As Rowntree argues:

"The line between coercion and encouragement in assessment is hard to draw." (5)

Instead of these traditional methods there are a range of what can loosely be called modern assessment methods being advocated, not only by NVCQ, but also by critics of the education system such as community educationalists. These new methods of assessment tend to be informal, that is carried out in a work like environment. They are criterion referenced, which means performance is judged according to an exact criterion or standard. A third feature is that they tend to be formative which means assessment is carried on throughout the training programme. It is expected that these changes will bring to eradicate the concept of failure. Students will either be competent or not, with the ability to build up their competencies in their own time. The possibility exists now that all students on a programme can be awarded qualifications.

The range of assessment methods open to all educational institutions is widening to such an extent that methods previously used only in informal teaching will become central to the new assessment processes. These include performance of skill, log book keeping, video recording, role play and a range of other imaginative assessment processes. Tutors and students will be drawn into closer relationships as the tutor, now assessor as well, will be more in-touch with each students' development. Thus in assessment terms, NCVQ is certainly initiating changes which may prove advantageous to students normally excluded from traditional education systems by threatening and difficult assessment processes.

## Impact of NCVQ

Adult educational and training providers have long been expected to change in the light of each new government policy, particularly new policies issued in response to unemployment. Some now see the introduction of NVQs as the latest whim of government likely to fade into insignificance in a few years. However, the change required by NVQs cannot simply be added onto the curriculum. Rather the whole system will have to be overhauled. This overhaul will have most effect in increasing the number and nature of bodies able to provide and certificate education and training, changing the role of lecturers and widening the range of students able to participate in vocational education and training.

The most dramatic change occurring in the provision of certificated vocational education and training is that it will no longer be in the hands of Further Education Institutions. It has in effect been brought into the 'marketplace', the fate of many other state services under the Thatcher government. The national framework defined by NCVQ allows for various groupings of managing agents to provide assessment and training. Such groupings have already been formed and include what used to be YTS providers, companies with well developed training programmes and other state and voluntary groupings, who are free to make agreements with awarding bodies to become registered centres for the delivery of NVQs. Recently in Belfast one such managing agent who had previously sent youth trainees to a College of Further Education withdrew all their students in favour of providing training themselves. As the number of teenagers drop particularly in Great Britain, workplaces will be offering work and training to young people who do not feel it necessary to enter F.E. colleges at all. The most serious implication for F.E. Colleges is that they must become more cost effective, a worrying thought in the light of F.E.'s salary and capital costs.

## Role of Lecturer

The changing role of the lecturer is also a concern to many, particularly those educators trained and practised in the traditional classroom situation. As well as being independent of teaching methods, NVQs must be offered by providers in a way that maximises access. Students will no longer be expected to remain in programmes if they are competent in particular skills. Entry can be made at any time of the year rather than being tied to September. The student can take as long as is necessary to complete the competence. Finally, assessment will be by demand of the student, not the institution. The classroom will be changing into a workshop with open access to students requiring advice, training or assessment. Inevitably, the lecturer's role will change to one of designer of individual learner programmes, assessor of student performance and/or adviser to students about learning possibilities.

Changes initiated by NCVQ are expected not only to increase the number of students participating in vocational education but also widen the range of those able to do so. This is to be achieved firstly by an anti-discrimination element of NCVQs framework which forbids discrimination on the grounds of gender, religion, ability, race and special needs(6). Secondly, more flexible programmes will allow adults to remain in work or at home completing programmes through open learning; have their previously unrecognised skills accredited and be assessed in ways which are less intimidating and threatening than traditional exams.

## The Women's Education Project

Whilst FE institutions are grappling with these changes, those in community education are faced with similar dilemmas with less financial and informal resources. The Women's

Educational Project, for example, is a community education organisation which has always been closely related to the developing grassroots women's movement in Northern Ireland. In the early stages of the development of this movement, there was much hostility expressed to the notion of education from women in working class areas, most likely as a result of their negative school experiences. However, as the movement developed so too did the attitude of group members and educational providers to the nature and type of educational provision. Educational providers pioneered courses designed to maximise the participation of women with negative school experiences. They did so through negotiation with students and relating education to issues of direct concern to potential students in local groups. Such has been the change in attitude that today a vast array of women-only educational programmes are now being run in locally based centres.

The WEP is presently assessing its response to NCVQ. To date it has found several ways in which the educational philosophy and practice of NVQ correlates with its own educational philosophy and practices as well as ways in which it diverges from it. As a feminist organisation the WEP has consistently argued that society as whole undervalues the skills and experience gained by women in the home and through their voluntary activities. Accrediting of Prior Learning in NVQ is the first formal educational initiative to initiate validation of the skills and experience many adults have gained outside the school environment. Despite some obstruction from the industry led bodies, Butler suggests:

There has never been a better time to initiate radical change to women's access to vocational qualifications and employment through recognising the real value of the competence they have acquired through their unpaid work. (7)

NVQ's are also based on outcomes of learning independent of any particular mode, duration or location which suggests that feminist content and instructional methods should not be threatened, but enhanced as a tutor's freedom of choice of methods is increased. If feminist organisations can offer education and training, they will be free to choose their own instructional method as long as competencies are achieved.

As NVQs increase, the number of students eligible to secure qualifications is of great importance to the WEP, as over the past number of years the educational demand from students has changed. As a result of their experiences in informal adult education which has built up their confidence, many of the women with whom the WEP comes into contact, are increasingly interested in securing qualifications to promote their own confidence as well as increase their own job opportunities.

The changing demand from students coincides with the growing awareness that the NCVQ framework offers the flexibility of approach that community educationalists have long argued for. Modern assessment methods described above and new structural developments such as modular approaches, open learning, roll-on, roll-off programmes are designed to increase access to education for many of those normally excluded from it. Whilst the NCVQ framework is compatible in many ways with the type and range of provision offered by the WEP and other community education organisations, there appear to be two major concerns about it.

### Critiques of NVQ'S

Critics argue that the changes being suggested by NCVQ are being forced on educational institutions. In the past the WEP did not offer certification but it now seems increasingly likely it will be forced to do so in order to receive government funding. Initially, the ramifications of NCVQ were restricted to the vocational field leaving other fields untouched, but after recent

government announcements, the funding of all non-vocational adult educational is seriously jeopardised (8). Community educationalists are concerned too that the development of NVQs ignore the criteria of personal and group development in an individually constructed and skills focused educational programme. Finally, it is argued that the whole concept is seriously flawed with the notion of competencies 'stretched too far' (9) as it is inappropriate for use in situations which demand non-mechanical, creative or sensitive responses.

So to the issue of definition. In the past community based education organisations prided themselves on their campaigning base, their responsiveness to demand from local groups, their radical content and accessibility to less privileged groupings in society – in the WEP's case unwaged women. The changing climate in education and training offers new challenges. Access, once the jewel in the crown of community education, is set to become a priority of all education providers, as it is a crucial element in the provision of NVQs. As competencies are nationally uniform, all providers will offer training to similar ends. How then will community educationalists retain their radical philosophy? It may be possible to adopt a radical approach to training in competencies, but to do so will be very demanding, considering the large scale changes being introduced. Finally, central to the campaigning base of community education is the goal of providing education for the powerless to inspire personal community and societal change. How will this be affected? This is the question bedeviling many now. Community educators are carefully weighing up the arguments for and against the introduction of NCVQ to their respective organisations. Debate centres on how to retain radical course content as well as community education's campaigning base. Without them community education loses its reason for existence.

It is impossible at this stage to predict accurately the future of community education in the light of changes spearheaded by the National Council for Vocational Education. The whole framework of adult education and training is in a state of crisis as a result not only of NVQs but also changing funding arrangements and structural developments. NVQs offer exciting possibilities, particularly in terms of access, assessment and accreditation of prior learning. However, the nature of NVQs pose many practical and more significantly philosophical problems for community educators at the forefront of education for change.

## References

1. Burke Competency Based Education and Training, Falmer Press.
2. NCVQ Criteria And Related Guidance 1988
3. Burke as above
4. Butler Adult Learner NIACE Vol. 2 No. 7 March 1991.
5. Rowntree Assessing Students
6. NCVQ Criteria and Related Guidance 1988
7. Butler as above
8. The Guardian 23 May 1991.
9. P.D. Ashworth & J Saxton Journal of Further and Higher Education Vol. 14, No. 2 Summer 1990.

# The Changing Landscape of Adult Education

*Cathleen O'Neill*

*Cathleen O'Neill is a writer. She has been involved in women's education since 1983.*

The following Poem was written 7 years ago and reflects the hope and belief of a working class woman who has just become involved in running her local adult education centre.

“...my consciousness level was riding rock bottom but since joining this group I can analyse spot on all sorts of events matters social and national not only a mam, look it's me see...I'm rational. Bound closely by class and a common desire our minds are afire to swop thoughts and ideas some small others large each one always equal no person in charge of our thoughts	or our feelings we each hold a brief to stay in control reinforce our belief in ourselves and each other we each choose the pace of our progress or lack the group gives us space to discover ourselves break open the mould of class, race and gender and help us unfold from the mind numbing tasks matters drab and mundane to direct our own struggle and hold tight the rein.....”
--	--

... the poem was left unfinished because even at that early stage of my development I was aware of a certain ambiguity between what I was saying and what I was experiencing. However, I kept the lines to record and measure that particular stage of my journey. A journey that began with small, hopeful steps toward finding the woman who got lost somewhere between the vows and rows of marriage and mothering; and bearing and caring for children in a patriarchal society.

My first steps along that road were encouraged by teachers, education organisers and community workers. Slowly, slowly, a more confident woman began to emerge. A woman who began to question her role in society; who was prompted by the belief that she could affect her own destiny and who saw education as the means of achieving it.

Initially the road to self discovery led to a new self confidence, awareness and vocabulary. Words such as 'process, empower, enable and self-determination' became familiar everyday signposts through the maze of community development courses and other training on offer.

Like thousands of other women I became part of the growth in adult learning and saw education as the means to developing both myself and my community. I began to take control not only of what I was learning but how I was learning, recognising the need for flexibility, creche facilities, and a new concept in learning. We used our experiences as women, and drew

on these experiences for the kind of learning we wished to pursue. As a member of KLEAR I became part of the success of that organisation, which grew from a local voluntary initiative by five working class women into a thriving centre for more than four hundred adults.

This led to years of training in areas such as group facilitation skills, leadership skills, conflict resolution skills (an inevitable part of community work). We challenged societal structures and were challenged in return (in some cases arrested by the guards). We learned administration and management skills, and fundraising — the mundane sale of work sort — and the applications to funding agencies where the figures ran into telephone numbers. We became responsible for raising the annual sum of £18,000 to maintain our creche facilities. We became employers of other women and were careful not to exploit them, all the while exploiting ourselves in the guise of 'voluntarism'.

Working alongside paid Adult Education Organisers and Community Workers we found premises, ran classes, organised creche and childcare facilities, raised funds to keep fees as low as possible. All the while being applauded by VEC boards whose only responsibility was to pay the rent and 'part-time teachers' and only that so long as the classes were self-financing.

Middle-class academics, educators, trainers and community workers held us up as role models to other groups and charged us a small fortune to provide pre-training and re-training modules. It took a while before we realised that we were paying dearly for the right to be voluntary community workers; that we had few rights, little recognition and were dependent on the goodwill of others to stay in existence. We learned the hard way that adult education is only an after thought; that there is little commitment to providing 'second chance' learning for the 'forgotten people'. The hardest lesson of the last decade was learning that Adult Education is a growth industry along with poverty and unemployment.

After spending almost a decade taking one course after another we find ourselves without any accreditation or qualifications. Without accreditation our training becomes useless when applying for jobs. We are unable to avail of third level education. For example after years of researching, designing, participating and running courses in women's studies, none of us 'community women' can avail of the foundation and degree courses presently on offer by UCD because we lack the 'necessary' qualifications, despite the fact that the course organisers know of and have affirmed our work in the past.

Very few women with a background in community development have managed to acquire employment, even in our own projects. We set up projects and as soon as they become viable and credible in terms of being funded by the various agencies and departments, the paid work is then given to middle class people who possess the required piece of paper or clout.

As I prepare to end this article I find myself remembering friends and other women who were damaged by their attempts to take control of their lives, women who suffered from the burn-out and wipe-out because the State has copped-out from its obligation. I remember them even as I continue to bang my head against the glass ceiling of academia; or should I say the class ceiling of academia.

I continue to bang my head because I am encouraged by a recent initiative between a group of working class and middle class women, who have formed an alliance and are looking at ways to raise awareness about the issue of 'class' in community work. Until this initiative has been tried and tested I will reserve judgement of the impact that my years of voluntarism have had. I will also leave this article open-ended ... just in case. In the meantime I will keep it to record this particular stage of my journey ...

# To Educate is to Liberate

*Kathleen Maher*

*Kathleen Maher is a well-known community activist in the Ballymun area.*

It is a widely documented fact that universities do not cater for working class people. In my experience, few relevant courses are available in the academic world and even if they were, lack of resources prevent people from attending these courses. Costs which may be considered basic to some people would be a major burden on many working class people living in the new urbanised communities on the fringes of the city. With limited bursaries available and the instant withdrawal of social payments upon starting a course, the possibilities for working class people to re-enter formal education are limited to say the least.

To make adult education more accessible, courses have been organised at a local level throughout the city. However, I think local people have to become more involved in defining and planning their own courses. This is because courses that are organised at a local level often tend to be offered to people who are associated with the church or the so called radical professions. These are the people who are given the resources and it is they who organise the courses. So, as usual, those who control the resources set the agenda.

Education providers have failed to research the educational needs and requirements of the communities themselves. Courses tend very often to be traditional in their approach and avoid social, political, economic and sexual issues that may challenge the role of church and state. For example, traditional education tends to have a middle class bias which undervalues the rich working class culture of Dublin and her people. Not only does it undervalue the rich working class culture of Dublin people, I believe that traditional education has to be challenged and that Educators who are providing courses for working class people should break away from the traditional mould to which they are accustomed and develop a concept appropriate to the needs of working class people. They should get out of these institutions, or possibly get out of teaching, particularly when there is no direct link with the community.

Secondly, working class people who spend many years active in their communities should automatically receive credits which should be of a standard similar to that of university qualifications. As it is, traditional education reinforces the negative images which people have been conditioned to have of themselves. Another example is the way in which sex education has failed to recognise the reality of people's lives reinforcing negative stereotypes of women, the unmarried and gay men and women.

Finally, the political, social and cultural aspects of working class people's lives are non entities in the education world. Issues like poverty, unemployment, working class women, particularly women with children who do not have access to creche facilities, are excluded from these courses. This exclusion means that they are not involved in these discussions, thus reinforcing the stereotype images of poverty that are already portrayed in the media and society as a whole. To take part in the training one must have the resources, to enable them to pay for the courses. Timetables must be suited to the needs of working class people, particularly women with children, and, more importantly, courses need to be located in the community if they are to have any relevance to working class women.

In large working class housing estates such as Ballymun, Blanchardstown, Clondalkin,

Darndale, Finglas and Tallaght, many people, particularly women, have been active on the ground, filling the gaps left by the state. These people have been responding to the needs of the community such as unemployment, homelessness, drug abuse and other welfare issues in a unique and effective way. Such activity gives enormous strength to the community and helps to build a community spirit. The educational process must link into this development, validating and assisting the efforts of community activists who are often overpowered by outside community workers with formal education.

For adult education to work at local level, educators must recognise the importance of ceding control to the communities themselves to ensure that people in the community become liberated by means of education. The model used by KLEAR, the Kilbarrack Local Education for Adult Renewal, is particularly useful in this regard.

This organisation, run by the local community with assistance from the VEC, initially began with basic education programmes but has expanded and developed over the last ten years. KLEAR develops and runs its own courses and some of the people who participated in the initial courses now plan and facilitate courses. Full creche facilities are provided with the slogan "No creche, no course".

Models similar to KLEAR need to be developed in other working class communities. To enhance what is already happening at a local level, education must reflect the needs of the community and not that of the needs of professional or "do gooders" who are selective and who give the impression that locals need their courses, such courses as budgeting and parenting, when really they should be trying to ensure that these courses reflect the needs of the community. This can only be done with full participation of the community.

## Combat Poverty Agency

### ***FAIR SHARES?***

*Fair Shares?* is a discussion pack which aims to create a deeper understanding of poverty in Ireland. It deals with the images and effects of poverty as well as looking at causes. The emphasis is on active learning techniques, e.g. role plays, case studies, use of images, etc.

*Fair Shares?* consists of:

- An A4 handbook including worksheets for participants
- A set of 40 black and white photographs plus a list of photoactivities
- A set of 4 colour posters

*Fair Shares?* is available from the  
Combat Poverty Agency  
8 Charlemont Street, Dublin 2.  
Tel: (01) 783355

Contact Maureen Bassett  
(Mondays and Tuesdays)

**Price: £6.00 per copy**  
(plus £1.83 postage and packaging)



# Adult Education and the New Act: Possible Structures

*Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh*

*Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh is Professor of Modern History at University College, Galway. Well known as a writer and broadcaster, his published works include Ireland Before the Famine 1798 - 1848.*

Nobody is opposed to adult education as an idea or concept. Nobody adheres to the view that 'learning for life' consists of a block or continuum of formal schooling from the age of four to mid or late adolescence. Acceptance of the concept of Lifelong Learning has become part of the conventional wisdom. This is merely to acknowledge the seismic impact of rapid and relentless economic and technological change and the complex socio-cultural transformations which have accompanied these changes, notably during the past half-century. The accelerated rate of change has led to a general acknowledgement that this 'lifelong learning' is a very major agenda of educational needs in contemporary Ireland: it ranges from the basic need to eliminate adult illiteracy to the need to provide re-training or additional training for those with highly specialised knowledge whose half-life is shortening with each passing decade. It involves in-service courses, education for career change, for leisure, topping-up and the acquisition of new skills; it involves, in its widest meaning, facilitating people in their desire and their need to know more about themselves (self-knowledge which takes account of the imagination and the emotions as well as the intellect) and about the world about them and their constantly-changing place in it.

All of these laudable dimensions of 'lifelong learning' will be readily accepted by all educationalists and planners, at least in principle. It need only be added that the 'logic' of accepting this broad definition of adult education is accepting that the potential 'demand' for adult education, unlike primary and in large measure secondary education, is not demographically determined, but is, rather, a function of profound socio-economic and cultural processes and desires. Indeed, the elimination of adult illiteracy is, perhaps, the only aspect of adult education which may present a 'finite' or quantifiable demand in the short or medium term. For the rest, continuing cultural changes are likely to continue to generate new needs and demands in adult education, under whatever auspices this may be provided. These general propositions will not be contested by anyone wishing to be taken seriously in the public debate on Irish educational needs in the 1990s and the early years of the new century. Because, of course, for educationalists, social planners, commentators or politicians, there can be little excuse for ignorance of the issues and challenges facing Irish society in the coming decades in the area of adult education, given the numerous reports and enquiries which have been produced on virtually every aspect of this topic during the past decade or so. (1) It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that there will be no drawing back from firm declarations of commitment to adult education on the part of government ministers in the coming debate. It is likely that such a firm declaration will be contained in the Green Paper and in subsequent texts right through to the legislation. It is also likely, and for the future prospects of adult education it is vital, that a serious adult education unit will be established in the Department

of Education, provided that political pressure is maintained to achieve this during the course of the debate on the Green Paper.

## An Adequate Provision

If the principle and general scope of adult education can be taken as generally accepted, it is probable that several of the main features of any adequate provision of adult education in the 1990s are also reasonably clear and established. These features or characteristics relate, most importantly, to access, flexibility and certification. That there ought to be the widest possible access to educational opportunity for all citizens is the kind of virtuous injunction to which all governments and parties can give ready obeisance. No less than for the children, everybody is committed (educationally) to cherishing all the adults of the nation equally. Specifically, in Irish terms, this will mean addressing seriously the educational opportunity-deficits which currently exist as a function of gender, social class, physical handicap or geographical location (where corrective action is likely to employ the technology and strategies of distance learning, in addition to more conventional measures).

Flexibility is at once a more complex and protean concept than access. It must, of course, relate to the structure of courses (modular, open-menu, semesterised, institution-centred, at home or on-site learning opportunities, etc), and to scheduling (day, evening, week-end, summer blitz, etc). The implications of even these basic issues go far beyond the matter of institutional flexibility: they raise issues which reach into the wider society (e.g. creche facilities, the entitlements of the unemployed or the partially-employed, and other such issues). And these are only the more obvious aspects of what 'flexibility' might mean as a characteristic feature of an adult education provision.

As to the third characteristic - that is, that achievements in adult education will, in so far as it is feasible, be assessed and certified - this, for a variety of reasons, has become a growing feature of adult education in recent years. This is so, both in respect of demonstrably vocational courses and more generally, as adults (and educational agencies of all sorts) have come to accept more and more the notion of qualifications being earned incrementally, and at the learner's own pace and convenience. To the extent that this tendency towards general certification of learning-targets being achieved has been driven by the needs and demands of an increasingly-integrated and qualification-conscious labour market, it may be taken that, in the post-1992 context of a single European labour market (and the prospects for labour mobility which this will present), the tendency towards certification of a standardised kind seems set to intensify in the coming decade.

## Resources and Structures

In all of what has been said so far there is little that is likely to excite surprise or contention. The desirability and, as it were, the 'unavoidability' of adult education; the general principles which must underlie it; its characteristic features for the decade ahead; all of these may be said to lie securely within the conventional wisdom of educational planners and of enlightened political leaders in all parties in contemporary Ireland. Where the questions and contentious issues arise is not in the matter of the 'what' and 'why' of adult education; but, rather, on the issue of 'how'. That is to say, it is in the thorny and inter-related areas of structures and resources that the vital debate will take place in the near future, as the Minister prepares the Green Paper, and debate is joined from which, it is predicted, an Education Act will ultimately issue. Before making some observations on these vital issues of structures and resources, it is

only right that I should state my belief that, in this most sensitive area of education, the structures which will ultimately emerge are not likely to be based on any clean, abstract, theoretical model, but, given the complex historical legacy of institutional and other vested interests in education in Ireland, are more likely to be the outcome of hard political compromises and balances.

The starting point for my observations on structures will be the present second-level infrastructure, with its wide variety of educational institutions and ownership/management structures. My reason for starting here is because the hints already given by the Minister on her thinking on the need for structural changes in the education system can best be situated, in the first instance, at second level. Furthermore, it is also the case that the V.E.C.s, upon which a significant part of the adult education remit rested until relatively recently, will inevitably be affected by any structural changes at second level.

It is clear that the Minister wants to see a more closely integrated structure providing second level education in the future. The somewhat untidy mixture of different types of schools within identifiably 'common' catchment areas does not find favour with a cost and efficiency-conscious Department of Education. Demographic projections indicate that there will be a drop in demand for 'places' at second level during the coming decade. This is not the same as saying that there will be a general 'surplus capacity' (of buildings or personnel) commensurate with the drop in population of second level students: geographical factors, staff-student ratios, curriculum requirements etc. will all affect the degree of 'rationalisation' that will actually be achieved. But schools will close, there will be amalgamations, and, even where (for a variety of reasons) a cluster of different kinds of institutions are left in place in any given catchment area with a limited or declining school population, there will inevitably be tighter controls in terms of resource-allocation to the 'suite' of schools in the catchment area.

What units will be devised to achieve and to provide the future management structure for this sector? One hesitates to predict anything with confidence in respect of changes in educational structures. But it would be logical, and it seems likely, that some new form of Local Education Authority (LEA) will be established. The precise size/catchment areas of such new authorities is difficult to predict. On one hand, the discrepancies (in size, population and resource-base) between the present V.E.C. units seem so great, and present such difficulties to achieving economies of scale and such variations in unit costs, that it is unlikely that any new LEA will simply be a re-vamped or reconstructed V.E.C.-type body coterminous with the present configuration of V.E.C. areas. On the other hand, it is not easy to identify the units (aggregates of existing V.E.C. units?) which might ideally suit Irish needs, i.e. achieve a balance between the economies of size for economies of scale and intimacy, local loyalties and other social considerations which come into play in these decisions. It is especially difficult to make predictions, given the considerable degree of uncertainty which still exists in relation to the government's thinking and intentions on local government reform. For example, the proposed regional councils might, on the face of it, seem an appropriate model on which to base Regional Education Authorities (flattening out discrepancies and inequalities at a more local or county level). As units appropriate for taking advantage of E.C. grants ear-marked for educational purposes from the Regional or Structural Funds (a source which the government will be hoping to tap, especially for the vocational aspects of adult education), this would seem to enhance the attractiveness of regional authorities as the units for new educational structures. On the other hand, however, E.C. funding to date (from Regional and Structural Funds) has, in the main, been channelled through central government and controlled by the Department

of Finance - with grants and disbursements being dispersed sectorally rather than in respect of any recognizably integrated regional development plan. Furthermore, the politically-contentious experience of the Health Boards (arguably the most apposite model, in general terms, for regional-type authorities in Ireland) has not been such as to encourage any government to establish Education Authorities on the Health Board model.

The gravitational pull will be towards using the county (and, in the case of the larger centres, the city) as the basic units for any new LEAs. But these units, as the regular redrawing of constituency boundaries illustrates, are not sacrosanct; and it would not be a major surprise were proposals to emerge to establish LEAs with an area/population larger than a county in some instances, though still clearly at a sub-regional level.

## What Kind of LEA?

It is likely that the Minister, if not necessarily the Department, would see advantages in giving newly-established LEAs some degree of administrative jurisdiction in respect of *all* first and second level educational institutions in their catchment areas. But this may not be a realistic ambition, even for a tough and determined Minister; the managerial system at primary level, and the assorted vested interests at second level may not be all corralled together at the first asking. Indeed, it is possible that bringing all types of second level institutions under a common structure (the LEA) will demand the most skilful political handling (though one suspects that schools which would opt out would do so at a real cost in terms of state subvention). But one need only consider the matter of how such authorities would be constituted to realise the political problems that arise: will the LEAs be 'representative' bodies? If so, 'representative' of what? Public representatives, teachers, parents, religious orders, bishops, trade unions? What will the mix of 'elected' and 'nominated' members be? What will be the Minister's influence? As a major state agency involved in vocational training, should not FAS be represented on any proposed LEA?

These questions - by no means an exhaustive list of the politically-sensitive issues - relate to the kind of LEAs that will be established, their size and their composition. What is vital, however, is that Adult Education Units (with their officers and support staff) be an integral and vital part of any new LEA system. The standing of the Adult Education Units (and their officers) ought to be enhanced under the kind of new LEA suggested here, if only because such new authorities would have a wider range of institutions under their jurisdiction, would be more broadly-based in their 'representative' character, and generally have a more substantial resource-base, than has been the case heretofore. The new LEAs would also be more meaningful administrative instruments by virtue of their having a statutory basis to them. But, granted all of this, it is likely to remain the case that Adult Education Officers/Units under a new LEA system would still have to deal with a variety of different institutions and agencies involved in the provision of adult education and training - school management boards (though here standardised procedures for access ought to be laid down by the LEA) voluntary bodies or groups; statutory agencies involved in adult education and training (notably FAS); third level institutions; professional bodies. This may seem like a somewhat diffuse and untidy remit for the Adult Education Officers, but it is difficult to envisage any new legislation producing a more tidy model. For example, it is difficult to see any significant 'dismantling' of FAS as a national training agency well-positioned to meet the criteria currently in operation in E.C.-funded training projects. Nor can one envisage third-level institutions coming under the jurisdiction of LEAs: indeed the reverse is the case, with Regional Colleges moving towards greater

autonomy from the existing V.E.C.s. In short, it seems likely, even under new structures based on greatly fortified LEAs, that Adult Education Officers/Units will have broad functions of liaison, co-ordination, innovation and advice, in respect of a range of agents providing various kinds of adult education under a variety of institutional auspices.

This may seem a less than radical departure from the existing situation; and it may, accordingly, be a disappointment to those who look forward to the promised new legislation with hopes of more fundamental change. But, in the light of the current indications, and of the historical background, it seems, to this commentator at least, that the general structure outlined above is the kind of structure within which Adult Education Units will be expected to operate, at a 'local' level, under whatever new structures emerge from the government in the months ahead.

As for the National Council for Adult Education recommended by the Commission on Adult Education in 1983, it is quite likely that such a Council will be established, but with a predominantly advisory function. Indeed, apart from a proposed role in ensuring adequate initial and in-service training, the functions proposed for such a Council by the Commission were largely advisory, despite the more ambitious recommendation that the Council might 'assist' the Minister in the formulation of policy on adult education. But a National Council may well have moral authority, depending on the quality, the expertise and the courage of its members. It may act as an important focus and forum for diverse interests in the adult education 'lobby'. But it will not, it seems to me, have any real executive function in the provision of adult education, nor will it have any significant say in the fixing or spending of an adult education budget.

One final word on structures. The logic of a single labour market within the E.C. is a movement towards increasing standardisation and transferability of all qualifications. This would seem to require a corresponding move towards the standardisation of all certificates issued in respect of educational evaluation/assessment. The universities and the NCEA would seem the appropriate bodies for overseeing the broad range of awards issued in the area of adult education. It is not clear that any significant changes in the role of either the universities or the NCEA will follow from the government's Green Paper and subsequent legislation. But, in any case, the general standardisation of certificates must be accomplished through national award-granting with firm linkages into the E.C., thereby ensuring Community-wide recognition for educational qualifications.

## Funding Mechanisms

Finally, no structures can have life without reference to resource allocation and funding mechanisms. This is true also of adult education. Here, one has to make a number of assumptions, and one might also offer a few words of warning. Firstly, the funding for adult education in the coming decade or so will be a mix of state (including E.C.) subvention, fee-income, and whatever endowments (from industry or philanthropic agency) arise from time to time. As at present, some courses and programmes will be able to generate fee-income to cover their own costs - and, occasionally, to do even better. But there will have to be a substantial subsidisation, in a variety of ways, of many aspects of adult education. There is no reason to doubt that the state finance will come directly from central government - principally, but not exclusively, through the Department of Education. Where E.C. funds are concerned, the indications (on current form) are that these also will be disbursed by the national government (under the watchful eye of the Department of Finance). This will mean that

funding for adult education will, therefore, be according to criteria devised by and acceptable to central government in Ireland. It is the criteria for funding, therefore, and the ways in which the figures will be arrived at, that assumes importance in our forecasts. I would expect that in determining the level of funding for adult education, some form of unit cost will be applied by the government wherever it can be done. This will not be a straightforward task: geographical, social and 'other' criteria may well cut across a tidy system of unit cost financing of programmes and courses. But a more disturbing prospect would be a decision that only demonstrably vocational courses would be subsidised, leaving the provision of 'enrichment' and 'non-vocational' courses (art, history, philosophy, etc.) to the free play of the market. It must be a cause for concern (given our lamentable propensity for imitating only one exemplar) that this kind of thinking seems to have become influential in the U.K. (2) It would be an unacceptable contraction of the meaning of 'adult education' or 'lifelong learning', if state subsidisation were to be confined to (or even disproportionately concentrated in) courses or activities with a demonstrably vocational purpose or bias.

As to the total volume of resources to be made available to adult education, opinions vary on the desirability of setting a specific target (a specific percentage of total state expenditure on education) for adult education. One can understand the desire of many of those involved in adult education to have a definite bench-mark laid down, as an indication of a real, firm, ongoing commitment to adult education (as distinct from exhortatory rhetoric). But whatever the objective merits of laying down a specific baseline for the funding of adult education, political considerations will, it seems to me, make it most unlikely that any government advised by its senior civil servants will commit itself to a fixed percentage. It is likely that a more coherent adult education structure, with a stronger brief at LEA level, an energetic unit on Adult Education within the Department of Education, and an active and courageous advisory National Council, will together constitute the best prospect for increased real expenditure on adult education in Ireland in the coming decade.

The foregoing observations do not represent the author's view of an 'ideal' set of structures for adult education in Ireland for the 1990s and the early 21st century. What they represent is no more than an outline of what, in the light of the available evidence, the political realities and the established 'conventional wisdom' on adult education, seem reasonable guesses on the kind of structures within which Adult Education (and adult educators) may find themselves operating after the dust has settled on all the government papers - Green, White and Grey!

## Notes

1. It is not the intention to encumber this short essay with detailed reference; but a sense of the richness of the debate can be gained from: For adults only: A case for adult education in Ireland, by Maureen Bassett, Berni Brady, Ted Fleming & Tom Inglis (Aontas, Dublin 1989); Aosoideachas sa Ghaeltacht, le Anne Byrne (Aontas, Dublin 1987); Tuarascail an Chomhchoiste um Oideachas sa Ghaeltacht (Oifig an tSolathair, Baile Atha Cliath, Pl.3464); Lifelong Learning: Report of the Commission on Adult Education, (Oifig an tSolathair, Baile Atha Cliath, Pl.2282).

2. There are indications in this direction in the British government's White Paper, Education and Training for the Twenty-first Century, volumes one and two, published in early May 1991.

# Adult Education and the Unemployed

Tom Collins

*Dr. Tom Collins is lecturer at the Centre for Adult and Community Education, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. This article is an edited version of a paper given at a seminar organised by the Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed (I.N.O.U.) in Dublin.*

It is difficult not to be assailed by a sense of futility in preparing yet another article on Adult Education and Unemployment. For twenty years now unemployment has featured prominently in adult education literature, thought and action. Initially, the concern was with 15-24 year old unemployed groups. Gradually, the concern moved to those over 25 years. One senses that in the next few years the concern will have moved to focus on those aged over 55.

The scale and the intractability of Ireland's unemployment problem, together with the economic, social and psychological implications which it has upon its victims, combine to pose the single greatest social challenge to modern Irish society.

Not alone does Ireland have a higher level of unemployment than is typical in most other Western societies, but the nature of the problem also appears to be somewhat different. A recent statement on poverty in America, for instance, stated that:

"There are many paths into poverty, such as divorce, illiteracy, too early childbearing, lay-offs, drugs, dropping out of school or just plain bad luck. And we know there are many paths out: education, a long term job paying a decent wage, marriage. We also know that the vast majority of the poor are in poverty for only a short period of time..." (Mott Foundation, Annual Report, 1989, pp 6-7)

There are many ways in which the Irish situation differs from that of America, as described in the above statement. Poverty in Ireland is largely inherited, thereby assuming an inter-generational longevity and inevitability. As with unemployment it is also strongly resistant to solutions. Unlike America, there are not "many paths" out of it and one suspects that the vast majority are in poverty throughout their lives.

One of the key features of modern unemployment in Ireland is that the assumptions of its temporary nature seem no longer valid. While broad sectoral changes in the structure of the labour force may explain this, specifically the gradual demise of blue-collared, unskilled labour, the consequences for those 'displaced' are both profound and long lasting.

Policy makers are extremely reluctant to abandon their view of unemployment as a temporary condition. Trade Unions assert the right to employment, while the Welfare State asserts the obligation to it. And so 'unemployment' policies are largely based upon a view that unemployment is a temporary condition arising from a passing crisis which will be dealt with by social welfare payments until the normal order of employment is restored.

This view is acknowledged in two related principles underpinning welfare policy: the Eligibility principle and the Availability principle. The Eligibility principle is the one under which it is decreed that welfare must not become more attractive than employment. Since Victorian times, therefore, welfare has embodied a punitive dimension. Adult Educators daily encounter

those from whom welfare has extracted a heavy price - in terms of personal dignity and self worth. The Availability principle is that under which the unemployed are effectively barred from a wide range of socially and personally useful activities because it may render them unavailable for work. So the unemployed must be available for unavailable employment and punished for not availing of the unavailable employment. The unemployed therefore are not only the victims of unemployment, but increasingly they are becoming the victims of the illusion of full employment.

The fundamental conditions of unemployment will never change until these assumptions are challenged. Peripheral alterations of welfare allowances and payments, job creation schemes or other such initiatives will never significantly change the unemployment and poverty traps in Ireland. Something far more radical is required.

It is instructive here to recall a comment from Liam Ryan on the effectiveness of the many Rural Development programmes produced in Ireland over the last century, all purporting to solve the problem of rural decline:

A little bit of dole here, a little bit of Bord Failte there, will not be enough to change this trend. The people grumble but do nothing. But their grumbling has at last produced the beginning of a sceptical scorn for any more of these half measures - each hailed successively as a Messiah, each failing in turn - which litter the path of decline for the past hundred years. (L. Ryan: "Some Social Aspects of the Buchanan Report.", 1970)

## Implications for Practice

It is not the purpose of this article to encourage Adult Educators to take refuge in the view that as they cannot do everything, it is best to do nothing. It is rather to suggest a focus for adult education activity, and in particular to assert the inseparability of the political agenda from the education agenda.

The political agenda of education with the unemployed must:

- (1) Assert the abnormality of current welfare provision and approaches. In particular, it must challenge the assumptions discussed above, upon which welfare policies are based. It must enable the unemployed to quantify the price of welfare and to compare the price which they must pay for it with that paid by the many other groups in receipt of significant public subvention — e.g. third level students, and the agricultural and industrial sectors generally.
- (2) Challenge the widely held view — particularly in labour circles — of the right to employment with one which asserts the individual's right to basic dignity and decent living standards.
- (3) Recognise that employment is a key mechanism through which such rights are realised, but that it is not the only mechanism and is one, the significance of which appears to be in decline.
- (4) Look to ways of removing the 'client-condition' from unemployed people to one which actively engages them in partnership arrangements in all dealings with welfare agencies. This is an area in which small, locally based 'schemes' can have a major innovative role in developing partnership arrangements around the area of Community Welfare.
- (5) Shift the emphasis in Education/Training course content from a system orientation to a personal one, from a vocational orientation to an occupational one. In Robertson's terms (*The Future of Work*) the focus must be on enabling participants to become more socially and personally useful.

(6) The unemployed are justifiably impatient with proposed solutions to the problem couched in terms of redefining work. And while it is difficult not to share both the impatience and the scepticism, it is equally difficult to escape the conviction that something radically different to past approaches must now be attempted.

Adult Education will not solve Ireland's unemployment problem. It can make a significant contribution, however, in the intellectual reappraisal of the problem, particularly amongst the unemployed. Adult Educators should not underestimate their role in the emergence in the past decade of the many self-directed community education/development groups throughout Ireland. While the objective conditions of many of the participants in these groups may not have changed too dramatically, participants invariably report dramatic and fundamental subjective change. It is at this level also that Adult Educators can make their contribution on the unemployment problem — by working with the unemployed and employed in redefining old avenues and discovering new ones towards personal dignity and decent living standards.

## Adult Education 1882

**T**his is an extract from a letter of the Rev. James Reynolds, Parish Priest of Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford, written to his Bishop, Bartholomew Woodlock. The letter is dated 11 December 1882.

"My Dear Lord Bishop,

I have tried the experiment of opening the schools at night for adult males and so far with marked success. Glen new school had a nightly attendance during last week of sixty. We teach them only reading, writing and arithmetic. After the day's toil the school is a healthy and useful amusement and it will keep the young folk out of idleness and perhaps mischief.

Respectfully yours,

Jas. Reynolds P.P."

(Ardagh Diocesan Archives)

Comment: Modern parish priests and school managers, please copy!

# Eating out at the Agencies

## *Ad Hock*

**FAS:** Runs a number of high class eating places around the country. Menus are very specialised and feature some very exciting European dishes. Rather on the expensive side, with prices ranging from 120 ECU's up. Popular with those returning to work and we are informed that, for those moving in the right circles, one may actually be paid to eat there. Their fish dishes are excellent and they include such cosmopolitan specialities as Brussels sprats, Dover sole and Strassbourg cod. Watch out for the EC gravy train, which accompanies all dishes. Music, betimes, by the revolving doors.

**Combat Poverty:** Open early and late. Menus are rather rudimentary with a marked emphasis on vegetarian and vegan dishes. The fare, although basic, has a high fibre content and is certainly nutritious. The ambience is somewhat low key and, during rush hours, it is advisable to bring your own bean bag. Prices could not be cheaper and, among the recommended items are Welfare Starters, Chicken Handout and Breadline Pudding. All dishes are accompanied by portions of free rice. Do not be deterred by the queues forming outside as regular patrons are in the habit. Strictly self-service and anyone hanging about may be pressed into service behind the counter. Certainly growing in popularity at present.

**AONTAS:** Very much mixed fare and in its efforts to accommodate all tastes, it runs the risk of satisfying none. Those not liking the heat of the kitchen can shelter under the umbrella. The food, on the whole, is rather bland — a consequence perhaps of too many competing influences, with none predominating. Menus are presented in an interesting and innovative manner and come under such headings as the Minutes Steak, Platters Arising, Workshop Dishes and some quite exotic desserts like Facilitators Propose, A Motion of Prunes and Rapport of Pears. Frequented sometimes by celebs like Inglesias.

**V.C.'s:** Founded in 1930, this is the best known fast food chain in the country, offering a service nationwide. Prices are most reasonable and the fare is basic but sound. Among the dishes on offer are old favourites like the fish starter Know Your Gar and the popular standard Flour Derangement. In some quarters, a more adventurous approach has been adopted and Dessertiveness courses are on offer. Also look out for new spicy items such as Klear soup and the Date specials. There has been talk recently of a takeover bid and some of the smaller establishments are threatened with closure. However, as a spokesman for the group put it, "Such a development would be roonious".

**The Dubs Institute:** An old fashioned and popular establishment in Mountjoy Square. Catholic in its tastes, it offers a range of standard courses and its downstairs sandwiches and soups are legend, or is that leg ends. Popular with those on their way home from work, it can also be passed on the way to Croke Park. For those with more eclectic tastes, there is always Berni's Bistro.

**Oscall:** Appropriately named, used to be known as Dunta. Recently refurbished and Open under new management, this latest and most trendy place offers the most exciting concept called Eating from the Distance. All dishes must be applied for three months in advance and come in packages. Be warned, however, this is not for the ordinary patron, as all reservations must be accompanied by a C.V., two letters of reference and a deposit of £325. A very exclusive

wine list, it can boast of some of the rarest labels, such as MBA 91, which comes at £568 a bottle and Credits 94, which can be bought in instalments and takes three years to drink. Looking forward to the wider market in 1992, Oscail specialises really in banquets for large corporations and multinationals.

**Ray's Place, Leeson Street:** Well located on the strip, this Eating Institute has flourished over the past fifteen years. It is particularly popular with fifteen to eighteen year olds and it must be said that clients can be found repeating here. Adults are tolerated rather than welcomed. The Place is unusual and indeed generated some controversy some years ago because of rumoured experiments to do with forced feeding. This, however, has become the attraction of the Place, an indicator of changing tastes. A note of warning must be sounded — forced feeding can be addictive and the owners are contemplating the establishment of a new Institute at Porterbelly Bridge, which will specialise in helping addicts to cope with withdrawal symptoms and help them return to normal eating. Menus are carefully graded, beginning with foundation courses, moving on to the very popular Inter course and for those on the way out, Leaving courses.



## Irish Trade Union Trust

- Conference facilities available
- Accommodation for up to 100 persons
- Computer hire facility for training classes

**REASONABLE RATES**

*Apply to:* Ross Connolly, Administration Officer,  
Solidarity House, 48 Fleet Street, Dublin 2.  
Tel: 778294

# CATS and Community Education: A Mechanism for Collaboration?

*Eilish Rooney*

*Eilish Rooney lectures in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education at the University of Ulster, and has been involved for many years in teaching in Springhill Community House and the Conway Education Centre on the Falls Road, Belfast.*

CATS is the acronym for the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme devised by the UK Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). It is designed to respond to and to stimulate market forces. The title of this article posits a relationship between CATS and community education. Anyone working in the community education field may find this an unlikely link. The mention of market forces in relation to community education might justifiably send educators into an apoplexy or a fit of laughter. The 'market forces' in community education generally have more to do with levels of deprivation and insecure funding than with purchasing power. Nevertheless, the concept of CATS has been adapted by a group of people active in community education and seeking a mechanism for collaboration between the voluntary sector, the further education sector and higher education. Some definitions and background information will be useful in order to see how CATS may be a mechanism for collaboration between a variety of community educators.

## CATS

The concept of credit accumulation and transfer is not new. The Open University (OU) operates a system of credit exemption and credit transfer. And any higher education student who transfers from one institution to another is in effect transferring credit gained at one institution in order to gain advanced standing at another. UK third level institutions are experiencing the demographic trends that closed primary schools in the 70's along with the pressures to expand provision in line with Government policy for expansion in the sector. Added to this is the pressure on the Universities to convert the 'ivory tower' into the 'factory floor' of commerce and industry; thereby servicing the professional needs of these wealth producing sectors of the economy. These are discomfiting times in higher education.

CNAA have adapted the OU system and the ad hoc arrangements between institutions and have come up with a scheme that will facilitate and structure collaboration between organisations within and outside the higher education sector. The principle behind CATS is that 'appropriate learning wherever it occurs, and provided it can be assessed, should count for credit against the Council's awards' (Pollard, 1990). Implicit in the scheme is the notion that it will make educational institutions more flexible and responsive to demographic trends and to the 'market'. The market includes those seeking access, or advanced entry, to higher education. Such students may accumulate credits through part-time study and use these to gain a higher education award. The market also includes other providers. Professional bodies and employers in business and industry who provide in-house courses can negotiate membership of the scheme and thereby offer their course participants the opportunity and incentive to accumulate CATS credits whilst updating professional expertise. For example,

British Telecom has secured recognition from CNAA for its in-house management courses.

Interest in credit accumulation mechanisms is widespread and growing. The Irish National Council for Educational Awards organised an International Conference on Credit Transfer in Europe, May 1990. The range of representatives from all over Europe, East and West, and the range of papers at the conference attests both to the complexity of making these schemes work and to the commitment to finding ways of making them work on ever larger scales (Bhreathnach, 1990). Credit transfer structures are designed to facilitate collaboration between bodies that are unequal in resources, that may differ in their principles, policies, and their practices, and in their structures and strategies. It was this collaborative aspect of CATS that initially appealed to the group of educators that gathered in Jordanstown at around the time of the International Conference in Dublin.

## Community Education: Issues before CATS

It must be a truism for anyone involved in education that the resources and status of the work is linked to the status of the student. So, someone working in Secondary level education with 'less able', 'underachievers', unmotivated young people who are headed for the dole queue has few resources and occupies a low status on the educational ladder. And this is the case despite the difficulties of the job and the skills required in carrying it out. Occasionally an educational initiative will identify a 'deprived group' and target them for special resources. But such initiatives, such as literacy projects, work with the unemployed, are frequently short lived, have uncertain futures and are never, or rarely, in the control of the group targeted.

Community education suffers a similar fate to the low status statutory work or the briefly targeted initiative. And, like these, its practice calls for highly skilled and committed people. The key issue is resources. Community education projects in the voluntary sector are virtually invisible when funding is allocated. This is linked to the lack of clarity as to what community education is about, and where it fits, in relation to the statutory structures. This lack of clarity, however, may be partly willful on the part of decision makers. The history and politics involved in the funding of local groups in NI augers caution to the career civil servant who may wield considerable power when it comes to such decisions (Mulrine, et al, 1991). Recent research carried out by the Community Development Review Group suggests that voluntary sector funding is a means of political manipulation (Mulrine, et al, 1991). In the context of a local authority area in, for example, Glasgow the local Councillor or MP may support funding for projects in the area they represent. If successful, this could be seen as a legitimate form of political manipulation of resources. However, in NI projects have been subjected to political vetting without recourse to the decision making process. The resulting media attention and withdrawal of funding is so alarming to most groups that a process of self censorship in relation to these decisions is almost inevitable. Some of the projects that have had funding withdrawn are community education projects.

Special initiative money targeted for NI (variously known as 'American' or 'European' money) is channelled through statutory sector initiatives. The local group may have some call on these resources and decide how they want the money to be spent on their behalf but rarely do they hold the purse and gain the empowerment that command of resources confers. These initiatives have led to collaborations between organisations in the voluntary and statutory sector in the field of community education. These collaborations enable the statutory sector to work with the voluntary networks but the partner with least resources is seriously disadvantaged. Given the insecurity of the funding and future of organisations in the voluntary

sector there is the possibility of losing and/or undervaluing the experience and practice of these organisations. A mechanism is needed which can utilize the expertise of all partners to a collaboration. Hopefully, and perhaps optimistically such a mechanism may be a means for providing guidelines for good practice in the field; clarifying what community education is about; and of how it 'fits' in relation to the statutory sector. In the world of which dreams are made, such clarification could lead to a role for the voluntary sector in guidelines governing funding decisions.

The proposal for guidelines of good practice in community education may suggest a professionalization that is anathema to the radical spirit or the political activism that many hold is at the heart of this endeavour. However, this 'radical' definition of community education and the 'liberal' definition, that it is the provision of innovative courses in community locations, need to be debated by theorists and practitioners.

The experience of organisations involved in the work suggests that many of the people participating in community education want recognition for their participation. Like the proposal for guidelines governing good practice, this may seem to be a rather conventional aspiration. But many of the participants (community activists and members of local groups) are also returning informally to education. Their motivations include the desire to gain a formal qualification and the mobility that that may permit, the ambition to re-enter formal education and/or the simple, important wish to have recognition of achievement. A mechanism that can facilitate this is also needed.

The issues outlined here are central features of the community education field in NI. The group of people who came together in Jordanstown with the aim of finding a way of working together that would utilize their strengths and the resources of their respective organisations included practitioners in the voluntary and statutory sectors, representatives from umbrella organisations, from community groups, theorists and administrators. The debate between theory and practice and the cross fertilization recommended in this article began at this point and is ongoing. It has resulted in a planned Certificate/Diploma in Community Education and Development. Hopefully, following validation in the University, the course will be offered in January, 1992.

## What about the CATS?

CATS cannot resolve all of the issues identified here. But it does offer a mechanism for collaboration between statutory and voluntary sector organisations. Such collaboration gives acknowledgement to, and thereby reinforces, the role of voluntary organisations in this field, and it is a means of informing practice in the statutory sector. This mechanism enables individual organisations to design credit bearing modules (in-house courses) appropriate to their area of expertise, and to offer such modules to their catchment of students and/or community organisers. The students may then use credits so gained in order to proceed to obtain the Certificate or Diploma in Community Education and Development. Members of the course planning group have collaborated in the design of modules such as 'Community Education Skills' (collaboration between the Workers Educational Association and the Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education) and 'Research Methods in Community Education and Development' (collaboration between UU and Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action) (Course Document, 1991). The work involved in these collaborations is, of course, not the work of 'organisations' but of individuals in these organisations who are eager to find ways of pooling experience and expertise, of promoting good practice and of stimulating critical

debate in community education. As a direct result of this course planning collaboration, UU has decided to examine its provision and strategy in the community field. The course planning group has a role in that process.

The practicalities of this collaboration have yet to be practised and tested. The CATS principle cited above makes the proviso that credit for appropriate learning can be accumulated 'provided it can be assessed' (Pollard, 1990). The planning group debated and decided on 'appropriate learning' with relative ease. The range of assessment methods, however, practised by individual members ranges from those who use student objective setting and self assessment to the standard assignment method of assessment. In the course design these methods have been combined and each module has a set of student outcomes. The student will have a Student Outcome Profile which will facilitate the setting of personal learning outcomes and contain the learning outcomes built into each module. Assessment of achievement of outcomes will combine self assessment by the student, tutor assessment of written work, and the assessment by an appointed person or persons (who may be course tutors) of other appropriate outcomes. The latter may involve a learner outcome that the student may achieve in a community setting. For example, conducting a committee meeting or a workshop may be a learner outcome which can be best assessed by an experienced, previously appointed, local community educator. There are models in teacher training for this kind of approach (McAleer, 1990).

Neither a credit accumulation scheme nor the good will of individual organisations and people can hope to shift the scale of the problems facing those engaged in community education in NI. This planned course is one encouraging development.

## References

- Bhreathnach, E. and G. McDonnell, eds, International Conference on Credit Transfer in Europe: Proceedings, National Council for Educational Awards, Dublin, 1990.
- Course Document, Certificate/Diploma in Community Education and Development, Department of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Ulster, Jordanstown, 1990.
- McAleer, John, 'Credit for Experiential Learning within a Competence Based Teacher Training Programme', in E. Bhreathnach and G. McDonnell, eds, International Conference on Credit Transfer in Europe: Proceedings, National Council for Educational Awards, Dublin, 1990, pp.71-74.
- McGivney, V., The Women's Education Project — Northern Ireland: An Evaluation, The Women's Education Project, Belfast, 1990.
- Mulrine, C., J. O'Neill and B. Rolston, Community Development Review Group (Northern Ireland): A report into funding and support for community development in Northern Ireland, Community Development Review Group, Belfast, 1990.
- Pollard, D., 'Structures of Credit Accumulation and Transfer', in E. Bhreathnach and G. McDonnell, eds, International Conference on Credit Transfer in Europe: Proceedings, National Council for Educational Awards, Dublin, 1990, pp.45-49.

# The Catholic Voluntary School and Community Education

*Sr. Teresa McCormack*

*Sr. Teresa McCormack is a member of the Education Secretariat of the Conference of Major Religious Superiors.*

Community education can be broken down into two inextricably related parts: education which is for the personal advancement of individuals and which is also for the collective advancement of communities. It has, therefore, implications for all those engaged in education at every level, both formal and non-formal. In this article, I use community in the sense of neighbourhood community and in some cases community of interest.

The Catholic Voluntary school has not had a tradition of systematic involvement in community education. In recent years however, all schools including Catholic Voluntary, are exploring new roles in relation to community education. In this article, I will refer to some of the factors which are contributing to this change. I will then explore some ways, appropriate to schools, in which they can become involved in community education. Finally, I will highlight a number of implications for schools in implementing this community education dimension.

## Why Schools Should be Involved in Community Education

There are many reasons why schools should be involved in community education. The basis for these are well developed by many writers in the field (e.g. Poster, Lovett, Rennie, Bastiani). All refer to rapid changes and developments, both in education and society as a whole.

Sociologists highlight the systemic wholeness of society and the interdependence of all its parts. Application of this general systems approach to education means that children cannot be educated adequately in isolation but are part of an interdependent system comprising home, school and community. An extensive and rapidly growing body of research substantiates this interdependence and points out the need for partnership between home, school and community in the education of young people. Such partnerships are contributing to better academic achievement, improved school environment and the revitalisation of families and communities (Henderson, 1987). In particular, research and practice indicate that new partnership arrangements are central to tackling the problem of educational disadvantage. In this regard, a recent ESRI report calls for "intervention at an early age, built around the development of stronger links between school, home and community" (Breen, 1991).

Secondly, changing patterns of employment and the changing relationships between jobs, work and unemployment raise questions about the relevance and appropriateness of school curricula. A curriculum which was designed largely for a homogenous 30-40% of 16 year olds in the 1960s, is no longer considered an appropriate response to differences in interests, needs and work prospects of the majority of the nation's 16 year olds in the 1990s. Schools, in seeking to develop alternative curricula, are offering a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities in different settings - both school and community based - and are involving

variety of agents. Recent National Council for Curriculum and Assessment proposals indicate a commitment to upgrade and extend such alternative programmes.

Thirdly, for the reasons already cited and others, such as an aging population and a growing demand for communities to shape their own situations, there is an increased awareness of the need for opportunities for life-long learning. Schools are becoming aware that their considerable resources — plant, personnel, equipment — have the potential to respond to some at least of these needs for life-long learning. Such thinking is highlighted at a time when numbers are beginning to fall in schools and extra space is becoming available. It is particularly relevant in disadvantaged areas where the school may be the only major facility in the area.

Finally, there is a growing awareness of the need to recognise the democratic rights and responsibilities of the educational partners in the life of the school. Recent ministerial circulars to schools indicate a move towards firmly establishing the role of parents as partners with schools in the education of their children. Parents, in becoming collectively involved with the school, may become the bridge builders in the collective advancement of their communities.

These four reasons, among others, are contributing to a reexamination on the part of all schools of their role in community education. There is, however, an additional factor which does and should influence the relationship between the Catholic Voluntary school and community education. That factor is the special concern of the Catholic school for providing an education that is illumined by the light of faith. Such an education supports and is supported by the lived faith of the Catholic community for whom "action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of society is a constitutive element of the preaching of the Gospel" (Synod of Bishops, 1971). The whole school community, comprising management, parents, teachers, students is challenged to give expression to this 'faith that does justice' in every facet of the educational enterprise. In many cases however, especially in disadvantaged areas, the involvement of the whole school community in the educational enterprise is not possible unless special strategies are engaged in to empower parents and whole communities to assume their roles as partners with the school in the education of their children and in the development of their communities. These situations present a special concern for the Catholic school and its local Church community.

## Involvement in Community Education

There are many ways in which all schools can become involved in in community education. A number of these can be summarised under what I refer to as 'partnership approach'. The Catholic Voluntary school by integrating the faith/justice dimension into this approach makes it distinctive.

A partnership approach is built on the principles of community education. These include accessibility, accountability, participation, empowerment, inter-agency cooperation and an understanding of education as a process of life-long learning. The adoption of these principles has particular implications for the school's overall internal organisation, both in relation to its management structures and processes and to its curricular provisions. For example, participative decision-making processes are facilitated and systematically evaluated at all levels - management, staff, parents and students; curricular provisions endeavour to be needs-directed both in relation to personal needs of the individual and collective needs of the community; cooperative and communal values are valued and rewarded and influence all aspects of the school life. These practical expressions of the principles of community education are incompatible with a school culture which is dominantly competitive; with processes of

selectivity and streaming; with an over-emphasis on cognitive learning and an absence of a variety of assessment and accountability mechanisms.

A school which adopts a partnership approach organises itself at three different levels in relation to community education. The first relates to the particular types of learning opportunities which are provided for young people to prepare them to contribute to the advancement of community; the second relates to the empowerment of parents to participate fully in all aspects of school life; the third focuses on the maximisation of resources.

### Learning for the Development of Community

In addressing this aim, the school shares the belief that to prepare for a future in which human beings will work collaboratively, new patterns of learning are needed. It recognises that “only a small part of this new style can be taught in the conventional classroom” (Theobald, 1987). It therefore promotes a variety of learning opportunities which occur in appropriate settings both in and out of school. This learning is facilitated by the most competent agents, both professional and non-professional. In particular these learning opportunities are directed towards preparing young people for active involvement in the development of community and of a just society. The school therefore emphasises opportunities which promote co-operative and communal values, critical reflection and teamwork.

### Participation of Parents

The key principles of community education — empowerment and participation — guide the approach to involving parents in the life of the school. The Board of Management is the formal structure through which parent representatives are involved in decisions which affect the school. In the partnership approach, the Board of Management and Principal work with Parent Councils to seek ways of engaging all parents in meaningful consultation. However, meaningful consultation requires effective communication and education around the relevant issues. In order to implement such an educative and consultative process core leadership teams of parents/community members are trained in leadership and facilitation work. These teams mobilise parents in small groups in their own communities as well as in the school. Special facilities, e.g. a parents room, are made available to parents in the school. In this way, parents are enabled to identify their own needs as parents and how they can collectively participate in the life of the school. Groups of parents engage in learner-centred programmes such as parenting and begin to learn to work in partnership with the school through, for example, formulating discipline codes, developing specialised programmes in areas such as social education and religious education. As a recent Vatican document points out, parents are engaged in: “helping to plan the goals of the schools” and “determining the degree of success in achieving these goals” (Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988). They are therefore no longer ‘clients’ of the school; rather a transaction between equals — parents and professionals — is established. Through participating in identifying their own needs and together seeking solutions, in many cases parents are empowered to become educators and agents of change not only in their schools but also in their own communities.

### Maximising Resources

In practice, the maximisation of resources, through, in particular, the dual use of facilities can be promoted more for financial and political reasons than for the purposes of community education. In serving the purposes of community education a key task of the school is to

contribute to establishing an appropriate community education network to meet local needs and in particular to promote the development of community. Because of the resources available to the school it may frequently be at the centre of this network.

Working for these reasons rather than for purely financial or political ones, schools plan to make their resources available on a dual use basis and to actively promote the use of school, both in and out of school hours for adult and community education. Rather than providing pre-designed courses to meet predetermined needs, participatory and needs-directed activities are promoted primarily. Parent involvement activities of the type already described are pursued on this basis. The school therefore becomes a centre where groups of retired people, unemployed groups, adolescents, women's groups etc. gather around their own concerns. As a result, inter-generational groupings of many of the above pursue common interests. In many cases, this work gives rise to outreach activities within communities for the purpose of the development of community.

## Implications

For all schools, implementation of the principles of a partnership approach can contribute to overall school effectiveness. Its implementation, however, requires fundamental changes in many aspects of school life, as already indicated. More specifically, it has resource and financial implications.

In some schools the costs incurred can be met by a redistribution of resources, careful budgeting and the creative generation of new sources of income. However, schools in disadvantaged areas require special attention for the following reasons. Firstly, few sources of income generation exist for such schools. Secondly, experience shows that the mobilisation and involvement of parents usually requires, as a first step, extensive personal contact ranging from house visitation to small group work in out-of-school settings. Personal development needs tend to surface initially in parents' expressed needs and must be addressed before steps can be taken to move into more school related concerns. Experience shows that this work can be served by a full-time resource person e.g. home/school/community liaison person. Additional resources must therefore be targeted to disadvantaged schools both in the form of a specific community education budget and resource person.

In the absence of State funding to at least a selected number of schools, trustees need to adopt two strategies simultaneously. Firstly, they need to engage in advocacy and lobbying activities for the allocation of specific resources to community education. Secondly, they need to demonstrate, by modelling the partnership approach, particularly in schools serving disadvantaged areas, what can and should be done through a community education provision.

## Concluding Remarks

When schools engage with a broad range of family and community resources in the education enterprise, overall educational outcomes are improved for both young people and adults. The role and responsibility of the total community in educating its young people is also acknowledged. As a result, young people learn in and with community and are enabled to reflect together on the kind of society and community they wish to be part of shaping. Through active participation, families and communities become empowered to reflect on their own situations, to assume their partnership role in relation to the education of young people and to work both for their own collective advancement as parents and for the development of their

own communities. For the Christian community and the Secondary Voluntary School this integrated action reflection process is guided by 'a faith that does justice'.

Schools working out of this understanding of community education become instruments and mediators of opportunities where learning and living meet. They are no longer the only agents of education but one of many partners creating together educational networks and building educative communities. The challenge for schools is to develop new ways of working, which empower the various partners to assume their complementary roles and which respect and value their essential and distinctive contributions.

## Bibliography

- Bastiani, J., Working with parents. A whole school approach, Windsor, NFER-NELSON, 1989.
- Breen, R., Education, Employment and Training in the Youth Labour Market, Paper No. 152, Dublin, ESRI, 1991.
- Henderson, A., The evidence continues to grow, Colombia, Maryland, National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1987.
- Lovett, Y., Clarke, C. and Kilmurray, A., Adult education and community action, Kent, Groom Allum Ltd, 1983.
- McCormack, T., "Approaches to family and community education", In CMRS Proceedings of the Conference Education for Family and Community Development, Dublin, CMRS, 1989.
- Poster, C. & Kruger, A. (eds), Community education in the western world, London, Routledge, 1990.
- Rennie, J., "Why Community Education?" in Poster, C. & Kruger, A. (eds), Community education in the western world, London, Routledge, 1990.
- Synod of Bishops, Justice in the world, 1971.
- Theobald, R., Rapids of Change, Indianapolis, Knowledge Systems, 1987.
- Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education, The religious dimension of education in a Catholic school, Veritas, 1988.

# Dublin Institute of Adult Education

3 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1.  
Tel: 787266 Fax: 364755

**Newly decorated conference facilities  
available at reasonable rates**

**Academy Hall for up to 120 people  
10 workshop rooms (20-40 people)**

**Full catering service on request (courtesy of Brian Boru Cafe - Larking Workers Co-operative)**

**Conference equipment (video, TV, overhead & slide projectors) included in price**

**Creche facility for hire • Residential accommodation (16 rooms) June-September**

**Contact Person: Sharon Wylie**

**— 40 YEARS FACILITATING ADULT LEARNING —**

**For a full brochure of all our courses and other enquiries, just phone or call in**

# Can Networking Work?

*Deirdre Rice*

*Deirdre Rice is currently Project Officer with the Community Education Development Centre at the University of Ulster. In September she takes up a post as tutor organiser with the Workers Educational Association.*

## Background

The Department of Education in Northern Ireland has just issued its long awaited statement concerning the future of Further Education in the Province. This statement ends the nervous speculation that D.E.N.I. was going to adopt proposals put forward in the white paper on the mainland, (where F.E. colleges are being removed from local authority control), and establish a centralised Funding Council for the Further Education sector. If plans for the Funding Council had been given the go-ahead, then the five Education and Library Boards would have delegated the entire management of the Further Education sector to the Council. Many have feared that in one such stroke, all the constructive ideas relating to the broader role and structure of Further and Adult Education, as indicated in the consultative paper *Signposts for the 90's* (1), could have suffered total eclipse.

The government's announcement states that an overhaul of Further Education in Northern Ireland will indeed take place, but emphasizes that the Province's twenty-four colleges will remain under the control of the five Area Boards. The government has, nevertheless, decided to establish a review group to report — within six months — on present Further Education and Higher Education provision within the sector. What the statement does not do, however, is to signal an end to a long and weary period of transition, change and uncertainty in the field of Adult Education. Rather, it has simply added yet another dimension of uncertainty to an increasingly delicate 'crystal maze'.

## A Network for Adult Education

Changes in the economy and in the age structure of the population are altering the client base for Further Education. The *Signposts* document suggests looking towards adults as a new target group, and recommends a collaborative development approach with voluntary and community organisations to facilitate this move. In this context, it would appear that community based education is a prime area of interest for Further and Higher Educational bodies. It would also seem to create vast opportunities for the voluntary sector to demonstrate a whole repertoire of skills which have been acquired through long-standing experience of working on an educational level, at the coal face. Since Further Education college staff have limited expertise in dealing with adults as a client group, networking with community organisations could provide Further Education with the information and training it needs to tackle the complicated issues involved. For example, it could help to adapt a more dynamic outreach approach; design courses for adults which would attract them into Further or Higher Education; learn appropriate teaching methods; and acquire attitudes, skills and counselling dimensions which are essential for adult learners.

The *Signposts* document places strong emphasis on training people for the world of work,

and on how the needs of industry must be met. It even suggests that Further Education courses should be delivered in the workplace. However, it must be said that training people solely for employment is a very unbalanced provision. And it is here that community organisations could play an important and more active part by providing the educational aspects and activities to which D.E.N.I. does not adequately refer. Signposts does recommend that colleges examine the possibility of voluntary organisations making community education provision on the colleges' behalf. It must be presumed then that by liaising with the non-statutory sector, Further Education could design and develop issue based courses relevant to the community, and which could provide a solid basis for continuity and access to mainstream education. Therefore, it is in the interest of Further Education colleges to be responsive to a network approach, since funding will be based on its ability to attract enrollments.

Networking will not happen without many accompanying difficulties. For example, it is generally accepted that there is much conflict and mutual distrust between statutory and non-statutory agencies. Also, to date, there has never been an inter-institutional rational policy on Community/Adult Education. Moreover, no unity of approach on this area has ever been agreed, thus leaving every Further Education college in Northern Ireland with a different perspective as to what Adult Education actually is. Many colleges simply rely on the enthusiasm of individual tutors, which often results in conflicting examples of practice. Considering such difficulties, and in light of the forthcoming government review, the Further Education sector in Northern Ireland must now realise that if an efficient network is to become a reality, then Adult Education must be firmly located within a theoretical framework: a framework informed by the literature, examples of practice—especially within the non-statutory sector—and the practitioners themselves. It is essential that this be so, in order that vague references and casual encounters can be avoided. Bob O'Hagan highlights this point when he argues against the assumption that Community Education is merely a unifying force which brings people together: The assumption that Community Education is a broad church with a common aim but diverse practices,... discourages critical examination of purpose. (2)

It is policy makers and administrators who contribute (perhaps inadvertently) to such 'myths' concerning Community Education, as they often fail to consider the ideologies and theoretical constructions behind the practice. During the present period of uncertainty, (which will continue until the completion of the imminent governmental review), the incentives to work positively together can be summarised as follows:

- It is much more sensible to pool resources, both human and material.
- Funding is much more likely to be given on a collaborative development basis.
- There will be less duplication and a more effective service delivery. Networking in this way can serve educational needs at a neighbourhood level without undermining traditional education. Indeed, the non-statutory sector would be wise to recognise the relevant contribution made by a professional in educational terms. The baby must not be thrown out with the bath water.

## A Network for the Future

The myriad of existing organisations within the statutory and non-statutory sectors agree on many of the principles concerning a range of social, economic and political problems. What they vary on is a strategy to enable work on these areas to be carried out. However, a common factor which draws a veritable host of organisations together, either willingly or unwillingly,

is the community based approach which is being used to tackle the numerous problems facing government, local authorities, voluntary and statutory bodies. This integrated approach is gaining ground. And when many organisations are committed to this community based problem solving approach, a network becomes less amorphous. Even if this network has evolved as a safety net for poor government policies, this should not be a reason for its rejection. The reality of the situation means that there are voluntary, community and statutory bodies in Northern Ireland working on common issues and themes. In many instances voluntary/community organisations, whose prime function is not education and whose structures are less formal, have in fact greater access to community needs and potential learning situations than the traditional adult educators. Therefore, Universities, Further Education colleges and voluntary Adult Education organisations should be developing a network through which needs and interests can be explored with those *outside* the established Adult Education system. There is substantial evidence to show, that once people can be engaged in an educational process — no matter how apparently uncontroversial the concern — they can more readily progress to task oriented and even academic paths. In this respect, a network of community based learning constitutes an important access route for more formal learning — University admissions officers take note! The collaborative development outlined above is the *sine qua non* of a realistic network.

### Conclusion

Were a coherent and rational policy to be implemented for Adult Education in Northern Ireland, then networking might become an ongoing working reality. With the review of Further and Higher Education provision about to take place in the Province, will the positive thought processes (enshrined in the Signposts document) concerning working partnerships have to start all over again? It could have been a very good marriage.

### References

- (1) When D.E.N.I. released its plans for Education Reform (March, 1988), it stated that, in addition to the provision which would be made in legislation for delegation of financial powers and responsibilities to colleges, other issues relating to the broader role and structures of Further Education would be reviewed in due course. The consultative paper Signposts for the 90's was issued in June 1990 to fulfill that commitment.
- (2) Bob O'Hagan, "Community Education in Britain: some myths and their consequences", in Community Education — An Agenda for Educational Reform, edited by Allen, Bastiani, Martin and Richards (Open University Press, 1989), Chapter 4, p. 73.

# Adult Education and Travellers

*Fran McVeigh*

*Fran McVeigh is a youth and community worker with the Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group.*

**M**ost Travellers have been unable to avail of the educational facilities which are designed for the settled community. Consequently many are illiterate and do not have a clear understanding of the social forces or structures which govern their lives. In an environment where they experience discrimination and hostility it is essential, from a community work point of view, that Travellers be enabled to develop their talents and be given the opportunity to grow in awareness of their identity, history and current reality as well as future possibilities. Only then can they act collectively in a way which promotes their rights and interests. In designing courses for Travellers the Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group (DTEDG) felt it could partly fill the educational vacuum which exists and thereby contribute to Travellers struggle for justice. In a small survey conducted on the participants of the first DTEDG Adult Education course the average period of time for attending school was 3-4 years and this didn't necessarily mean on a continuous basis. In further courses this average has not changed dramatically.

This lack of regular schooling for sufficient period of time obviously has serious implications for participants and for staff. In relation to the participants, it meant that most have a very limited vocabulary, short concentration spans and lack of familiarity with performing in a classroom context. For staff it demanded special efforts to adopt tuition methods which enabled all participants to participate and the use of language which could be easily understood.

The process/methodology and content of the courses and other programmes are designed to achieve the objectives of our educational work with Travellers. The process consists of talks, large and small group discussions and experimental learning. Central to the process is the emphasis on learning through doing, achieved by undertaking concrete tasks, followed by group reflection and sharing. This action-reflection-action process is designed to stimulate critical and creative thinking which is in fundamental contrast with the various social pathology models which influence education and training of "the disadvantaged" especially Travellers. Such models attempt to include "social and life skills", giving them a progressive appearance, while still seeing the problems faced by Travellers in terms of personal inadequacy to be shared by remedial education i.e. coping mechanisms to better adapt to (not challenge) existing institutions.

DTEDG's Adult Educational opportunities for Travellers cover a wide variety of topics which include travellers history, language, culture, discrimination, rights, current realities, racism awareness and developing anti-racist strategies. Other topics include Irish Society, Personal Development, Social Exposure, Women and Enterprise.

The methodology has to be creative and stimulating, so various techniques are used to ensure successful involvement in the courses. Frequent use is made of videos, slide shows, games, quizzes, debates, role play, stimulations and discussion to enable even the shy individuals to participate and feel part of the process. There is no easy kit-bag of methods which can be simply transferred from one situation to another. It is therefore always important to have some mechanism for testing the methods before using them in sessions.

To ensure take-up of educational opportunities, it is therefore important to:

- be sensitive to the needs and respect the identity of Travellers
- base the approach on an action-reflection-action model (rather than an abstract academic approach)
- be committed to the principle of self-determination and therefore promote active participation
- recognise the importance of personal growth, leadership training and collective action. As adults have become more involved in the education process there has been an increased take-up of schooling by Travellers (though not necessarily as a direct result!).

Based on the DTEDG's experience of educational work with Travellers over the past seven years we have identified a number of concerns. Firstly many Travellers feel that the present educational system doesn't meet their educational needs. Secondly, they express frustration and anger at the forms of segregation experienced within the system. Thirdly, they often cite incidents of discrimination and racism and finally, they are very critical of the standard of education provided and the lack of a culturally appropriate curriculum. Mainstream adult educational programmes also need to make a commitment to the inclusion of Travellers in order that they can participate in an environment which is conducive to learning.

To foster a civic educational system there is a need to promote and legitimize the cultures of ethnic groups. In the Irish educational system this is particularly important in relation to Travellers whose culture has been systematically denied and rejected down through the years. This creates a major challenge for those committed to greater equality at all levels in the educational system. DTEDG acknowledges that Adult Education can and does play a most important role in the lives of Travellers but that without a conscious effort to include Travellers within mainstream Adult Education opportunities, it may be being exclusive.

## A joint UCD/RTE initiative in Adult Education Television Programmes



RTE 1	Women's Studies	Animals, Science & Society	RTE 1
1	Changing Lives	Partners and Friends	1
2	Faith of Our Mothers	The Nature of Deer	2
3	Round the Clock	A Breed Apart - The Horse in Ireland	3
4	Bottom of the Class	The Farm Laboratory	4
5	High Time for all the Marys!	Bio-technology - An Emerging Science	5
11.45 a.m.	Wednesday	Friday	11.45 a.m.

The Series is a Production of The Audio Visual Centre, University College Dublin

Series Commencing RTE1 30th October 11.45 am

# Book Reviews

## *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning*

by Jack Mezirow and Associates, Oxford: Jossey-Bass, 1990, pp 388, Price \$36.50

Some books bring back memories you thought you had forgotten. I now remember again the first time I rode a bus in the American South and saw that white people sat in the front and blacks at the back. I remember too having a frustrating and disorienting discussion with a South African policeman in Moscow. Why are these half remembered events coming back? Something important is happening when key events in my life come back to be reworked and reexamined. But I will return to this later. I remember too times spent studying at Columbia University in New York with Jack Mezirow as my advisor. Five of the contributors come from Columbia but all seventeen writers share a lively concern for critical learning.

Paulo Freire made an indelible mark on the language, theory and practice of adult education. Many are excited by the possibility of freedom that is central to his teaching. Some engage in consciousness raising and attempt to translate into the Irish situation the praxis Freire found so effective in South America. How do you do consciousness raising? Are there ways of doing it? Methods? If I wanted to engage a group of adults in this process how might I go about it? This book by Mezirow answers these questions. But it also does much more. Jack Mezirow and Associates have attempted to construct a theory of adult learning and a process that leads to critical reflection. This book opens with a chapter by Jack Mezirow exploring the theoretical framework for understanding the nature and functions of reflection. It shows how critical reflection makes possible the process of transformative learning. In the remainder of the book, other authors who attempt the kind of consciousness raising described by Mezirow in their teaching outline their methods, their theoretical contexts and give a detailed explanation of how these methods can be used to foster critically reflective learning and action.

The opening chapter clarifies the connection between critical thinking and the concept of reflection. The process he advocates is that of becoming aware of the "meaning perspectives" we always use in our making sense of the world and in guiding our actions. These perspectives are the structure of assumptions within which we do our thinking, feeling, judging, acting, etc. These perspectives are learned intentionally or otherwise. But mostly they are uncritically acquired. Mezirow is proposing that becoming aware of these assumptions, acquiring more appropriate ones and acting on the basis of these is the kind of learning that is of most significance for adults. He is proposing that critical adult learning is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting upon these new understandings. (p. 14)

Unfortunately, Mezirow is not very helpful to the reader who might be coming across these ideas for the first time and few references are made in otherwise helpful reading lists at the end of each chapter to where these ideas have been worked out in greater detail. In the next twelve chapters are six "Exemplary Programs" (sic) and "Six Key Approaches To Helping Adults Become Critically Reflective". Twelve concrete (not misplaced), practical and real examples of critically reflexive learning and education. Victoria Marsick starts with a description of

"Action Learning in the Workplace" where critical self-reflection is possible. Action learning is defined and programmes are described which help employees and managers learn what Argyris calls double-loop learning.

Methchild Hart then discusses "Liberation through Consciousness Raising" where critical reflection is a tool for transformative learning in the context of feminist education. She warns against getting "stuck in the personal," e.g. sharing personal experiences and feelings, and proposes that critical learning has the radical intent of examining and overcoming oppression. Thomas Heaney and Aimee Horton describe a process of "Reflective Engagement for Social Change." Both are involved in Community Empowerment work and from sit-ins in the 1960s to Housing Projects in Chicago, they do consciousness raising in an attempt to solve real problems in the city.

A theologian next takes up the story. William B. Kennedy proposes the telling of one's life history as the raw material for learning. His own story is provocative and made me remember those half forgotten events from the past. How might it be done in a group? Kennedy is good at this. But he emphasises that an autobiographical search is done in order to identify the ideologies at work in our histories, e.g. racism, sexism or classism.

Irvin Roth in "Challenging Habits of Expectation" brings insights from psychotherapy as does Roger Gould in a computer based "Therapeutic Learning Programme." Roth emphasises the inescapable nature of distortion in creating our models of the world. Gould's previous work would lead one to see that the learning he encourages is indeed transformative and emancipatory. It is difficult to judge if the soft-ware package, even if there is some interaction with a therapist, will lead to significant learning. It offers the possibility of short-term psychotherapy helping people through transitions. Here there are rather obvious differences between those who advocate personal transformation and those who link this to radical social and systemic change. It would have been interesting to hear the contributors deal with this kind of issue. Developmental psychology has thrown light on cognitive (Piaget), moral (Kohlberg, Gilligan) and faith development (Fowler). Karen Kitchener and Patricia King leave me wanting to know more about the development of epistemic assumptions and how these act as meaning perspectives that radically affect our understanding.

Stephen Brookfield has two chapters. One is on the hugely important area of Critical Incidents and how they can be used to explore assumptions. When linked with chapters on Educational Biography by Pierre Dominice and Progoff Journal Writing by Joseph Lukinsky, we see the development of a set of ways of working in the area of consciousness raising. Brookfield's second article shows how media analysis prompts reflection on one's assumptions.

The final essay in this section of the book is by Maxine Greene who encourages the reader to take up literature and see its emancipatory potential. The active reader — one cannot be passive says Sartre — brings into being an imaginary world which interacts with 'stored' material in the memory of the reader. The adult educator interested in literature will help their students to become present to fiction, provoke among them an unease that leads to wonder and enquiries, that awakens passion and provokes desires to choose and to transform. In a nation with a rich heritage of outstanding fiction, we might listen carefully as Greene passionately unfolds its emancipatory potential. She writes well.

The final section of the book deals with four specific approaches for mapping meaning perspectives — repertory grids, metaphor analysis, action-reason-thematic technique and conceptual mapping. As a book with so many contributors, it holds together remarkably well. Its aim of being theoretical and practical is achieved. All contributors are practitioners too and

articulate well the theoretical foundation of their practice. The repeated references back to the Mezirow article which sets the agenda is useful.

It needs a critique. In the book a section might have been given to outlining some critical comments on the theory and the methods. This would be in the interests of dialogue and in the interests of an adult education aware of its own presuppositions. It is a book for the student of adult education. It is not a book for those looking for a bag of tricks or ready made materials to be taken to their classes. But it will stimulate thinking and provoke and encourage teachers to take the risk of engaging with their students in new and imaginative ways which will open the possibility of transformative and emancipatory learning. It will become recommended reading on graduate programmes in adult education.

*Ted Fleming, Lecturer, RTC, Dundalk*

### ***The Women's Education Project — Northern Ireland: An Evaluation***

by Veronica McGivney, The Women's Education Project, Belfast 1990

The challenge facing Veronica McGivney in this action research document is not just to outline and analyze facts, but to convey in a very real way the excitement, vitality and enthusiasm that is the life blood of small community education projects struggling against the odds. To translate this onto the pages of a research document and to do justice to either the people or the process involved is no easy task. To attempt to do otherwise is to misunderstand what adult and community education is all about.

At first glance this report, in its starkness, is in danger of falling victim to such lofty aspirations. It looks somewhat awesome and its format and layout make it at times unappealing and heavy going. However, to consign it to the nearest shelf without a second glance would be a mistake for all adult educators, not just those with an interest in women's education. In essence, this evaluation offers a revealing insight into the confusing landscape that is adult and community education in Northern Ireland and in particular, it offers a glimpse of the work of a small, effective, women's education project struggling for survival.

This report is an evaluation of a voluntary community education initiative, the Women's Education Project, set up eight years ago in Belfast. It documents what it is, how it has developed, its methods of working and how it might be developed in the future. As an action research project, it is a valuable source of information on informal adult education provision and an interesting critique of a community education project at work. From a southern perspective, the emergence of any research on adult education is always welcome because it helps us to focus on how our own experience relates to that described here and the extent to which the basic principles and philosophies which we espouse underpin our own work. The integration of such qualitative evaluation into our system is an argument much proffered but little acknowledged. Practitioners and participants alike will find much to relate to in this evaluation.

The report comprises three sections: the first looks at the socio-economic and educational framework from which the project emerged and the manner in which it has developed since its inception in 1983; the second deals with the effectiveness of the approaches, philosophies and methodologies employed; the final section attempts to highlight the issues raised by the experience of the project and how they might inform subsequent initiatives and the overall policy and delivery structures for adult education in Northern Ireland.

The Women's Education Project was set up to improve the educational opportunities for women from socially and economically disadvantaged areas of Belfast and its environs. It is essentially an innovative, developmental project which discriminates positively in favour of working class women and is rooted in the philosophy of empowerment and validation so central to good adult education practice. That such a phenomenal output in terms of provision, training, curriculum development and liaison should be achieved by so few without compromising the mode of delivery is a significant achievement and one which is deserving of our admiration. Those involved in similar projects here will readily identify with the activities undertaken, the methods used and indeed the problems encountered along the way. That this is a project on short term trust funding and one which seemingly falls outside the parameters for core funding provided by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, through the Education and Library Boards, tells its own story. One can only begin to imagine how time consuming and soul destroying this search for funds among the myriad charitable trusts has been. The overriding impression is of a confused, uneasy relationship between formal and informal provision, the cost of which is very heavily borne by small projects like the Women's Education Project. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that "... there is no infrastructure for community adult education in Northern Ireland". This combined with the failure to reconstitute the Northern Ireland Council for Continuing Education since 1988 leaves one in no doubt as to the value placed on such initiatives for women by a system whose indicators for success are based on principles of efficiency and economy.

The central section of the report focuses on the evaluation proper; looking at how successful the W.E.P. has been in meeting its initial aims of accessibility, empowerment, support and liaison; its effectiveness in meeting the needs of its client group; its success in meeting funding criteria and its impact on community groups and by extension, the wider community. It is here that a critical dilemma for the project becomes most apparent. While there is overwhelming agreement that the project has had a significant impact on the lives of individuals and groups, its impact on the wider community is less certain. There is some evidence that the approaches of the W.E.P. have gained credibility but also a clear acceptance by them that they are "... failing to affect overall policy".

In the final analysis, it is the multi-dimensional, holistic approach adopted by the W.E.P. which has been the cornerstone of its success and its Achilles's heel. As a small, independent, neutral project it has been able to adopt a flexible, supportive approach which is essential to success at grassroots level. However constraints of size, resources and finances have conspired to create a situation where there is "... no widespread awareness of its methods and achievements, or the scope of its activities..". Ironically, the projects target group is also one of its inherent difficulties as women are not seen as a funding priority. It doesn't fit neatly into the remit of any single, central funding authority and suffers financially as a result.

This is an honest, informative evaluation of a project which has provided an "... accessible, non-threatening and stimulating route back to learning..." for women who need it. It is interesting and thought provoking but it's not saying anything that hasn't been said many times before. What is disturbing is that despite years of hope, determination and struggle, North and South, the questions are still the same. There is no acknowledgement, no policy, no structures and no real support. This evaluation report has a lot to say to policy makers, administrators and practitioners — but the question remains: is there anyone listening?

*Eileen Curtis, Adult Education Organiser, Co. Kilkenny*

## *Community Work in Ireland: Trends in the 80's - Options for the 90's*

Published by the Combat Poverty Agency, 1990, pp 310, Price: £5.00

This publication consists of the papers delivered at a Community Workers National Conference held in Kilkenny in September 1989. Contributors include a sprinkling of academics (two from Maynooth, one from U.C.C. and one ex U.C.D.), three agency Directors, a social policy analyst (from N.E.S.C.), a senior local authority administrator (from Dublin County Council), one London based former teacher and social worker turned author and a whole galaxy of community work luminaries — all Dublin based with one exception.

Given a total of eighteen contributors, the conference papers reflect a wide variety of emphasis, preoccupation and treatment ranging from the broader brush strokes of social policy issues to more minute consideration or description of community work initiatives, issues or interests. It is perhaps inevitable therefore that a book such as this would suffer somewhat from a lack of organic cohesion and display a certain unevenness in content, style and quality of analysis in some of the contributions.

That said, what does emerge clearly from these pages is a fascinating, revealing and quite comprehensive overview of the main issues, trends, developments and difficulties in the community development movement in Ireland during the past decade as well as some significant pointers to developments in the current decade. In addition, many of the individual contributions from community workers at the 'coal face' offer graphic descriptions and insights into the challenges of working alongside people in the margins of Irish society in an effort to promote social change.

These papers, in many cases, give testimony to a gritty integrity, an indomitable idealism and an enthusiastic commitment to a vision of 'a better way' of ordering our affairs which is both impressive and refreshing. Community workers, a bunch of rugged individuals undoubtedly, seem nevertheless to share a common capacity for clear-sighted social analysis offering uncompromising insights into the underlying causes and potential cures of the multiple social diseases savaging the lives of so many of our people — poverty, prejudice, unemployment, racism, injustice and inequality.

One recurrent trend during the 80's identified by several contributors refers to the 'hi-jacking' by the State for its own purposes of the term "community" viz. to shift responsibility for problems like unemployment (and their solution) on to communities and away from the structural causes of joblessness (Crickley and Devlin, Maynooth). As Vincent Tucker (U.C.C.) puts it: "... the term community is now widely used by government agencies and politicians ... because of its evocative nature ... it can also be an ideological smoke-screen which allows state agencies to relate to those 'community' organisations who speak the same language as they do while steering away from those groups which challenge them". Tony McCashin (N.E.S.C.) puts the matter succinctly: "'Community' care, and a whole range of activities conducted under this rubric, may be a substitute for real policy". For Mick Rafferty "... the word 'community' actually means less and less a term within an organic philosophy of development and has become more a tool used by the state to create an illusion of participation of the community in decision making". As an adult educator, one cannot help asking where this leaves 'community' education, 'community' training workshops, 'community' enterprise, 'community' schools not to mention 'community' and democratic participation in the vocational education system?

Another recurrent theme is the tension between the personal and the political in community development work. As Sarah Flynn and John O'Connell put it in their paper, community workers are engaged in a constant struggle "... to manage the tension which exists between an analysis of social issues which finds ultimate explanations at the level of the personal and an analysis which attaches primacy to the structural dimension ...". This tension is evidenced in the focus on personal development for women, on pastoral care in parish community work and serving peoples' individual needs in, for example, social service councils. We in adult education might do well to question whether our provision is (or should be) in the main concerned with meeting the individual learning needs of adults or whether we should be actively seeking to promote social change through emancipatory learning as a priority?

Hugh Frazer's (Combat Poverty Director) paper entitled "Integrated Approaches to Development" addresses another key trend which emerged in the 80's and seems strategically central to community development initiatives in the 90's. His contribution is particularly interesting to Adult Education Organisers in the light of section six of the Programme for Social and Economic Progress which is devoted to initiating precisely this strategy in combatting long-term unemployment at local community level. He outlines five key features of an "ideal" model of integrated development from a community work perspective as follows: such a model is area based, multi-faceted and multi-sectoral, development is planned, uses an area's existing natural resources and is essentially a 'bottom-up' participative development model. He points to a number of European programmes, ranging from Naples, Belfast, Rotterdam and the Western Isles of Scotland, as evidence that integrated action works and is particularly effective in counteracting at local level the essential fragmentation and centralisation of state services. This paper should be required reading for any A.E.O. involved in the twelve pilot projects as integrated area responses to long-term unemployment currently established under the terms of the P.E.S.P.

Besides the forgoing, other contributors offer penetrating insights into the role of the Churches and Community Development (Sarah Flynn and John O'Connell as former religious are extremely well qualified to offer perceptive insights on this topic), the relationship between the State and Community Work (Anna Lee), Travellers and Community Work (Ronnie Fay and Niall Crowley, D.T.E.D.G.), and Community Work Responses to Drug Abuse (Barry Cullen), Unemployment (Mick Rafferty) and Rural Development (Kieron O'Donoghue).

The conference papers enclosed between the covers of this book, while informative, provocative and challenging, also witness to the vitality and energy of working lives spent in the margins of society with marginalized people attempting to change the way things are through participation, empowerment and networking and a rigorous analysis of social realities, powers and processes. These pages vividly testify that community work is political, not personal, a movement rather than a profession, identifies with the marginal, oppressed and poor rather than with the powerful, complacent and rich and like adult education operates in a policy vacuum perennially starved of resources and significant political commitment.

Having read and enjoyed these papers, it seems to me that Adult Educators and Community Development Workers have many interests/roles in common. What a pity that we don't get together and at least talk to each other, perhaps even learn from each other, maybe establish fruitful networking and even discover the possibilities of a symbiotic relationship.

*Tony Downes, Adult Education Organiser, Co. Dublin*

*Writer to Writer — Studies in Community Education*

by Sam Burnside, Workers' Educational Association — NI District, pp 135, Price: £1.50stg

"A model of good practice in adult and community education" is what the blurb claims for "Writer to Writer", a newly published account of a community writing project conducted in Derry and the North West between February 1989 and February 1990.

There already was a thriving network of activity in the arts in that area, thanks to the Workers' Educational Association, pioneers of adult education in Northern Ireland since 1910 and publishers of this book. Sam Burnside, tutor and organiser with WEA, saw the need to explore new ways of providing support for writers' workshops and of extending their influence. So in 1988 he proposed to the district council of WEA that a one-year project be established.

From the beginning the project had a lot going for it. The three pages of acknowledgements would make any arts organiser drool. BBC Northern Ireland is there as well as the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, local media and many other bodies, businesses and individuals. Burnside had an advisory committee as well as a central resource of well-known writers at his disposal. There were also the leaders and facilitators needed at local level.

Initially the core method of creative writing workshops was to be used but with the intention of extending experiences and learning environments and range of participants. Here Burnside uses the image of a fountain or number of small fountains to explain his ideas.

In all there were 211 participants, predominantly women, from Derry (city and county), Donegal, the Sperrin area and from Omagh. Twenty-three activities were covered, the more interesting being a one-day school for writing in Irish, a workshop devoted to tutor training and some exploratory work in areas such as prisons and hospitals and in traditional story telling.

Up to this point "Writer to Writer" impresses in its range, in the clarity of its purpose and the sureness and control of its author. When it comes to dealing with each activity however this control becomes a drawback. Instead of allowing the activity to speak for itself through participant and/or tutor, Burnside opts for his own report, which lacks immediacy and reduces the impact of his final analysis.

Burnside is however aware of the problems inherent in this approach. He shows this, for example, when in "The Downside", he says that he would have liked to have worked more closely and over a longer period of time with a smaller number of writers.

The voices of some participants do eventually get through. Disappointingly, this lasts for a mere ten pages. Michaela Fry says that, whenever she shared her work in a "Writer to Writer" workshop, she learned something from "... owning (her) work in public". The experiences that are available tell of personal growth, broadening horizons and, of course, publishing success. There were problems too, such as lack of leadership, too many personal revelations, insufficient emphasis on the discipline of writing, too narrow forums for discussion and analysis due to, as one participant put it, "war-weariness".

The effectiveness of giving the experience first hand is potently demonstrated in Burnside's account of a weekend in which he himself participated as project leader and which addressed the need for tutor support. In so doing, he allows for a participative role for the reader who can identify the good ideas, the weaknesses, even feel the energy that was generated within the group and this before Burnside, in a reckless moment, mentions the "crack".

Well-known names figure in this publication. David Craig (who is responsible for the MA course in creative writing at the University of Lancaster and who led the above mentioned weekend), Edna Longley and David Marcus write on writing and literature. With the exception

of Craig however these do not make any connection with the project. Craig puts forward the interesting point that a creative writing workshop "is really a literary education in its truest form".

Over the project, as over any exercise of this kind, must hang the one haunting question: is the writing any good? Eavan Boland in her "In Defence of Workshops" (poetry Ireland Review No 31) talks about the "symmetrical irony" in the self-deceptions which are present in both workshops and the more orthodox literary community. "Both" she says, "can mistake self-expression for art." She goes on to affirm a number of small publications, from the subsidised to the shoe-string, arguing that there is no art without self-expression and that a workshop, if properly developed, can make "difficult distinctions between autobiography and poetry, between experience and its expression".

The "Writer to Writer" project did not reach an end with the publication of an anthology of participants' work. Burnside addresses the problem of publishing when he asks what does "good" mean in the context of "local writing". If this issue could be resolved there would be the problem of choice and who would do the choosing. He answers these questions simply: no volunteer editor came forward and anyway the overall opinion was that this was a creative writing enterprise, not, at this stage, a publishing one.

However some people have had work published and broadcast as a result of the project and Burnside says that hopes for publishing a representative body of work are still alive. And there are the small number of participants' poems sprinkled throughout the book. These are strangely without titles. One must wonder too about the term "local writing" which appears frequently in this publication and about the thought processes which produced it.

"Writer to Writer" is a model of good publishing. It is attractive-looking, with great care given to layout and presentation. As an account of a project it is never less than interesting and often enlightening. Not all the activities were successful: some didn't even get off the ground, as with the provision for involvement of a prison and a hospital. Burnside deals extensively with both the problems and successes of the project, demonstrating his intellectual mastery of the task. In his recommendations he ranges wide, from a conference supported by the two Arts Councils to a redefinition of creative writing.

Ultimately one couldn't help wondering about the participants, such as the six in the Sperrin area. It's easy to make judgements at this comfortable distance from what was clearly a huge and courageous undertaking but Burnside says that "as the project developed the terms 'dialogue', 'discussion' and 'debate' became subsumed into the word 'conversation'". One just wishes there had been more of that conversation.

In his untitled poem, Damian Quinn (who led the Sperrin group) is describing a cow calving but could he be describing what happened in his writing group?

"All of us got our arms wet  
Right up to the oxters with this  
Birth, but some struggled harder  
As if their efforts could change  
The course of things .....

*Pauline Brady, Creative Writing Co-ordinator, Dundrum, Dublin*

***Adult Education as a Vocation: A Critical Role for the Adult Educator***

by Michael Collins, London: Routledge, 1991, pp 146, Price: £30.00stg

There are those who feel that the distinction between education and training is unrealistic and artificial. I sometimes get sucked into this, particularly when it comes to making submissions for funding. It is hard to maintain a line that adult education is essentially about enabling people to think for themselves particularly when there is so much poverty and oppression surrounding us, when what the poor and oppressed want is to be part of the system — to have a job, an income and the time to think for oneself and what they and the powers-that-be tell us is that the way to achieve this is through training.

Michael Collins wants adult educators to fight being sucked into the technocratic, efficient world in which they become part of the process through which people are trained, placed, monitored, evaluated and audited like a complicated piece of information technology. What Collins is most against is the whole technique which has been applied to adult learning as if there is the one best way, the optimum form of learning which must be discovered. He detests strategies such as self-paced learning, computer-guided learning, learning contracts and competency-based education. In this process "independent, reflective, thought on the part of the adult learner is effectively usurped by the expert designers of technocratic curricula." The true role of the adult educator, his or her vocation, is to try to counteract these processes or tendencies, to overcome the blocs and barriers to free, open discussion and communication which distort understanding and prevent genuine participatory democracy. Collins is coming from a strand in adult education which has its roots in the thoughts of Lindeman, Hoggart and

# ***WERRC***

**Women's Education Research and Resource Centre  
University College Dublin**

## **COURSES**

**MA DEGREE  
Fulltime & Part-time**

**GRADUATE DIPLOMA  
Fulltime & Part-time**

**CERTIFICATE  
Part-time Evening  
Open entry**

## **ACTIVITIES**

**Public Lectures**

**Research Seminars**

**Workshops**

**Conferences**

**Publications**

**For Further Information, Please Contact:  
WERRC, Room 525, Library Building, UCD, Dublin 4. (01) 706 7002**

Dewey which has grown through the work of people like Freire and Illich and which is now grounded in the Frankfurt School, and Marcuse and Habermas in particular. Collins is coming from this strand and is coming on strong about the role of adult educators in modern society.

The first sacred cow to get knocked on the head is self-directed learning. For Collins, this process — whose main advocate has been Houle — is simply a modern technique which enables the system, including adult educators, to incorporate people without having to rely heavily on teachers. It is essentially a technique of self-discipline and does little to develop autonomous critical thinking or decision-making. "Self-directed learning is presented as a ruse to normalize adults learning projects, accommodating their autonomously determined interests to those of institutionalized and professionalized needs." In relation to adult educators who do research, he documents with approval the general shift since the beginning of the 1980s away from natural scientific methods which relate to human beings more as reified objects for statistical manipulation to methods rooted in participation and trying to sensitise oneself to the experience of the person's life and his or her world.

It is within this context that Collins puts forward his notion of adult education as a vocation. He sees the role of adult educator as one involving a calling and commitment beyond personal career aspirations and job expectations. There has to be a sense of a mission, of being an agent of change, of concern for "shoulds" and "oughts" to take us beyond the realm of technique and technocracy. To avoid becoming the worst kind of missionary, a cultural imperialist, it is necessary to engage constantly in critical self-reflection. This involves a struggle with theory. "Serious commitment to adult education implies that its practitioners, as intellectuals, should be prepared to read and engage with theoretical texts as they begin to theorize their own practice."

When it comes to putting the critical theoretical approach into practice, Collins is somewhat less inspiring. Nevertheless, he recognises that this is of crucial importance and he identifies the problems in addressing needs, programme design and evaluation. But this is in the form of a review. It is not a blueprint or manual as to how it should be done. He argues that while becoming professional can have its attractions and benefits for adult education, it can lead to a concern with creating and maintaining power and this can destroy the adult educator's vocation of enabling emancipation through the critique of power, including that of the professions.

Beyond the primary issue of bureaucratic, technological domination, some of the specific issues which adult educators need to address are modern gender relations, particularly within the family; the environment; and the decentralisation of power and a genuine grass-roots rather than top down approach to participatory democracy.

And so, at the end of the day, Collins exhorts us to strive to attain an ideal. He sees adult educators as the new priests spreading the message of freedom which comes through critical reflection and free, open, undistorted communication. In the face of daily struggle with petty alliances and massive blocs of power where reason and truth are bent for short-term, material ends, the vocation of the adult educator is to stand and proclaim the gospel of reason and rationality for, without it, we will all be crucified.

*Tom Inglis, Director, AONTAS*

## *Guidelines for good Adult Literacy Work - NALA 1991*

These Guidelines outline the basic principles and practice of good adult literacy work and are designed to be a useful resource for all involved in adult literacy work. It builds on NALA's first policy document which was published in 1985, but takes account of developments since then, particularly the emphasis placed on training and the delivery of quality service as part of funded provision at both a national and local level.

The Guidelines start with the basic principles underlying good adult literacy provision then go on to deal with the needs of students in relation to their own learning and their involvement in the organisation of literacy provision. The succeeding two sections concentrate firstly on examples of sound organisational structures and practices from the start-up of a scheme to the maintenance and development of an effective service, and secondly on agencies or services which can be of specific support to those working in literacy in terms of funding, premises, learning materials or training. The final section examines a number of issues including full-time courses, numeracy, special needs, accreditation and research, which are likely to shape the course of literacy work in the next century.

I found these Guidelines very effective. They start from principles which are succinctly stated and then expand on what these principles mean in practice. For example, the principle about the adult status of the learner points out how this should be reflected in the relationship between tutor and student, and the principle about learning as a lifelong process discusses how literacy work can be linked to other educational provision in a realistic and equitable way.

The structure of the Guidelines is also very appropriate in that, having started with principles, it then goes on to consider the needs of students. I found the section on student involvement particularly effective because it discusses how students can be encouraged and supported to develop the confidence and skills that they will need if they are to participate fully in the work. Too many schemes assume that students will want to be involved without giving serious thought to how this involvement can be encouraged.

In discussing "organisation" the Guidelines make an important statement which I would wish to underline, which is that schemes and administrators should opt for quality rather than quantity and thus concentrate on developing good provision for a limited number of people rather than poor provision which results from spreading resources too thinly. Another important discussion relates to the roles of paid and volunteer workers, which points out that the full-time support of experienced personnel in the form of more paid workers is required to complement the important contribution of volunteers.

This section also discusses the value of links with other Schemes and with other education activities, and makes a number of helpful suggestions on how to initiate and develop such links. The final part of this section discusses how the general public can be made more aware of literacy work and considers publicity, recruitment, and campaigning. One statement which I found interesting was that potential students were more likely to respond to national rather than local publicity. In Scotland, although this may be true for local areas, it is not the case for the cities, and it would be interesting to find out if this holds true for other countries too.

Finance is probably the most important issue for literacy schemes and it is appalling that guaranteed funding to ensure adequate provision is still not available. A situation in which most literacy schemes are operating on a grant awarded on an annual basis in arrears helps nobody and should not continue.

From the Scottish perspective the issues chosen for discussion in the final section were

interesting as some, such as numeracy and special needs, are no longer issues here as such provision has been embedded in most schemes for a long time. One issue, accreditation, is a very live issue for Scotland too, and I agree that there is a need for a continuing debate on the most appropriate forms for both students and tutors, although this debate is now urgent as Europe approaches 1992.

In summary, I found this a very valuable document which will not only move the work of literacy forward in Ireland, but will also be very helpful in Scotland. If NALA can find the resources, I think they should publish a brief summary of recommendations which would be a handy reference point for Government, Schemes, and other providers, to have.

*Lynn Tett, Assistant Director, Scottish Community Education Council*

### ***Adult Education, Community Development and Older People: Releasing the Resource***

by Christopher Pilley, Cassell Council of Europe Series, Unpriced

“Older People have to become Agents of Change, rather than Victims of It”

We older people provide a vast area of study for professional experts of all kinds. While many have been specialist studies, it is generally accepted that retirement and ageing have strong negative associations that need to be challenged; the role of the retired is increasing in social importance because of growing numbers, longer life and better health; most are likely to be better off and better educated than their predecessors; retirement and older age should now be seen as offering a new lease of life which calls for new ways of living; choices must be offered for purposeful living with a continuing working role, if desired; continued education in retirement; and worthwhile leisure; older people themselves should take the initiative in creating the proper conditions and attitudes for their lives.

In the context of these conclusions, this book is a welcome source of inspiration and ideas for those who subscribe to the need to challenge negative stereotypes and who work to emphasise positive aspects of ageing — continued physical activity, further education, self-help projects and greater understanding between young and old.

The author, Christopher Pilley, is Senior Development Officer with the Scottish Community Council. His study is based on a report of his visits in 1988 to seventeen projects or organisations in six countries. He uses examples from his study to show how adult education, together with other agencies, can release the potential resource of older people to provide a wealth of valuable skills and experience. Mr. Pilley is enthusiastic and knowledgeable about his subject and writes with clarity. Thankfully, he avoids the use of professional jargon.

A short introduction sets the scene for the main section on the Case Studies. In it, the author details the dramatic trends leading to the ageing of Europe which now results in tomorrow's 'young-old' being richer, better educated and with higher expectations than formerly. He points out why older people will have to be given greater recognition and will have to find a new role and purpose for their lives. The Case Studies are intended to give a few pointers on how this can be done.

Mr. Pilley indicates that, in the Case Studies, the projects were studied on the basis of four main themes: information projects; transition from working to non-working life and the role of self-help programmes; interaction between older people and the rest of the community; and

international exchange projects. However, he does not advert to these themes in dealing with each project though, in a commentary later in the book, he relates the themes to the projects in a general way. I found it difficult to assimilate the information in the Case Studies; perhaps a more structured approach would have helped. The Case Studies cover thirteen projects in detail with brief notes on four others. Some examples are:

- The GILDE (Guild) project in The Netherlands which organises the provision of skills by older people to those needing them.
- The Lewisham Skills Centre in London brings together during school hours, older volunteers to impart skills to 13 to 17 year-olds from eight schools.
- In Denmark, the city of Viborg pioneered the first of 50 study circles for older people. Their work is impressive.
- In Denmark also, Brandbjerg Folk High School (an adult residential college) developed a programme of in-depth educational visits abroad involving both retired people and young unemployed.
- Still in Denmark, the EGV organisation comprises the EGV Foundation for research and funding; EGV Services, LTD; and Danage, a membership organisation. Its range of operations is staggering.
- Other projects dealt with include those in the University of Dortmund, Germany; OIR (Opportunities in Retirement) in Ayr, Scotland; University of the Third Age in Belgium; Pensioners Action Group, Glasgow; and the Federation of Associations of the Third Age in Catalonia, Spain.

My overall impression of the projects was that certain key features apply: most projects receive public funding or other support; most are able to employ professionals; participation in some activities, e.g. travel, requires substantial financial resources; leadership is crucial; many projects feature interaction between older people and younger people; international visits and exchanges are not just holidays but involve considerable preparation and subsequent action.

Inevitably, comparisons will be made with the situation in Ireland. In 1988, Aontas published "Never Too Old to Learn", a study of education for older people in Ireland (compiled by Mary McCarthy). It concluded that "... with the exception of the interesting work being done by Active Retirement Associations, some Adult Education Organisers and a few Health Boards, there is a great paucity in the number of educational courses, projects and activities for older people." I think it would be fair to say that the work of the Federation of Active Retirement Associations would compare very favourably indeed with most of the projects dealt with in this book. There are now over 60 associations with a total membership of over 6,000 who are involved in wide-ranging activities of an 'adult education and community development' character, including administration, art, music, language learning, handicrafts, woodwork, local history, discussions, educational tours, etc. The movement is a completely voluntary self-help organisation. It receives no funding from any source.

What could it not achieve if given the resources?

*Muiris Prenderville, Executive Member, National Federation of Active Retirement Associations*

## *Arts Action: A study of a community development training course in which arts activities were used as tools of learning*

by Jude Bowles

'Arts Action' is the term applied to a model of education devised by CAFE (Creative Activity for Everyone) in which "...Arts activities are used as tools of observation, analysis, communication and action". This model was designed to enable community groups to address issues of relevance to them. The recognised demand for women's training programmes in the area of community development and women's track record in involving themselves both in community activity and personal development courses influenced CAFE in choosing women as the target group.

CAFE piloted the Arts Action method in a community development training course which was contracted and funded by FAS. The pilot, which took place from December '89 until June '90, was targeted at women in disadvantaged areas, in this case, West Tallaght.

The course was thus designed to accommodate women — a creche was provided and women instructors were hired.

'Arts as Education' is a concept which promotes the Arts, not as peripheral to our experience, but as central to interpreting, understanding, and knowing the world around us, which in turn enables us to partake in it more completely.

The Arts Action method is derived from a combination of the theories of Brazilian educationalist, Paulo Freire and 'Arts Education' thinking. Freire argued that people are motivated to act by issues which relate closely to them, and education and development, with a view to action, should be a process of problem-solving by leaders and participants together. There are a number of facets of the Arts Action method as manifested through the Tallaght Arts Action course which distinguishes it from more conventional models of adult education. The most significant of these are the issue-based nature of the course, the use of the Arts as tools of learning and finally, the high level of self-determination practised by the participants.

The participants' control over the course, its content, the way the budget was spent were facilitated by regular meetings at which they evaluated it as a group and planned its progress. The level of control increased as the course progressed. The administrative difficulties created by this were in part overcome by the teamwork skills of the group. These were developed by a series of trust-building exercises which were important to the success of the Arts Action method.

The course employed the Arts, not as an end in itself but, on a personal level, as means of communication and self-discovery, and, on a community level, as a means of initiating and realising social change. The Arts enabled the participants to reflect on and understand the issue at hand prior to taking action. A broad range of Arts activities was explored through the course to demonstrate the full potential of 'the Arts' and to offer something to which each individual could relate.

The success of the course in exploiting this potential is reflected in the social issue the participants chose to address — the lack of Arts provision in West Tallaght. They argued that "... everybody should have the opportunity to experiment with Art and to discover their creative potential". This would be facilitated, not by external organisations but by the participants themselves who recognised their need for further training as Arts workers. From that point on, the course content was based on the needs of the group in achieving their goal.

Tallaght Arts Action, as evaluated by Jude Bowles in her report on the project, seems by

many counts to have been enormously successful. None of the participants dropped out of the course. They all stated increased confidence, communication skills and social awareness, realisation of their own creativity and development of organisational teamwork and leadership skills as personal benefits gleaned from the experience. On a community level, twelve of the participants formed 'Arts Action for Tallaght', a community group which ran Art workshops for others in the area, and went on to take up further training as Arts Workers which is currently being provided by CAFE.

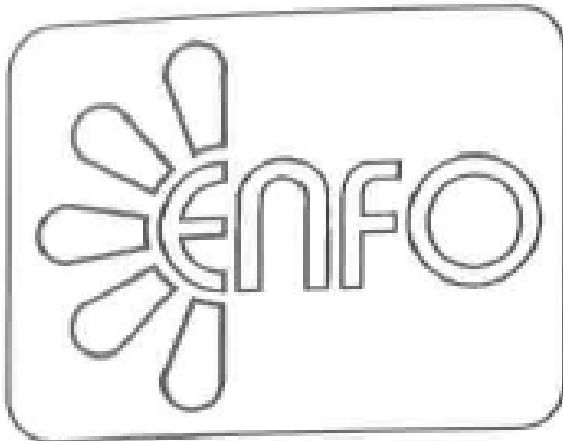
The concept of 'Arts Worker' is still relatively new in Ireland. It asserts that Community Arts is something which requires skill, motivation and training. Jude Bowles' evaluation of Tallaght Arts Action can be read as a rationale for both Community Arts and the Arts Action method. The benefits in terms of personal development and the impact on the immediate are convincing. The long-term benefits have yet to be assessed.

Tallaght Arts Action was designed to encourage the continuation of the project once the actual course was completed. The enthusiasm and conviction of the participants for the contribution the Arts can make to their lives should ensure this. However, unless this enthusiasm and hard work continues to be matched by funding organisations, the long term impact of Arts Action in Tallaght will be limited.

As a model for Adult Education, Arts Action has much to recommend it. Administrators may be reluctant to adopt it for a number of reasons. Placing control over the content of a course into the hands of the participants does not so much create administrative difficulties as require a more flexible approach to planning. In addition to this, the Arts Action method, as practised in West Tallaght, might not work as successfully in a group which was not united by sex, community or objectives. Nevertheless, given this, Educational Authorities would be well advised to exercise determination and imagination in adapting the Arts Action method to their own purposes. By providing out-of-school/adult education which is in keeping with the needs of the recipients, and by working towards the provision of Arts activities in localities formerly deprived of them, they would ensure a sound use of resources. Likewise, Arts Action has much to offer Community groups in terms of working successfully as a team, developing skills of communication and leadership, creative use of resources and employment of the Arts in realising their goals.

*Mary Grehan, Arts Organiser*

# The Environmental Information Service



17 St. Andrew St.,  
Dublin 2.  
Tel: 01-679 3144  
Fax: 01-679 5204  
Open Mon-Sat,  
10am - 5pm

**A drop-in environmental centre providing  
access to information on all environmental topics.**

**Write to, phone or visit ENFO.**

**GROUP VISITS WELCOME BY APPOINTMENT**

- Videos
- Exhibitions
- Reference Library
- Air and River Quality Information
- Computer Book References
- Information Leaflets

**An information pack is available for teachers and  
group leaders on how best to use ENFO facilities.**

**Videos may be viewed in the ENFO centre or borrowed.**

**All of the above mentioned items are free of charge.**