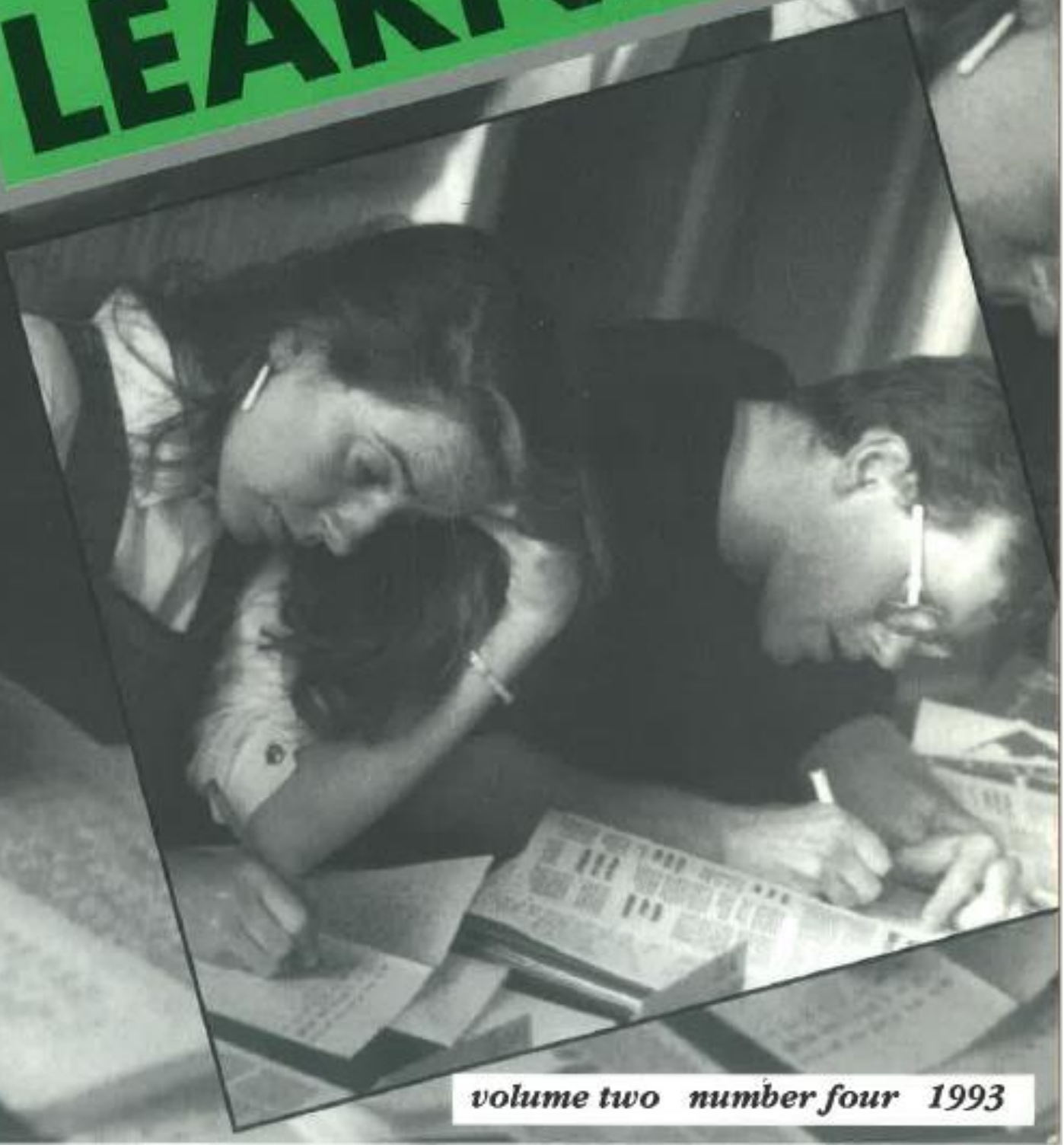
Adult & Community Education in Ireland

THE ADULT LEARNER



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RIGHT TO LEARN

DEVELOPING LEARNING, TRAINING & THINKING SKILLS FOR THE LONG TERM UNEMPLOYED

Right to Learn is a joint RTE/UCD Euroform project to produce:

* 5 Television programmes
* 5 Radio programmes
* Video pack & Workbook
* Fact Sheet Information

The aim of the project is to develop the learning, training and thinking skills of the long term unemployed using television, support materials and local initiatives. The programmes and supplementary materials are being developed in co operation with a group of 20 people who have themselves experienced long term unemployment.

The programmes will be broadcast on RTE in Autumn '93 and the video pack and workbook will be available for groups working in the field of adult education.

For more information contact Sue Russell, Audio Visual Centre, University College Dublin, 01 706 7040.

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Editorial Comment

Recent developments would lead one to believe that adult education is at last emerging into the daylight and being taken seriously. Not seriously enough, however, to lead one to believe that adult education is about to be developed in a carefully planned, systematic manner. In an article in this issue, Noel Dalton examines the involvement of a multiplicity of agencies in the provision of adult eduction courses in one area, many of them addressing identical needs. Apart from the obvious waste of scarce resources, this demonstrates that, while needs are being acknowledged and addressed, there is a lack of any kind of structured response, showing that we still have the ad hoc 'it'll be alright on the night' approach, which has bedevilled adult education provision in this state.

Before the Green Paper turns irretrievably White, there is a unique opportunity, first of all, to develop a policy in adult and community education and secondly, to begin to implement the important elements of such a policy so that we can join our EC partners in showing that we consider adults learning to be as important as children learning. In this regard, the Department of Education might begin by studying another article which outlines an interesting initiative by the City of Limerick VEC and the attempt to develop a continuum of adult learning.

This issue also contains two articles on approaches to accreditation in community development and community education, one from the South and one from the North, as well as a progress report on the AONTAS/NOW inititiative. Tom Inglis has a nicely provocative piece which I am sure that women will enjoy. The danger is that men, as usual, will have their minds made up. My thanks to all contributors, most of whom provided contributions at very short notice indeed.

I am grateful to Tony Downes, who occupied the editorial hot seat for a year and to the members of the editorial board for their enthusiasm and co-operation.

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Editorial Board

Planning and Managing Adult Education at different levels

Deirdre Frawley

Deirdre Frawley is Adult Education Organiser for Limerick City VEC. This article is based on a report published by the Council of Europe.

All over Europe the educational landscape for adults is being reshaped. New forms of adult education seek to address the problems of marginalisation and exclusion in society and to respond to the needs of those most vulnerable to social change, e.g., the long-term unemployed, lone parents, ethnic minorities and the elderly.

One such response is the continuum model of adult education in Limerick city which was designed to broaden access to education and training on a life-long basis. The continuum evolved in Limerick over a period of six to seven years and was influenced by the then adult education provision in the city, by the learning gained during its continuing development and by new international and national initiatives which were implemented during the time in question.

Sowing the Seeds for a Continuum of Learning

Against a background of rising unemployment and growing poverty in the 80's, funding was provided by the Department of Education for the development of programmes geared to meet the needs of a target population not previously included to any significant extent in adult education - those most marginalised within society.

In the mid-80's the Limerick City VEC organised a range of adult education and training programmes to meet the needs of particular target groups, e.g. the long-term unemployed and people in marginalised communities. The programmes were organised at different levels, in terms of content and structure, to take account of learners' different backgrounds and expectations.

The programmes may be categorised as follows:

(a) Non-Institutional Community-Based Programmes.

These programmes were located in residential areas in the city which are characterised by high levels of unemployment and multidimensional deprivation. There is a trend in urban areas across Europe for the increasing spatial concentration of poverty and this trend is particularly acute in Ireland. The aims of the community education programmes were as follows:

- to provide second chance adult education;
- to develop mechanisms which would address the internal and external barriers to learning experienced by many people;

- to enable people to analyse and understand their own lives and the society in which they live;
- to build the capacity of people to participate in community development and community enterprise activities;
- to facilitate direct access to the labour market;
- to facilitate progression to further learning.

The majority of the participants in these programmes were female full-time home managers.

(b) Semi-Institutional Programmes operating in a flexible manner with regard to programme design and delivery methods. Two programmes came into this category, the Education Opportunities Scheme (EOS) and the YOUTHREACH Programme.

- The EOS , a national programme, designed and delivered locally sought to develop a framework which would allow the long-term unemployed to upgrade their general education and training and to access formal qualifications.
- The YOUTHREACH Programme had a developmental education and training programme for young school leavers who had no educational qualifications. Participants were aged between 15-18 years and many were the children of unemployed people and lived in the marginalised communities.

(c) The range of long-established Institutional Programmes included most of the adult education and training programmes run by schools, colleges and universities. They also included most labour market training programmes.

New Partnerships

During 1990 a partnership approach to addressing the multidimensional problem of poverty and marginalisation was initiated in Limerick as one of the EC Third Medium Term Poverty Projects. This formal partnership was further extended in 1991 to include a locally based integrated approach to addressing long term unemployment as part of the National Programme for Economic and Social Development (PESP).

Membership of the Limerick partnership include education and training providers, employers and trade unions, local communities, development agencies and social agencies.

The focus of this large partnership is local integrated social and economic development. Several smaller partnerships co-exist with or are subgroups of the larger partnership. In Limerick one such smaller partnership focuses on the development of an integrated education and training system.

The Limerick City VEC is one of the statutory partners in the large partnership and is a key partner in the smaller sub-partnership which focuses on the development of an integrated education and training system. Accordingly, most of the adult education programmes developed before and during the 80's described above now form part of the wider and smaller partnerships' activities.

This new direction has challenged all concerned to think and act in different ways - ways

which put the learner rather than the provider at the centre. The aim of this approach was to provide the learner with an integrated range of learning opportunities which meet his/her needs at any given time. The challenge to individual providers is to find ways to work together in partnership to achieve this aim and break down the barriers caused by having separate bodies responsible for different areas of learning.

Establishing the Continuum

In establishing the continuum model, the partnership sought to complement the existing adult education provision by developing additional programmes to meet the needs of new target groups.

The task of the education and training partnership included:

- implementing joint planning processes;
- developing a conceptual framework which would promote a common vision to guide all involved towards the achievement of short and long term goals;
- assessing the strengths and weakness of current provision in the light of the above;
- identifying the needs of all the partners involved;
- developing strategies to meet needs, organisational, design, promotional, evaluative;
- developing links between partner organisations.

An ideal partnership is built on trust and co-operation between the various providers, learners, communities and employers. The task of managing and integrating the new programmes and planning the way forward has been a learning process which has presented all involved with many challenges.

Negotiation was the key operational process and it focussed on programme content and delivery. This posed challenges for all the partners involved. It challenged the planners, whose role had been to hand down pre-designed programmes to be delivered/implemented by others. It offered a challenge to the learners who had been accustomed to adopting a passive role in relation to their education and training and to the tutors/trainers who had traditionally delivered pre-set, knowledge-based, terminally-assessed programmes.

On-going analysis of needs was an integral part of the planning process for the new partnership. The needs of all the partners in the learning enterprises had to be identified through activities such as discussion, surveys, questionnaires, in depth interviews, self-appraisal and seminars.

The student needs that emerged related to recruitment, access, learning objectives, curriculum, teaching methodology, assessment, support services and evaluation.

The tutor needs that emerged related to teaching techniques, assessment skills, support structure, management skills and networking skills.

The manager needs that emerged related to team building, motivational skills, negotiational skills, systems analysis, public relations, joint planning and managerial skills.

Issues for Planning a Continuum

The experience of developing the continuum model in Limerick, still in its early stages, has produced learning opportunities on many fronts, but especially in relation to the following six key areas:

- access
- a student-centred approach
- a range of learning opportunities
- an appropriate accreditation system
- guidance and counselling services
- a networking structure.

(a) Access

Improving access to learning opportunities involved looking at the kind of barriers or obstacles to participation. It meant looking at issues such as location/environment, promotional materials and procedures, recruitment, teaching methodologies, costs, assessment procedures, relevance of curriculum to student needs and interest and motivation.

In order to maximise access, programme managers had to listen to the needs of all concerned with the learning process and they had to take on board their view of needs rather than act on normative definitions of need.

In the Community Education projects much work was done on addressing access barriers. Providers acted on the belief that projects must start 'where people are at' in terms of their social, educational and geographic situation and should progress at a rate and in a manner which is in keeping with the felt needs of that community. To ensure such practice providers introduced learning activities which were sensitive to the needs of the participants and used innovative techniques to make people aware of those opportunities and of their relevance to them. They developed teaching practices which were sensitive to the needs of participants and they involved the people in the creation and management of their project activities, thereby facilitiating people/communities to take ownership of their own learning.

(b) Developing a Student-centred Approach

This was part of the process of broadening and enhancing access to education and training. People learn and perform best when they are actively involved in what they are doing. Participation meant being included in decision-making about one's learning. For the adult education tutor, participation by the students meant that the tutor's role involved facilitating learning rather than delivering education. Through participative learning, students had to be facilitated to take greater control of situations both inside and outside the classroom. The skills learnt had to become part of their everyday life, tools to assist them in the daily process of problem solving. Encouragement from those around them, a friendly, supportive learning environment and positive feedback in relation to their achievements were essential to learners' progress.

(c) A Range of Learning Opportunities

The constantly changing society adults live in demands an education system that is continuously upgrading knowledge, challenging horizons and facilitating autonomous learning. Adult learners need a whole range of programmes catering for different aspirations, different starting points, different interests, different stages in life. It should be possible to access these programmes through a variety of formal and non-formal means such as modular courses, open learning, distance learning and self-directed learning.

A key element in the continuum model was the need to create a coherent framework for that diversity of learning opportunities and qualifications so that there were pathways and bridges between programmes. A network of programmes and programme providers facilitated the development of progression routes, both vertical and horizontal in accordance learners' needs and aspirations.

(d) An Appropriate Accreditation System

Assessment and certification were key issues in the continuum of learning. Assessment and certification provide motivation, confidence and recognition and they facilitate horizontal and vertical movement within a continuum. The lack of an immediately visible and recognised ladder of progression, apart from the existing state examinations for post-primary students, posed a challenge and sent the providers in search of assessment and certification from alternative bodies within and outside the country. The establishment of the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) in October 1991 was warmly welcomed in the light of its provision of a qualifications framework accessible to adults and based on modularisation, open-ended time scale, flexible assessment procedures, credit accumulation and credit transfer.

(e) Guidance and Counselling Service

An ever-increasing choice of learning opportunities and qualifications put greater demands on people to exercise discrimination, to make sense of all that array of information and to make choices relevant to their needs and aspirations. The provision of guidance and counselling services was seen as an essential support to the learning process and was provided for in planning the continuum of learning. The community-based service, which will come into operation in Autumn 1993, has an integrated management structure. It will be client-centred and will be innovative in its integrated outreach initiatives.

(f) A Networking Structure

The experience of the Limerick partnership would suggest that a networking structure should facilitate a holistic approach to development, should be people-centred, should maximise participation, should maximise use of resources and should facilitate integrated planning.

The concept of partnership implies the creation of democratic structures which promote and enhance the rights and responsibilities of all the partners and allow them to fulfill their

complementary roles.

The experience of partnership in Limerick would indicate that the devolution of power from our highly centralised administrative and political system is essential to promote a participative democratic response to social, economic, cultural and political development.

Ongoing Development of the Continuum of Learning

The process of ongoing evaluation led to a re-appraisal of the original concept of the model. The current understanding of the continuum of learning model embodies a much more holistic approach to meeting learning needs both in terms of content and delivery.

The contiunum promotes the concept of life-long learning. It facilitates the individual and the community to achieve a sense of wholeness, of completeness: to achieve their own well-being. It creates an environment that maximises potential. Bringing and keeping together the diverse elements that form a partnership can gain significantly from sensitive and effective leadership. Skills in coalition building are particularly relevant. This involves great sensitivity and an ability to listen, to build consensus and to promote communication and a common sense of purpose between all the different elements of a partnership.

People can learn to become good partners.

Anyone for POLO ?
(A student centred approach in community education)

Eilish Rooney

Eilish Rooney lectures in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education at the University of Ulster, Jordanstown and is currently conducting research into women's participation in local women's groups and electoral politics in Belfast.

The invitation of this attention seeking title is aimed at those who are involved in resolving the problems of devising award bearing community education courses. There may not be many of us, given that there appears to be a contradiction between the empowerment aim of community education and a course which requires that the student should undergo preset assessment with the possibility of failure (not a very empowering experience). I will address some of the issues and contradictions of theory, practice and passion in community education shortly. This article describes a method of assessment which was designed to satisfy the conventions of a university based, assessed course but which also hoped to utilize the experience and practice of community educators and theorists. A key feature of the design of the course was the opportunity for the students to set their own learning outcomes, appropriate to their individual needs, abilities and situation.

POLO (Portfolio of Learning Outcomes) is the acronym for an experimental method of assessment in the University of Ulster's sub-degree Certificate/Diploma in Community Education and Development offered by the Department of Adult and Continuing Education. The course is the outcome of a collaboration between a variety of community educators and community development workers in the voluntary and statutory sections and in the university (Rooney, 1991). For them, it was vital that the students should find the course an empowering experience. They anticipated that providing students with the means to define their own learning would ensure a sense of empowerment.

We all failed to take cognizance of: the university context; the students' traditional experiences and expectations of formal education; the time that part-time students have; and also the impact of the University's demand that POLO should conform to a conventional marking scheme. Some description of POLO is needed in order to examine what happened.

Polo Explained

Joanna McMinn, Director, The Women's Education Project, Belfast, invented the acronym. Each student is given a POLO booklet in which the aims, objectives, learning outcomes and assessment methods of each course module are set out. Each module has a compulsory core learning outcome and a set of other optional learning outcomes. Each module is assessed on

the basis of the student's achievement of the core learning outcome plus one other learning outcome. The latter may be selected from the optional module outcomes or the student has the opportunity to set a learning outcome appropriate to their particular community or project situation.

For example, the Certificate Module: *Community Organisations* has one core learning outcome and five others from which the student may choose another outcome appropriate to their community situation, inclination and competence.[1] Optional learning outcomes reflect the aims and objectives of the module. The student's selection from the options could reflect their particular aims and objectives within the module. The core aim of the *Community Organisations* module is 'to introduce students to the various types of community organisations'. A further optional aim is 'to evaluate the role of community organisations as an agent of social change and regeneration, taking women's groups as an example' (Course Document, 1991). It was anticipated that those active in local women's groups might select this as appropriate to them. In the table below I set out how these two particular aims are expressed in terms of assessed learning outcomes.

Community Organisations (Certificate Module)

Aim:	Learning Outcome:	Assessment:
Introduce students to the various types of community organisations;	Describe a particular community organisation; (Core Outcome)	Using the portfolio, produce a written description of a particular community organisation; where appropriate include: constitution/ goals; funding; membership; structure; issues and problems.
Evaluate the role of community organisations as an agent of social change and regeneration, taking women's groups as an example;	Identify and assess the impact of women's groups in challenging the existing power relations in a community, and in bringing about social change; (Optional Outcome)	(i) Suggest ways in which women's groups challenge existing power relations in a community; (ii) Provide evidence of activities that women have carried out to bring about changes for themselves in their communities/community organisations; (iii) Critically evaluate the impact of these activities.

[1] The module Community Organisations was devised by Gerry Doherty, Lenadoon Housing Action Group and Joanna McMinn.

Community Organisations (Certificate Module)

The process of scrutinizing and selecting learning outcomes, with tutor guidance, was foreseen as being an integral part of the learning on the course. The information in the Portfolio (sample in columns above), along with the syllabus and reading lists, was provided in order that the student could follow the process of module design; and to see and criticise the intentions of the tutors. The information provided under the 'Assessment' column enables the student to understand the criteria that the tutor intends to apply in the assessment of the achievement of the learning outcome. The student could then decide on, and negotiate, a different set of outcomes and assessment criteria which they would apply to their own learning.

The intention of the course team in designing the assessment procedure in this way was to demystify the process and empower the student in the selection or design of learning outcomes and assessment methods. The students are given the choice to assume control, albeit limited control, of their learning. The course team attempted to combine a dimension of the empowerment practices of community education with the conventional demands of university assessment methods. In the first year of the course, 1992-3, the invitation to choose and to invent was greeted with the enthusiasm expected by the course team. We are still pondering the why of it.

Theory, Practice and Passion

One of the impassioned debates facing people involved in community education (however it is defined and whatever their role) is the debate about empowerment versus accredited achievement (Maher 1991; Mezirow1990). There appears to be a fairly obvious contradiction between education which aims, or claims, to transform and liberate from oppression (Freire 1972; Ilich 1971; Lovett 1982) and that which offers an award based assessment criteria. The latter is based on the assumption that a student may, can, and at some time some student will probably fail. Otherwise why have assessment criteria? The basis of the former is that 'society' as structured (economically, geopolitically, by class, gender and so on) is oppressive and that the moral and political purpose of education is liberation from oppression and the transformation of society. The words may trip off the tongue but, offered the option of changing the world or enabling an individual to gain an award, many activists in community education would be motivated by the world changing scenario. However, 'transformation' is easier to imagine and to theorize than to realise.

Many community education 'professionals' already have the awards and may be sceptical of their worth. However, offered the opportunity to gain an award that may lead to qualification and/or to recognition of achievement, many of the people engaged in community education courses as learners want just that (O'Neill 1991).

Our students were clearly motivated by the prospect of a university award and what this might enable in terms of future employment. They were familiar with essay writing and generally eager to succeed. Once work was returned with a grade attached, many students inevitably compared themselves with each other. Regardless of the course team's assurance

that the point of POLO was to achieve learning outcomes, the students pragmatically recognised the competitive framework of the university and they generally adopted the competitive approach. This meant not taking chances with choice of outcome and certainly not designing your own. Students chose the conservative, and perhaps less time consuming option, of what is set down and familiar.

We still think that POLO is a good idea. But it obviously requires far more discussion with the students and between students about ways of going about assuming control of assessed learning. We are about to enter the Diploma year of the course. Some of the original students plus a set of new students are readying themselves for the new year.

We have to find ways to work in community education that facilitate recognition of experience and achievement and that are more than ticking exercises. Ways that provide the opportunity to gain awards and which attempt to demystify that process and empower the learner. The fact that that empowerment is clearly limited in the case of POLO is perhaps a good place. Watch out for a report from the Diploma students.

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The Need to Develop an Adult Education System

Pat Rabbitte

Pat Rabbitte is Democratic Left T.D. for Dublin South West and is his Party's Spokesman on Finance.

The opportunity to offer a number of thoughts and modest proposals regarding adult education is valued. As a Democratic Left public representative, I have been aware of efforts in my own party to place adult education within the left perspective of education as a right of all citizens. I have also been impressed by the work of agencies and groups, many of them voluntary, in the Tallaght-Clondalkin area to develop a structured system for adult learners.

Policy

A formal, organised response is needed to the educational needs and demands of adult learners - whether they be workers in homes, industry or services, or unemployed. This is a question of rights, but is is also one of the society's and the economy's need to benefit from the knowledge and skills of citizens. Putting a system of adult education on a firm footing involves creating a separate unit within the Department of Education, a Dail vote (alongside those for the Minister's Office and for each of the three "levels") dedicated to adult education and a statutory authority. The age-profile of the Irish population will in itself give an impetus to the growing demands for such a system over the coming period.

In the absence of a systematic response, a hotch-potch, a thing of "shreds and patches", develops. Entitlement is not established and access can depend on factors such as where you reside, your income, how long you have been unemployed, your gender.

The recent Green Paper says positive things about access to adult education but it is short on resourcing, on providing a timetable for development and a statutory authority to guarantee progress. The VEC structure, which the Green Paper elsewhere promises to sideline, is to be a major vehicle for development. This will hardly be wise, if other sectors of the system are to be taken from under the wing of the VEC and given to new local authorities. Similarly, the PESP area-based initiatives are still finding their feet in the education area and with the future of the PESP concept in some question, the need for an over-reaching statutory body is again highlighted.

Access and Participation

The continuum of adult education is very wide. "Second chance" type of courses leading to formal qualifications should not prove impossible to arrange through schools. The birth rate in this state fell dramatically from 1980 to 1989. The effects of this are now beginning

to be felt in second-level schools and, over the coming half dozen years, there will be building and classroom availability - unless there are many sell-offs of school properties - at a growing rate across the country. This can offer a "building space" and teacher access opportunity to "second chance" adult learners.

But the "second chance"/others divide is not a good one in principle. Adult learners have too much in common to compartmentalise specific needs. The VTOS, for example, has been a useful initiative but its criteria for participation need to be widened to allow greater involvement. Voluntary organisations will continue to respond to a wide range of needs and the use of television and packaged videos/cassettes in distance education needs to be incorporated into a system.

In terms of funding, it is a modest demand that adult education should be resourced to the same extent, at least, as the level of the system which receives the most basic level of funding now. At primary school level, there is provision through state resources (nearly 90 per cent) of buildings, full payment of teaching/tuition and a £33 per student (from September 1993) capitation grant. This has allowed a skeletal system, in EC terms, of primary education to develop. It is the minimal level of resourcing necessary.

An optional credit system must be put in place for adult learners - optional in the sense that the participant will control whether to utilise credits accrued over a period.

Training and Re-training in Industry

I might be permitted here to raise one of my ongoing concerns which is of relevance to the topic of adult education. This relates to people in jobs and the task of maintaining employment through closing productivity gaps and changing the ways of Irish industry to ensure that Ireland competes well in the single market. The Culliton Report was hard on FAS and its lack of commitment to training for the employed. But the bulk of indigenous industry, as well as successive governments, have shown little understanding of the need for training and qualifications in the workforce. The result has been that:

- well over half of Irish employees receive no training of any sort in any year;
- expenditure on training per employee is £97 per annum, compared with £328 in Britain;
- 65 per cent of small firm employees receive no formal training while just 10 per cent of large firm employees get training;
- only 30 per cent of managers get training, compared with 50 per cent in other countries.

This is a brief summary of a disturbing position which has serious implications for our economic and social well being. There are ways, such as sectoral schemes, around the problems of training for small firms. But a modest proposal of mine is that any company seeking grant assistance should be asked to show its education and training programme before the request is even considered.

Education and Community Development

Luke Murtagh

Luke Murtagh is Chief Executive Officer of Co. Tipperary North Vocational Education Committee. He is joint Editor of The Decision Maker, the journal of the C.E.Os' Association, and he is well known for his involvement in community development projects.

Community development refers to actions taken by people living in a defined and identifiable geographic area acting together for the improvement of the economic, cultural, social and environmental life of that area.

The action can be taken by:

(1) The Community itself
(2) The Community acting with other Communities
(3) The Community acting with the support and involvement of outside bodies and agencies.
(4) Outside bodies/agencies acting as the prime movers and drivers.

In Ireland, because of the centralist nature of our administrative and governance system, Community development has been driven or controlled by "outside" agencies such as central Government, the EC and local authorities. The dominant factors have been the pervasiveness of the culture of the external agency and unpredictability and short-term nature of the finance arrangements.

This approach is totally ineffective because of its stop-go nature and because it impoverishes the people living there by not making them central in their own development. Drawing on my own experience in community work in Westmeath, Kilkenny and Tipperary, I believe strongly in a model which places the local community in the driving seat and where the culture of the local community is the pervasive culture. That model needs to be tempered by an understanding and knowledge of the regional, national, European and world context in which the community operates and by a general broadening of the communities horizons. Education in its traditional and broadest senses has a central role to play in community development through mainstream provision, continuing, adult and community education programmes. VEC's have a role and responsibility in community development. They can fulfill that role and deliver on their commitment through operating at a number of levels:

(1) Providing opportunities for those in our society who have been failed by the mainstream system. Examples of this sort of provision include:
Literacy schemes, VTOS, Youthreach, Traveller Education, Prisoner Education.
(2) Providing general Certificate, Diploma, Degree and Professional Programmes for people in each community at affordable prices and in accessible locations.

(3) Supporting and working with Youth organisations and groups.
(4) Providing leisure time programmes for the general community.
(5) Being proactive in community development in partnership with individual communities and other agencies.

Initiatives in Tipperary

My own committee, North Tipperary VEC, believes so strongly in the role of education in community development that it proposed in its response to the Green Paper on Education that a Seventh Key Aim as follows be added to the six already included.

To enable all students, each educational institution and the educational system to contribute to the social cultural and economic development of local communities.

In the first section of this article, I have outlined the theory underpinning education and community development and I have indicated the role and responsibilities of the education system. In the second part of the article I will describe two initiatives in Tipperary which illustrate the theory in action as follows:

(1) The advanced Diploma in the Organisation of Community Groups.
(2) The proposed Tipperary Rural and Business Development Institute.
(3) Advanced Diploma

The Advanced Diploma in the Organisation of Community Groups is geared to providing training for Community leaders. The course, which ran from May 1992 to May 1993, consisted of 90 hours of workshops/tuition. The workshops were held every third Saturday from 9.15 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. In addition, each participant got approximately 20 hours support on a one to one basis from the staff. The following units are covered in the course and students have to demonstrate competence in each unit:

- Review and develop the activities of an organisation within the Community.
  . Manage financial resources for an event
  . Manage physical resources
  . Manage human resources
  . Administration
  . Working with groups
  . Maintain external relation.

To give a better understanding of what is involved I will give a breakdown of what is expected in two units:

(a) Administration
and
(b) Working with groups.

(a) Administration - the elements the student has to display competence in are:

- set up and maintain a filing system
- establish and information base to meet the needs of the organisation.

- compose correspondence on behalf of the organisation
- operate record keeping procedures
- review insurance arrangements for the organisation.

(b) Working with groups - the elements are:

- convene a formal meeting of a committee
- chair a formal meeting
- facilitate a discussion within the group
- record the proceedings and outcome of a formal meeting
- plan for change within the group
- convene an informal meeting.

Course participants have to demonstrate competence in each unit and each element within the unit through carrying out the tasks, to demonstrate that competence, within their own voluntary organisation over a specified period of time. So, for example, participants have to chair a meeting effectively according to set criteria and prepare the minutes of a formal meeting.

That in my view is the great strength of the course which helps both the individual participant and the Community in which he/she operates.

The participants in the course were drawn from the following community groups/ organisations in Tipperary.

- The GAA
- Athletics
- Special Olympics
- Community Development Groups
- Youthwork with seriously disadvantaged Youth
- Community Training Workshop
- Credit Unions
- Parent's Association
- ICA
- Local Hall Committee
- Gardai

The course was successful for a number of reasons:

- Apart from the inputs by speakers the interaction between the participants and the sharing of their own personal experiences in Community Development contributed significantly to the course.
- The participants had to carry out each task within their own Community/Organisation and have it independently verified.
- The course challenged participants to review their approach to Community Development and to adopt the same professional approach as they would in their own employment. They also challenged presenters about the feasibility and relevance of suggestions on the day to day reality of community work.

As Communities develop it is essential that members of Community Groups and voluntary organisations get proper training to enable them to contribute effectively to the development

of their local Community. This is especially true if Communities and organisations want to get funding from Agencies, the Government and the E.C.

In many voluntary organisations and community groups, meetings are poorly run, records almost non-existent and financial controls weak. These deficiencies ensure no real development takes place. The Advanced Diploma in the Organisation of Community Groups, which is the first course of its kind in Ireland, is jointly certified by North Tipperary VEC and the RSA, an internationally recognised British examination body.

(2) The Tipperary Rural and Business Development Institute

The second initiative is a joint venture involving North and South Tipperary VEC's. A request has gone to Government requesting Structural Funding for the project.

Basic Concept

The Tipperary Rural and Business Development Institute is a third level institute with a mission to promote business and rural development. It will operate from a main campus in Thurles in the demographic centre of the county, as well as at Clonmel and a distributed campus throughout Tipperary. Where possible existing resources will be utilised to maximise the growth potential in each community within the catchment area.

Elaboration of Basic Concept

T.R.B.D.I. has a unique emphasis on:

- Action in small businesses and the community generally to stimulate economic growth and innovation.
- Action on technology transfer in rural areas.
- Mainstream courses with emphasis on Rural and Business Development.
- A mission which places adult education in a central role.
- An enhanced responsibility for relevant provision in the whole geographic area. An important factor is that staff will be contracted to operate throughout the county in a structured and continuous way.

Programmes

- Courses for adults leading to Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees, Professional Qualifications and work related skill development at the Thurles and Clonmel campuses and in other centres throughout the county.
- Community Development work by the Institute's staff as part of their contract of employment based mainly in the local communities and supported by co-ordination, research and short residential stays in the Institute.
- Business Development work by the Institute's staff, as part of their contract, supported by co-ordination, research and courses in the Institute. In keeping with the Institute's mission much of this work will be done on site in the businesses concerned.

- Programmes to ensure the utilisation of appropriate technologies for
  - Business
  - Communities
  - Education in the Tipperary area.
- Providing consultancy services in Rural and small business development overseas.
- Mainstream Third Level courses in Business, Engineering and Science with an emphasis on small business development.

Piloting of Part of Programme

The Tipperary Rural and Business Development Programme was set up in 1990 to pilot ideas on Adult, Comntinuing and Community Education.

A range of Certified Courses for adults have been provided throughout the county. These vary from 1 year Certificate Courses to 2 years Diploma in 3/4 year Degree programmes. In all approximately 2000 adults in Tipperary and from outside the county have benefitted.

National and EC Role of T.R.B.D.I.

The work of the new institute will help translate ideals of EC Document "The Future of Rural Society" into a reality. The Institute will work closely with EC national and local bodies engaged in promoting economic growth, as well as other education institutions, particularly those engaged in applied research. It will operate a data-bank of promising ideas, locations, people for investment proposals, joint ventures, and the like.

Conclusion

Given the serious problems facing this country with over 300,000 people unemployed, the rapid decline in agriculture, the threat to rural areas generally and in Ireland in particular, it is essential to fully and effectively mobilise all our resources.

One resource that has been seriously underutilised, is that of local communities determined to contribute to their own development and future education. By education here I mean community centred education, which is easily accessible. This resource is the key to the development of rural Ireland.

Community Development must become part of the mission of education in Ireland.

The Other Adult Education Conference

Ad Hock

This year, because of the year that's in it - 1993 - Ad Hock has decided to host a special conference. Like many other education specialists at present, Ad Hock is distraught at the lack of proper training and education for budding and flowering entrepreneurs and he is strongly of the opinion that this can be put right at a weekend seminar. Because of the welter of apathy with which the announcement has been greeted, places at the Other Adult Education Conference have been expanded from 15 to 35 and conference fees have been waived for all except the unwaged and the old aged pensioners, whose fees have been waived twice. To date, all offers of sponsorship have been successfully resisted and the Minister for Education has not yet apologised for not attending. The Other Conference will receive minimal plublicity, so just remember where you first read about it. There will be no charge for creche facilities and babies wishing to be minded should fill in the appropriate forms and send them back to Youthreach.

This is probably the best Other Adult Education Conference in the world and in keeping with the importance of the theme, a suitably dull and boring programme has been arranged. The keynote address will be given by a Mr. Bee Cahill, an expert on sugar and aeroplanes, who will speak for hours on the theme - "So what did you expect? We are in this for the money". One of the really low points of what promises to be a tremendously tedious and soporific conference is the late night spot being filled by the Davy Boys, lecturers in creative accounting. They are hosting a special slide show entitled "Stockbroking - the magic and the mystery".

The following morning is Smurf and Riley time. In a most unusual attention-seeking ploy, Doctor Smurf, who is a millionaire by design and a doctor by arrangement, will address the conference by telephone. At the time of going to press, the topic is not yet known but it is hoped that he will have valuable advice for those wishing to lease public buildings. Doctor Riley, who made his name playing rugby and his money selling beans, is renowned for his accomplished public speaking and he will regale the conference with tales of his exploits under the general heading of "If you want to make the news, buy the bloody paper". Finally in this session, there will be a lottery to see which Labour minister is afforded the opportunity of addressing the conference on the topic "Job Creation for the Family".

Entrepreneurs for Social Awareness

There is, unfortunately, a widespread perception among the public that entrepreneurs are heartless people who are only interested in making money. This, of course, is perfectly correct and in order to reinforce this perception, a Social Awareness evening is being held. A Mr. Farrelly from the Irish Temporary Building Society will address the conference on "Homelessness in Foxrock". A panel of guests, including a director of a well known building society, a

personality from a well known radio station, a well known attorney general and a relative of a well known taoiseach will lead a discussion on "The Plight of the Elderly in Inner Ballsbridge". Mr. Farrelly has been promised a bonus payment of £15,000 on condition that he does not attend any Other Conference at the same time. We are delighted to welcome, too, a member of Amnesty who will make a presentation about the foolishness of investing at home and paying tax when you can invest abroad and be forgiven.

At the Grand Banquet, which will be held in the new interpretative centre in car park number four, the awards ceremony will take place. The special guests will be the assembled senior counsels, barristers and solicitors who so generously gave of their time at the Beef Tribunal, the longest running show in town and there will be a display of leaked documents in the Horseshoe Bar. This year, Industry's most coveted award, the Golden Handshake, goes to a Mr. Comer Ford, for his unique contribution to pensions Irish style, while the winner of the Godman award for the Finger in Most Pies is a Mr. Desmond Desmond Desmond. Finally, the occasion will come to a historic conclusion with the first ever flyover of Shannon.

Who, in her right mind, would not wish to attend such a conference? Answers on a postcard please to Adult Education Centre, Fourth Prefab on the Left, Tón-na-Scoile.

Men Learning about Men

Tom Inglis

Dr. Tom Inglis, former Director of AONTAS, is attached to the Department of Sociology, U.C.D.

There has been a quiet revolution taking place in adult education in the past ten to fifteen years which has been led by women. This revolution is changing the content and format of learning. The old style hobby and leisure type courses are being replaced. The emphasis is on social and personal development, empowerment and emancipation. Adult education has become increasingly concerned with enabling marginalised and disadvantaged people to move closer to the centre of power. It has become focussed on helping people to read and understand what is happening in their personal lives and in the community and society in which they live. This understanding enables people to take control of their lives and change existing social structures and cultural practices.

While well-known theorists such as Freire (1970, 1972) and Mezirow (1987, 1990) have been working out the logic of empowerment and emancipation, it has been women, some of whom who may never have heard of these men, who have been putting the theory into practice. The quiet revolution has been part of the growth of feminism. The revolution questions the male way of understanding ourselves and the environment in which we live (Hart, 1992). It is standing the world of education on its head. It is changing the dominant form of learning away from mastery and control to sympathetic appreciation and peaceful coexistence. We are being challenged to learn how to love and surrender power. This requires a major rupture in western thought. It not only involves learning to depower, it involves men learning from women. Instead of women learning to behave more like men, which has been the dominant characteristic of the women's movement, men learn to behave more like women.

Women's issues first began to receive attention in Irish adult education during the 1970's. There was some pioneering research undertaken by Slowey (1987). There was the formation of a women's group within AONTAS, the National Association of Adult Education. The Kenny Commission of Lifelong Learning made specific reference to the educational needs of women (1983 , p. 25). The Government has mainly made little or no reference to women in the chapter on adult education (1992, pp. 207-217). But despite a lack of support from central government, women themselves have responded to their own educational needs (Fagan, 1991). There has been the growth of daytime education groups around the country; especially since 1985. The AONTAS Women's Education Group published an important handbook for women's education (AONTAS Women's Education Group, 1991). There has

also been support from Europe for women's education (with, it must be said, some supporting funding from the Government) with the New Opportunities for Women (NOW) initiative. These developments in women's education in Ireland are but the tip of the iceberg which has come to the surface with the rising tide of women questioning, informing, reflecting and developing themselves through education. The question which this article addresses is whether this rising tide can do anything to raise the consciousness of Irish men, or are they too tied to power to learn anything, especially from women?

Men and Education

It would seem that Irish men are a long way away from forming their own educational groups, from pressuring the government for more resources to be given to men's education and from screaming blue murder because there was no mention of their educational needs in the Green Paper. Of course, it would be unusual for those in power to begin to reflect on the way in which they limit, dominate or oppress others. One could argue that the purpose of education is to empower and since most men, viz a viz the women in their lives, are powerful, there is not much need for them to learn anything. Men, it would seem, are not interested in learning about themselves and specifically about the way they limit and dominate women. They tend to be more interested in learning skills, how to master and control things, especially if it helps them get a job. (Inglis and Bassett, 1988, p. 78).

If one steps outside of adult education and looks, as it were, at the wood from the trees, there are some major gender issues which can be readily identified. The most important of these is that whereas up to seventy-five per cent of participants in adult education courses in Ireland are women, the power to make crucial decisions, allocate scarce resources and decide what should be taught, where and when, mainly resides with men. Many men in adult education would seem to have no problem with this and do not see it as any kind of contradiction. The majority of adult education courses in Ireland are run through the Vocational Education Committees and Community and Comprehensive Schools. Although a fair proportion of the teachers and organisers of the adult education courses run under their auspices may be women, the real power - in terms of deciding policies, budgets, resources - is in the hands of men. But one of the defining characteristics of patriarchy is that men have no problem in deciding what it is that women should do. Similarly, many men in control of adult education have no problem in deciding what it is that would be good for women to learn and when, where and how they should learn it. One of the main developments of adult education in Ireland has been women gaining control of their own education. However, much of this has had to be done in their own time and at their own expense with little or no support from the State. It is interesting, for example, to contrast the resources which have been allocated recently to the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) which because of the way eligibility is decided is mostly taken up by men to the support given to daytime adult education groups (see Inglis, 1993). It would seem that when it comes to critically reflecting about men, about power and what it is that men have to learn about themselves and women, it is many of the men in control of adult education who have much

to learn.

The dearth of projects or initiatives in relation to men's education is matched by an absence of written material. There was a little flurry of writing and thinking about men and education towards the middle of the 1980's. In Ireland, Joe Kelly was alone in the field of adult education trying to open new ground on men. There was one key issue which was recognised by these pioneers in men's education. Whatever it was that men needed to learn it centred around their relationship with women and the way in which they directly or indirectly colluded in the systematic oppression of women. As Kelly found out, the accusation of being involved in systematic oppression raises crucial questions for some men. "Does that mean me? I'm a man. Do I oppress? Can a black man oppress a white woman? Is it racism? Is it sexism? Is it patriarchy?" (1986, p. 18).

There are two issues which I would like to discuss in relation to men learning about themselves. In the first place, we need to look at the way in which men have responded to feminism and the women's movement. This response ranges from reactionary to emancipatory. The second issue is what kind of things do men need to learn and how can they best go about learning them?

Conservative Man

The first response by many men to the women's movement is that like any other fad or fashion, it is something which has come, and which will soon go. Feminism is seen as another "-ism"; another ideology, like socialism, which will have it's day and then fade away. Since it has not faded away as quickly as they would have liked, some men have have grown impatient and in certain cases there has been a definite backlash. It would seem that many men do not fully understand what it is that "these women" are on about. They originally thought that the women's movement was about burning bras and becoming sexually liberated. They took this to mean that women wanted access to contraception so as to have freer and more frequent sex without the burden of having to have children. It was only the most conservative of men who were against this. The problem is that it didn't stop there. It seemed to these conservative men that women did not know where to stop. Not only did feminists want to wear the trousers, it seemed that some of them wanted men to wear skirts; to do things like take responsibility for the creation and care of children, to do their fair share of domestic work, to let women go out to work and let them stay at home and mind the children. Again, while this conservative response may be more prevalent among older men, whose world is in danger of being turned upside down, it occurs across all social classes and backgrounds.

Liberal Man

The second way men respond is something in between a neutral observer and a positive supporter. These are the men who recognise and accept that women have a justifiable case. They look upon the women's movement reasonably. There is, they feel, little or no argument that women have been treated unequally. They support changing legislation and creating

a free and equal society. They have the same attitude to the Women's Movement as they do, for example, about blacks in South Africa, Catholics in the North of Ireland, Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and Kurds in Iraq. It is a liberal issue; a question as to whether one is in favour of the underdog, the dominated and oppressed. But since they do not critically reflect on the way they dominate and oppress, they see the women's movement as something which does not really have much to do with them. If they are questioned or challenged, they never hesitate about offering their support.

The problem is that in their lifestyle there is no physical evidence of this support. It is as if they firmly believe that they have gotten to where they are on their own merits. It was a struggle. They are fully in favour of women getting to the top, if they can make it. They are your quintessential liberals who are in favour of equality of opportunity. They like the power they have and they are quite happy for women to have the same power as long as it does not necessitate them surrendering any of their own power.

The New Man

The third reaction of men has been at a more personal level. This is where positive attitudes have been transformed into practice. It is where men relate to and treat women as equals in all aspects of their lives from the workplace to the home. These are what are sometimes referred to as new men. They are the ones who are as much likely to be seen behind a stove and pram as behind a desk. Not only are they just as likely to do the shopping, if they do, they are just as likely to decide what to buy because they will be the ones who will be doing the cooking. They are the ones who take as much, if not more, responsibility for contraception. They live through the pregnancy with their partners. And when the child is born, they are willing and ready to do all the labour of love that needs to be done, from changing nappies (indeed the new ecological man will wash out the cloth nappies) to feeding, bathing, and when necessary, bringing the child to the doctor or clinic. These new men accept that relations between men and women will not be equal unless they support and engage in affirmative action which enables women to gain access to the economic, political and social power on which men have had a monopoly since patriarchical society first emerged. These are the men who surrender carers, income, property, possessions, position and authority to enable other women, particularly their partners, to become more powerful. There have been men like this in the past. However, what makes the new man different is that he is quite willing to take on the roles, tasks and responsibilities which traditionally have been seen as women's work. What is more important, this behaviour is not some hidden secret which takes place behind closed doors. It is done openly in front of other men and women. They are able to talk to other men and women about these domestic tasks and responsibilities without any shame or embarrassment.

Postmodern Man

The new man may be a recent arrival in Irish society, but he is already being surpassed by

what some see as the man to end all men, or certainly the type of man who wants to bring an end to male dominance and partriarchy. He is postmodern man, or, Post Man. Post Man man wants to be part of the revolution, begun by women, which revolutionises the way men think, act and see themselves. What makes Post Man unique is that he recognises that it has been male power which has created the violent, unjust, unequal, technological, bureaucratic order of the world and which, unless it is arrested, will eventually destroy the earth. He recognises in himself and in others that there is no longer any one definition of what it is to be a man. He realises that he has to write the script for his own life. There is no centre; no ideal man to which he can approximate. There is no futuristic Superman; just a pastiche of previous conceptions.

Post Man also sees the only hope is for men to surrender more power to women. But surrendering power, striving to become less powerful, is no easy thing to do. Power is something which is central to human beings. It is something for which we struggle from the earliest moments of conscious life. We want to have our own things, have our own way and have everyone defer to us. Trying to divest yourself of power is like an addict trying to give up alcohol or cigarettes; only ten times worse. Giving up alcohol or cigarettes requires enormous will power and self-discipline. Giving up power requires endless humility and continuous rigorous self-critique.

So what is it that Postmodern man does that the new man doesn't? The main thing is to try to disengage from the power struggle and to divest himself of power. This requires surrendering possessions. At a practical level, this means simple things like it is no longer his house, his car, his chair, his television, his needs and his wants. It is no longer his say, his decision, his authority, his rule. It is no longer his word, his right to speak, his honour. But having accumulated all of these privileges over the years, it is no easy thing to give them up. What makes it more difficult is that one has to continue on living within the world, the very real world of home life, work, family and community. There is no escaping to a monastery to achieve the task of depowering. Post Man represents a new generation of males. He is probably a hothouse flower in that he would find it difficult to survive in the harsh conditions of some male environments. It is likely that he has been brought up in a household in which there was a new man present as a role model.

What have men to learn?

During a workshop at a recent seminar on Gender in Maynooth, participants were asked to make a list of the words associated with the traditional male stereotype. Some of the words which came to the fore were; provider, hunter, breadwinner, mover, strong, emotional control, independence, competitive, self-assured, aggressive, macho, heterosexual. It was suggested that a man who is into this stereotypical image of himself can become stressed and isolated; not talking openly and honestly to anyone. He can become an escapist into work or drink. He can become negative, destructive and violent. He can live in fear of losing his job and his image. Even in purely selfish terms, i.e., saving their sanity, health and life, some

men have a lot to learn.

There is another side to the stereotypical image, to the strong, dominant male who never cracks under pressure. There is a need for intimacy, for being loved and accepted. Men may have power and may be into power, but that does not mean that they do not often feel insecure and uneasy. They may feel that as the hunter, provider and controller they have to hide these feelings. They have been socialised into being strong men, often as much by their mothers as by their fathers. The positive side of critically reflecting about themselves is that not only do men become able to reduce their domination of women, and indeed children and other men, but they can free themselves from the stereotypical images and beliefs of what it is to be a man. As Sellers (1986, p. 340) suggests, men are missing out "by their attitudes, by their reluctance to look more closely at themselves, by the search for social and financial power and by their unwillingness to share this power once attained."

But what else have men to learn? Well, a good start would be the nature of patriarchy, the way it relates to sexism, racism, authoritarianism, capitalism, imperialism, and how it manifests itself in each individual being a man. Men could go on to look at the way in which male knowledge, male language, male ways of seeing, dominate all aspects of social life. But it might be more practical and feasible if they tried to learn not to sexually insult and harrass, mentally torture, physically abuse, rape and sexually assault women. Men have to learn what is involved in using pornography and to understand and control violent sexual arousal (Eardley, 1986). They also have to learn about the feminine side of their personality and to recognise and accept demonstrations of physical affection as well as, of course, gay sexuality. A further, more practical, step would be to learn how to identify with and be supportive of women who have been, or are being, dominated and oppressed. What Freire said about oppressors, their relation to the oppressed, applies to men and their relation to women. "Discovering himself to be an oppressor may cause considerable anguish, but it does not necessarily lead to solidarity with the oppressed".

Rationalizing his guilt through paternalistic treatment of the oppressed, all the while holding them fast in a position of dependence, will not do. Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is identifying; it is a radical posture ... "true solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them 'these beings for another.'" (1970, p. 26)

Most of all, men have to learn to depower. Depowering is the exact opposite of empowering. If empowering is what the disadvantaged, dominated and oppressed do, then depowering is what the advantaged, the dominators and the oppressors have to do. The notion that we can all become powerful without anyone having less power holds about as much water as the notion that we can go on putting people on a boat without it ever sinking or, worse still, using up the earth's resources without ever putting anything back. But depowering is not something which comes naturally to men or indeed, women. It is something which has to be learnt, and this is where adult learning and adult education comes in. What is involved in men learning to depower?

Learning to depower involves, first of all, learning about the present ways in which men dominate and oppress women. It is about being aware of men's economic, political and social oppression of women; how it is that women do not have the same financial freedoms as men; how men still own and control women; how they gain access to and hold onto positions of importance; how it is that they ignore, talk through and belittle women (Halner, 1990, Seidler, 1990). It is about learning to be critically aware of how these attitudes and practices have become an integral part of the way we think and behave. It is about reflecting on our childhood and the way we were brought up as men and seeing how that upbringing is reflected in our present behaviour, and to what extent we are passing it on to our own children. It is about being willing to challenge and correct men when they are sexist. But most of all it is about being willing to say we are wrong; that we are sorry and that we are willing to learn to make amends.

But besides learning how to depower, is there not the possibility, as the Achilles Heal project tried to do, of discovering "a more affirming and positive vision of masculinity"? (Seidler, 1990, 217; Metcalf and Humphries, 1985). Can we escape from an essentialist view of men as rapists at heart and the devil incarnate? Undoubtedly there is a positive image of masculinity within the concept of a gentle man. A man who is sensitive, caring and considerate. A man who listens, reflects, admits mistakes, does not claim a monopoly on truth and is willing to learn, especially from women (Clatterbaugh, 1990). A man who knows when and where it is time for rational thought, who knows when and how to express and control his physical strength and who steps beyond stereotypical male images.

Conclusion

One of the major transformations which has taken place in Western society and culture in the last twenty years has been the growth of feminism and the women's movement. This social movement will have, in the long term, a profound influence on the way we live our lives. It will impact on the way we relate to the environment, the way we treat the land and other species, the way we produce and consume goods, the way we run organizations and most of all the way in which we relate to each other as human beings. I believe that what can happen in Western society is that there can be a wonderful fragmentation and diversification of the way in which people live their lives. But to do this we need to stop the process of centralization of power. We have to allow all minorities which have been dominated and oppressed in the struggle to attain and control power, to take control of their lives. We have to learn that there is no one way of doing anything. We have to let a hundred flowers bloom. To do this, we have to learn how it is that the struggle for power has infested every aspect of our social being. We have to be able to critically reflect about power and see the way in which it operates within us. We have to learn how not to stand in the way of those who are dominated and oppressed empowering and emancipating themselves. The first and foremost task in this process is that of women becoming powerful. The second task is that of men learning to critically reflect about themselves, to look at themselves

honestly and openly, to see how it is that they dominate and oppress women and then to learn how it is that they can surrender power. The process begins with men learning to critically reflect about themselves, the way they relate to each other and the way they relate to women.

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Learning with Women

Chris Mulvey

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The election of Mary Robinson has focussed attention on women in Ireland in a new and exciting way. For the first time women's role is being recognised and women's needs and interests are receiving the attention of society at large.

Nevertheless, it remains the case that the majority of Irish women experience exclusion from full participation in society. Approximately 700,000 women (58% of Irish women) work full-time and in an unpaid capacity in the home. These women are totally dependent for their income on the State or on the man with whom they live . They do not have equal access to paid work or to mainstream education and training. They are restricted to narrow and marginal roles and are thus denied opportunities to fully determine and develop their own lives.

Throughout the eighties, recurring economic crises plunged increasing numbers of individuals, families and communities in Ireland into unemployment, poverty and marginalisation. Despite scheme after scheme designed to "deal with unemployment", "combat poverty" or address social exclusion", these problems have consistently refused to go away.

While their effects have been felt by the majority of people in Ireland to some extent, they have had a particular impact on the lives of women in Ireland. As always and as everywhere women, particularly women living in circumstances of poverty and disadvantage, have borne the brunt of the changes the recession has brought. These women have also, however, been at the forefront of the initiatives and responses developed by those communities hardest hit by economic change in the eighties.

Local Community Groups

Mary Robinson referred to this development in her inaugural speech:

"Within our State there are a growing number of local and regional communities determined to express their own creativity, identity, heritage and initiative in new and exciting ways. On my travels throughout Ireland I have found local community groups thriving on a new sense of self-confidence and self-empowerment at work... This is the face of modern Ireland."(1).

The bulk of this work has been undertaken by women. Throughout the eighties women have responded to growing hardship by coming together in locally based groups to address their needs and the needs of their communities. The identity and activities of these groups are rooted in the daily experiences and interests of women who are struggling, many of them alone and without adequate resources, to care for those dependent on them.

Typically, these groups are initiated by one or two key individuals, sometimes with the support of local statutory or church officials, oftentimes alone. They are small, made up of ten to twenty members, and under-resourced. They rely on local fund-raising or small once-off grants, living hand to mouth, spending much of their energies on the constant search for sufficient funds to maintain survival.

They usually adopt informal and non-hierarchical forms of organisation. The tasks involved in organising the activities of the groups are shared out amongst all group members. In the process relationships are built, information and knowledge are passed on, new abilities and skills are acquired.

Initially such groups focussed on the needs of women as mothers. They organised locally based playschemes and childcare facilities and social activities. As experience was gained and new needs were identified, locally based women's groups began to respond to the needs of women as adults: as women, as citizens and as development agents.

Relying only on the commitment and the unpaid work of women, they began to organise accessible, non-formal and self-directed adult education. Programmes were designed, with the active involvement of learners and participants, to be relevant to the real needs and interests of women working full-time in the home. The circumstances of women's lives were recognised by providing free courses organised around school hours and backed up by locally based childcare facilities. Women's culture was respected and new methodologies of teaching and learning were developed. These methods emphasised participation, cooperation and creativity. They acknowledged the importance of the physical, emotional and spiritual, as well as the intellectual, needs of learners.

Research has documented the extensive benefits and effects for women of the services provided by local women's education groups. The activities of local groups provide women with opportunity to find relief from the boredom., stress and isolation of unrelieved housekeeping/childcare. Women are enabled to develop friendships and to find sources of support. New skills are learned. Self-awareness and confidence are improved as are family and community relationships. Women's expectations are raised, their options are widened and their quality of life is enhanced.

Local groups act as the first point of contact for women in the home who wish to widen their horizons and explore the possibility of returning to the workforce. As a result of their work women are developing the confidence and the skills essential to taking part in further training and to entering paid employment.

Local women's groups are thus succeeding in providing much needed and appropriate services and opportunities to a target group not being reached by mainstream providers. In so doing they are playing an invaluable role in combatting educational and social disadvantage and in promoting equal opportunities. They are mobilising women as a resource for development, thus making the abilities of women more widely available to Irish society.

Models of Good Practice

In the process of their work, local women's groups are also developing important models

of good practice in adult education. They are spearheading the growth of an adult education which is accessible, relevant and truly empowering. They are putting into practice a model of adult education which is actively participative and which is committed to social change and development. They have pioneered innovative, creative and effective methodologies. The adult education they are practising increases women's ability, not just to adapt to change, but to contribute to it and to become active participants in the shaping of their lives, their communities and their society. Their work therefore, merits ongoing recognition and support from those responsible for the provision of education, training and social services.

Since 1985 in particular, the numbers of locally based women's groups have multiplied at a phenomenal rate in urban and more recently in rural areas all across Ireland. Between them they cater for a huge number of adult learners. For example, a report on Daytime Education Groups, to be published in the coming months by AONTAS, found that the 96 groups that participated in the survey catered for over 8,700 participants. This is more than double the number of participants on the government's VTOS scheme. AONTAS is currently aware of over 300 of these groups presently active around Ireland!

Yet despite the importance of the contribution of local women's groups, both as community and national resources, they continue to experience a lack of support, recognition and resources. Women's groups experience isolation, financial insecurity and marginalisation from mainstream structures and agencies. These obstacles prevent women and local women's groups from realising their full potential and from contributing fully to the social and economic development of our country. Women therefore, continue to be this country's largest untapped developmental resource.

The NOW Initiative

AONTAS has long recognised the potential of these groups for women and for adult education in general. Alongside a number of other key agencies, it has been committed from the beginning to their support and development. In 1991 a significant new source of funding for women's training became available through the EC NOW Initiative. This initiative was one of three new programmes launched by the E.C.in 1990:

Euroform, Horizon and NOW. These three initiatives aimed to improve the integration of particular target groups into the labour force. Euroform is targetted at people categorised as longterm unemployed. Horizon is focussed on people who experience disabilities and specific forms of social disadvantage.

NOW, New Opportunities for Women, is directed specifically at women. It aims to promote equal opportunities for women by improving their access to vocational training and employment. In Ireland, the Council for the Status of Women (CSW) was appointed by the Department of Enterprise and Employment as the support structure for the NOW programme. Together with the Department, the CSW has selected a total of 30 projects which are presently being funded by NOW in Ireland.

Throughout 1991 and early 1992 AONTAS, realising that many local groups did not have the resources necessary to apply for European funding, decided to develop a project proposal

that would meet the developmental needs of women's groups.

The AONTAS Executive members responsible for this work were Bernie Brady, Emer Dolphin, Larry Fulham, Margaret Martin, Chris Mulvey and Christine Murray. AONTAS was determined to ensure that as wide a number of women and community based women's groups as possible would benefit concretely and directly from the newly available resources. Therefore the active involvement and participation of the local women's groups were facilitated during every stage of the project's development.

All the women's group members of AONTAS were fully informed about the NOW Initiative, its aims and structures. They were invited to attend two consultation days at which full discussions were held relating to all aspects of the project's design. They were also kept fully informed throughout all stages of the negotiation and lobbying process which followed the submission of the proposal.

The project was eventually accepted for funding in the summer of 1992. It is called ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND TRAINING FOR LOCAL WOMEN'S GROUPS. It's principal aims are to improve women's chances of accessing mainstream education and training by working to support and strengthen the work and the voice of locally based women's groups.

As soon as the funding was accessed, AONTAS employed a coordinator who began work in August, 1992. The first task was the organisation of a series of five further consultation meetings around the country. These meetings involved local women's groups in deciding how the project would be implemented in their area. The content, structure and budget of each training programme was fully discussed by local women's groups. A plan for the operation of the advice and guidance service was also worked out and a local management structure and process agreed.

Objectives of the Programme

The project is implementing a range of strategies designed to strengthen the ability of local women's groups to overcome the many barriers that prevent women from gaining access to mainstream education, training and employment.

Firstly, it is providing five locally based pre-training and skills training courses which aim to improve the effectiveness of the women who are involved as voluntary leaders in their local groups. A total of 80 women drawn from over forty local women's groups in four different areas around Ireland are participating.

In Dublin two skills development programmes are being run:

Organisation and Management and Social Analysis and Political Lobbying. Both courses are offering 150 hours training to fifteen women. In Offaly twenty women are training in Community Development and Management Skills. In Galway, fifteen women are benefitting from 180 hours training in Facilitation Skills. In Tralee the project is offering 150 hours training to fifteen women in Personal Development and Group Skills.

All of these courses are specifically designed to be accessible to women in the home. There are no course fees and no entry requirements other than active involvement in a local women's group. The courses are run locally and are organised to fit in with school hours and

to respect the other caring and voluntary work responsibilities of the participants. Participants are also re-imbursed for their travel, childcare and out of pocket expenses and this has been quoted unanimously by the women as pivotal to their ability to participate.

Secondly, the project is exploring the accreditation of these non-formal and community based courses. In the process it is spearheading the development of alternative forms of accreditation and of progression routes which could link non-formal and formal education and training.

The lack of recognition of women's role, of their particular skills and capacities, of the work that they do and the essential contribution they make, in the home and increasingly, in the community and the workplace means that women's achievements are given no formal status or value. Their access to further education and training can thus be limited.

The project is therefore, prioritising the promotion of ways of accrediting prior learning and achievement attained through education or through unpaid work in the home or in the community. Two of the courses are being submitted for accreditation, by portfolio building, with the RSA Advanced Diploma in the Organisation of Community Groups. The remaining three courses are being submitted for accreditation as Extra-Mural coures with different universities and their accreditation under the NCEA Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme is currently being explored.

Thirdly, the project is working to develop links between local women's groups and the statutory and mainstream agencies involved in adult education and training. Traditionally, women in the home have in practice been excluded from the services provided by the statutory training agencies.

Women in the home tend not to be on the live register. As "dependents" they are not assessed as independent adults. They are constrained by childcare and other caring responsibilities. They frequently can lack the prior educational experience and/or the confidence required by the training programmes on offer. Because of the traditional content and structure of the training programme and employment schemes offered by agencies such as CERT, FÁS, TEAGASC or the VECs and RTCs, women in the home can find them inaccessible or inappropriate to their needs.

The project has set out to begin the work of exploring areas of potential cooperation and linking between local women's education groups and these agencies. The experience of the project to date has been encouraging. Successful links have been made with local VECs in Offaly and Tralee and with TEAGASC and CERT. The project is hopeful of developing links with FAS and with local RTCs over the coming months.

Fourthly, the project is working to promote public recognition of the work and the contribution of women's education groups and to gain support and resources for their development. Alongside the training programmes an advice, support and development service is being offered.

Three part-time Outreach and Development Workers have been employed in Offaly, Tralee and Galway. These workers are available to local groups to offer support in relation to all aspects of their work in women's education and training, e.g. information on sources of

funding, resource people and materials, advice on course design, group organisation and development and assistance in making contact with each other and with relevant agencies. Already, the project in Dublin and elsewhere is dealing with calls on a regular basis from groups and individuals seeking this kind of support.

Over the lifetime of the project a number of publications useful to local women's groups will be produced: A Guide to Funding Opportunities, (already available), a Daytime Education Groups Pack and a report on Daytime Education Groups, both to be published shortly. The project to date has also initiated a number of research projects into areas of relevance to local women's groups. Together with the Combat Poverty Agency, AONTAS/NOW is investigating the issue of the accreditation of community based education. The students of one of the Dublin courses are engaging in a piece of participatory research investigating the destinations of the students involved in their local groups.

The project is also maximising the use of the media and political lobbying in order to win recognition for the work of women's groups in general, attention for the issues and appreciation of their role and effectiveness.

Finally, the project is actively encouraging networking at local and at national levels in order to maximise the sharing of experience and expertise. Participants from each course will meet each other at five different networking seminars over the course of the project. The AONTAS/NOW project also has active links with 11 other women's projects across Europe. With these transnational partners, the project is exploring innovative methods of accreditation, strategies for improving women's chances of re-entering the paid workforce and promoting women's active participation in social and economic development.

There is great enthusiasm and excitement about the AONTAS/NOW Initiative both within AONTAS and amongst the participating local women's education groups. The criteria, focus and structure of the NOW programme has enabled us to provide relevant training programmes that address the current needs of the women and the groups we are targetting. There is a sense that the project has come at just the right time and that it will contribute enormously to the strengthening and development of daytime and women's education groups.

It is also important to point out that the project brings with it significant benefits for AONTAS as a national organisation. It is providing AONTAS with an invaluable and resourced opportunity to support and promote daytime education groups whose work has so much to contribute to adult education's philosophy, methods and approach in Ireland. It is creating many opportunities to promote AONTAS, its aims and its work. Through the project AONTAS is developing existing and initiating new links with the statutory and voluntary agencies relevant to its future development and success. It is also enabling AONTAS to continue to raise and to address issues central to the development and improvement of adult education provision in general, issues such as accreditation, access to second chance education, training and employment programmes and the need for an accessible Advice and Guidance service for adults.

In this sense, the AONTAS/NOW project, although designed specifically to benefit women, is in fact contributing to the development and the benefit of all. For women's

development is society's development. When women grow, families, communities and societies grow. Investment in women, therefore, is investment not just in the present, but in the future. It is in all our interests to support and to learn from the experience of projects such as that of AONTAS/NOW and to ensure that resources for their future development continue to be made available.

Training Adult Literacy Tutors in the Republic of Ireland

Ed du Vivier

Ed du Vivier has been involved in training literacy tutors for the past ten years and was employed by NALA as National Coordinator of the PESP-Funded Training Development Project. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the National Adult Literacy Agency.

In the Republic of Ireland literacy tuition is available for young people and adults in a variety of settings - through VEC Youthreach Schemes, Community Training Workshops, Travellers' Centres, the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme, the Prison Education Service and Centres for the Unemployed. For many adults, however, the first point of contact is with one of over a hundred local literacy schemes which provide one-to-one (and, in some cases, small group) tuition. Approximately 2,200 volunteer tutors are involved in providing literacy tuition throughout the twenty-six counties.

As one of the most effective means of improving the quality of services offered to adult literacy learners, the National Adult Literacy Agency has worked consistently to upgrade the training provided to literacy tutors. A number of training courses, workshops and other events have been organised for tutors, students, organisers and tutor-trainers, and the Agency has also published a series of booklets, documents and articles on training matters. In 1991 NALA was invited by the Department of Education to submit a proposal for a Tutor-Training Development Project which was funded through a special allocation under the Programme for Economic and Social Progress. Grant aid was again provided in 1992/93, and funds have been made available for continuing the Project in 1993/94.

The PESP-Funded Tutor-Training Development Project has four main aims:

1. To improve both the quality and quantity of training provided for those working in local literacy schemes;
2. To provide opportunities for tutor-trainers from around the country to critically examine the training they provide, to update their skills and to acquire additional expertise;
3. To work towards agreement on minimum standards for the content, format and implementation of training programmes for literacy tutors;
4. To extend the provision of training into geographical areas where it is less well developed.

A sub-committee of the NALA Executive was established to supervise the Project and a part-time worker was appointed on a contract basis to coordinate activities. In addition, the Project benefited from the support and involvement of other staff and members of the NALA Executive Committee.

Existing Training Provision

Before detailed planning for the Project could be carried out, it was necessary to obtain a clearer picture of current training provision and the needs of schemes in this regard. A number of different approaches was adopted for identifying these training needs. First, a questionnaire was circulated to all local literacy schemes in the twenty-six counties asking for details of the training provided in the recent past. When responses to this questionnaire were compared with a similar survey conducted by NALA in 1983, the results were revealing (see Table1).

Table 1 - Results of Two Questionnaire Surveys of Tutor-Training Programme

	November 1991	December 1983
Total number of respondents	53 Schemes	27 Schemes
Response rate	50%	63%
Q: Did the Scheme conduct a training course last year (Sept.-June)?		
YES	85% (44)	93% (25)
NO	15% (9)	7% (2)
Q: Did the Scheme run a training course in Autumn 1991?		
YES	75% (39)	-
NO	25% (14)	-
Q: How long was the course?		
RANGE	6-24 hours	4-20 hours
MEAN	14.7 hours	13.5 hours
MODES	12 and 16 hours	-
Percentage of schemes providing at least:		
12 Hours of Training	85%	76%
16 Hours of Training	52%	-
18 Hours of Training	27%	20%
Q: Does the Scheme have a regular tutor-trainer of its own?		
YES	77% (40)	-
NO	23% (12)	-
Q: In-service training events last year:		
NONE	23% (12)	22% (6)
ONCE ONLY	19% (10)	
2-3 EVENTS	39% (20)	78% (21)
4 (or more) EVENTS	19% (10)	

Although there are now over three times as many literacy schemes as there were in 1983, the proportion of schemes with little or no training provision has remained about the same. The 1991 survey indicates that one in six literacy schemes had not conducted an initial training course for new tutors during the last fifteen months and that 23% had not provided in-service training during the last year. While 85% of schemes offered at least 12 hours of pre-service training for tutors, only half said that their course lasted a minimum of 16 hours, the duration recommended in the NALA Policy Document, *Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work*. One out of every four schemes reported that they had no regular tutor-trainer. The actual situation may be considerably worse than these figures suggest. While no definite conclusions can be drawn about the schemes that did not respond to the 1991 survey, it is fair to assume that those with little training provision would be less likely to return the questionnaire.

The training needs of local literacy schemes were also assessed by five regional coordinators, and consultations were held with a group of experienced tutor-trainers in order to plan further developments. The picture that emerged from all these sources was that the provision of training was patchy and varied considerably from region to region. While many schemes in Munster and in Dublin/East Leinster lacked regular tutor-trainers, others (particularly long-established schemes in urban areas) appeared to have few problems in this regard. Many schemes in the Midlands, Midwest and West, which tend to be organised on a county-wide basis, also reported minimal difficulties with the provision of initial training courses for new tutors. Instead, the immediate need identified in these areas was for specialised, in-service training for existing tutors. Over time it became apparent that tutor-training was not an immediate priority for schemes in one or two areas because of organisational or other difficulties.

Common Concerns

Despite the highly variable nature of training provision, local literacy schemes around the country shared a number of common concerns.

Multiplicity of Needs

Everyone involved in adult literacy work requires training. Tutors need to know how to respond positively to their students' needs and to provide help with technical skills such as reading, writing or spelling. Tutor-trainers need to develop their ability to plan programmes, devise materials and employ a variety of training techniques. Organisers, likewise, require training for the specialised tasks that they perform. Students, no less than anyone else, can benefit from opportunities to learn about issues such as study skills, developing memory power and styles of learning, which tutors might not be expected to provide. Students may also require training to take on special roles in the Scheme, such as working on committees

and preparing materials for publication. However, because training is often conceived of solely in terms of tutors, the needs of others involved in adult literacy work tend to be overlooked.

Function of Training

Anyone with a minimum standard of education, appropriate attitudes and outlook and the willingness to help another adult learn can become a literacy tutor. Whether or not these volunteers have any formal teaching qualifications, it is essential that they undergo an initial training course to become familiar with the approaches and techniques used in adult literacy work. More importantly, though, tutors must be able to respond sensitively and appropriately to the needs of adult students. Thus, initial training can also function as a selection process for identifying those who may not have the attitude and manner needed to work with another adult.

In addition to these demands, there are more general needs for support and encouragement that training is expected to fulfil. For example, in-service training sessions often provide opportunities for participants to share their problems and concerns in addition to brushing up their skills. In this way training can help to break down the sense of isolation that both tutors and students experience when working on a one-to-one basis. In-service sessions are also seen as a mechanism for maintaining the interest and involvement of tutors who are not currently working with students.

Funding

While pre-service training for tutors is frequently given priority in the allocation of funding, not all schemes receive money for this purpose. In many cases training is seen as part of the organiser's role, and no special allocation of hours is made for it. It may also be difficult to secure funding for in-service training, and as a consequence, it is impossible to plan sessions tor existing tutors.

Role of the Trainer

Everyone involved in the provision of adult education will recognise the limitations (in terms of low status, lack of career structure, inability to plan sustained development and difficulty in retaining experienced staff) which arise from the intermittent, part-time nature of the work. All of these apply to the tutor-trainer's situation, and in about half of all literacy schemes, the job is combined with other roles, primarily that of organiser. This leads to a situation of over-reliance upon one or two key individuals, with consequent lack of continuity and loss of expertise should they leave the scheme for whatever reason.

Strategy for Development

In response to these needs the PESP Project adopted a multi-strand strategy for developing training provision.

In Service Training

In order to provide the in-service training requested and to promote networking between literacy schemes for future training initiatives, the local coordinators employed by NALA organised six regional training days during 1991/92. All schemes in the twenty-six counties were invited to send participants to at least one of these events. A workshop format was adopted so that tutors, students, organisers and tutor-trainers could develop skills and gain practical experience in a variety of specialised areas that were not covered on initial training courses. These included topics such as listening/informal counselling, making materials, assessing progress working with special-needs learners, accrediting student learning, techniques for working on spelling, etc.

A different approach was adopted during 1992/93 to provide opportunities for further networking and to enable literacy workers to follow up on many of the ideas and initiatives that had arisen from the regional events. A grant scheme for in-service training events, which had been piloted in the Dublin/East Leinster Region during the Project's first year, was extended country-wide. All local literacy schemes and VECs were invited to submit applications for workshops, conferences or training sessions involving participants from two or more schemes. A total of eighteen grants were allocated tor these inter-scheme training events and over 600 people took part.

Training of Trainers

A second strand of the PESP Project over the last two years has been the provision of training for tutor-trainers. Most established trainers were thrown in at the deep end when they were first asked to run a course for new tutors. Apart from considerable personal experience as a literacy tutor, there are no formal requirements for becoming a tutor-trainer, and many individuals had been working in this capacity for years without feeling confident about their own abilities or expertise as trainers. In order to enable experienced tutor-trainers to share their concerns, to critically reflect upon their work and to forge links with trainers in other schemes, two residential conferences have been organised for this group since Autumn 1991. In addition, these conferences provided training inputs on a range of topics and developments in adult basic education.

The PESP Project was also concerned with identifying, training and supporting new tutor-trainers. As the number of literacy schemes continues to increase and as local services become available in more and more communities, the need tor training volunteer tutors will undoubtedly grow. At the same time, the pool of experienced trainers is likely to shrink as individuals decide to end their involvement for any one of a number of reasons.

Setting up a training team, either within an individual scheme or in conjunction with other literacy services nearby, is a good way of meeting this demand tor new tutor-trainers, of increasing the breadth of experience available to new tutors and of ensuring continuity. The idea behind the concept is to enable experienced tutors and students to become trainers by work on an apprentice basis with a long-serving trainer to provide initial courses and in-service sessions. In order to facilitate the development of training teams, the PESP Project organised

three weekend courses tor new tutor-trainers in different parts of the country. In addition, a series of four evening workshops were held for trainers in the Dublin area to enable the sharing of ideas and the upgrading of skills.

Training Resources

The NALA booklet, *Ideas for Training in Adult Literacy*, which was first published in 1986, had proved to be an invaluable resource tor tutor trainers. However, there was a need to revise, expand and update it to reflect the best of current training practice. This was achieved by collecting suggestions for materials and sessions from experienced tutor-trainers at a conference in Tramore, and these were subsequently edited and circulated in April 1993. The updated resource pack has been designed to enable trainers to adapt sessions to the needs of their particular scheme, to incorporate materials of their own and to allow for additions to be made over the years.

Issues for the Future

Feedback on the impact of NALA's PESP-Funded Training Development Project has been very positive to date, though the full benefits may not be apparent for some time. Future developments in the training of adult literacy workers in the Republic of Ireland are likely to focus on some of the following issues:

Organisation, Staffing and Funding

Though adequate training for tutors, whether paid or voluntary, is a prerequisite for good adult literacy provision, other elements are also required. Where schemes are preoccupied with organisational issues, such as access to facilities or the allocation of a minimum number of paid hours for organisation, then training may not be the first priority for development. Improvements in tutor-training can only happen once adequate structures have been put in place for organising and monitoring tuition.

The NALA Policy Document outlines the minimum requirements for the start-up and maintenance of an effective service for adult literacy students. It has been found time and again that developments in provision are dependent upon adequate staffing in each scheme, including an organiser, tutor-trainer and senior tutors, and payment must be available for these key workers in order to support the volunteers, who continue to make up the majority of tutors, and the students themselves. Funding should be provided for on-going training, and provision must also be made tor premises, secretarial facilities, telephone and learning materials. Schemes need to establish sound organisational structures to ensure close liaison with AEOs and adult education authorities and to enable students and tutors to be consulted on decisions that affect them.

Standards

Literacy work in the Republic of Ireland has traditionally been pluralistic, with providers adopting a variety of approaches which reflect differences in historical development, target

groups and institutional settings. Because of this variability no predetermined programme can possibly meet the training needs of those working in these different groups. At the same time, all new tutors require a minimum standard of training before they can be effective in helping an adult with a reading and writing problem.

There are limits, however, to the pressure that can be exerted by a voluntary organisation such as NALA in promoting minimum standards for training. By providing courses for tutor-trainers, by publishing recommended materials and by formulating guidelines for training, the Agency can offer guidance and leadership, but there can be no guarantees about the quality of the training provided. If NALA were to assume a role in monitoring the training of tutors and ensuring acceptable standards, then this would apparently conflict with its traditional role of representing the concerns and interests of literacy providers.

Accreditation

With the growing emphasis on accrediting students' learning and increased awareness of certification options available for tutors in Northern Ireland and Great Britain, there has been increased interest among tutors for some sort of basic qualification to attest to their competence and experience. In turn, trainers must consider whether they, too, require certification in order to maintain their professional credibility. In this context, NALA is investigating possible options for accrediting students, tutors, organisers and trainers and will make recommendations on the most appropriate system tor the Irish Republic.

Student Involvement

The training of tutors can be enriched immeasurably by the involvement of students at all stages in the process. Many literacy providers invite learners to take part in sessions of the initial training course, and some schemes have effectively integrated students or former students as full members of a training team. However, students who wish to expand their involvement into the area of training are faced by a number of impediments which they must overcome. While some of these are common to anyone who takes on a training role for the first time (for example, coping with the anxiety of speaking to a group), trainers must be conscious of the impediments which are raised unnecessarily (the use of jargon, for instance) and avoid these. Ways must also be found to provide students with the additional support they will undoubtedly need to take up the challenge of becoming trainers.

Confusion and Flexibility - A critical look at the multiplicity of Adult Education provision at local level

Noel Dalton

Noel Dalton is Adult Education Organiser with Co. Kildare Vocational Education Committee.

There is increasing evidence that adult education may be an idea whose time has come. In fact, we who have laboured long and hard in an area that was unrecognised may well be in danger of finding ourselves "flavour of the times" as it begins to dawn on authorities and providers that adult education has a hugely important part to play in the state in which we find ourselves. The time and energies invested in highlighting adult literacy problems and finding solutions, the patient and ceaseless efforts of voluntary groups and in particular women's groups, the spectacular growth of innovative adult and community education projects, both in rural and urban settings, the success of the VTOS and other educational initiatives for the unemployed - all of this is at last beginning to attract the attention it deserves and, especially, the funding that is so badly needed.

Attention is welcome and funding particularly so, but unfortunately, as has happened so often before in adult education, the development proceeds in an unplanned way, all of it pointing once more to the sad lack of any policy and consequentially, of any planning. The intention of this article is to highlight the crazy situation that more and more prevails at local level, where we now have unnecessary duplication and even competition for resources that are still all too scarce.

Never mind the quality...

"The scheme is intended to help with the cost of projects such as those which:
- encourage self help and personal development for women working in the home.
- address social problems such as stress and isolation.
- provide educational opportunities"

Extract from Social Welfare pamphlet on Grants to locally based women's groups. 1993.

"Training that might be supported:
- Management/Organisational Development.
- Social Analysis
- Media skills and analysis.
- Leadership skills
- Community profiles."

Combat Poverty Agency Community Development and Education and Training Grants. 1992.

"Funds are provided for the establishment of courses in community education and literacy. These courses will reflect the needs of the local community, in particular those disadvantaged areas, and will include subjects such as child management and home making".

Brief for use of Adult Literacy and Community Education (A.L.C.E.) funds of the V.E.C.s.

The above are a sample of the many means by which local adult and community education groups can obtain short-term funding for individual projects. The past 5 years has seen a mushrooming of schemes, funding initiatives and independent structures at local level. For example, a recent survey in a not untypical provincial town (pop 5,000) showed the following developments in the area of women's education:

1. A.L.C.E. budget under the aegis of the local V.E.C. which funds a day-time education project.
2. Department of Social Welfare grants.
3. Youth Organisations - Young women's group and Parenting.
4. Combat Poverty Initiative.
5. Self financing V.E.C. Courses.
6. FÁS Return to work programme.
7. Funds raised by self help groups.
8. European Funding, e.g. N.O.W. project.
9. St. Vincent de Paul - Women's study group.
10. Home School Liaison projects, e.g. parenting.
11. Courses organised by Centres for the Unemployed.
12. Commercial independent providers.

Some of the salient features of most of these projects are:

- All of them are aiming at the same target group.
- There is very little inter-agency co-operation.
- All are carried out on a short-term basis (2 to 3 months)
- Funding is short-term and limited.
- There is very little long term planning or follow up.
- In most cases the funding is supplied by the state.

While most of these initiatives, within their limited framework of operation, have a lot of merit and are of great benefit to the individual participants, nevertheless the drawbacks are substantial.

Firstly, given the short-term and temporary nature of most of the projects, there is a lack of continuity and no proper system of follow on. Everyone seems to be providing glasses of knowledge, but nobody is creating the fountain of wisdom. Doing 10 week courses for people in marginalised situations might alleviate the despair on a temporary basis but it rarely provides a solid pathway by which people can structurally alter their life chances.

Secondly, most of the projects operate in isolation from one another, which in many cases leads to overlapping and is wasteful of scarce state resources. You often have the ridiculous situation of state agencies competing for the same audience and in essence providing the same service.

Thirdly, access to much of the funding is very often dependent on the group's awareness of its availability and its ability to make adequate submissions. Of course very often the group that most needs the funding is the least able to access the funding. Therefore, the allocation of grants is submissions led rather than needs led.

Fourthly, the multiplicity of provision creates confusion and chaos at local level. I have experienced situations where one agency offers incentives to join a programme whereas another agency charges a fee.

A look at the recently instituted Home School education co-ordination scheme underlines these points. This scheme, which at present operates in so called disadvantaged areas and which aims to provide links between home and school, seems a good idea. It is, however, a good idea which needs careful research before implementation and this does not seem to have happened. There has been no attempt to liaise with already existing community groups so that, in some areas at least, not only is there unnecessary duplication of courses for adults but groups which have been struggling to run courses with minimum resources now find themselves competing with alien providers who seem to have funding that was hitherto lacking. A display of sensitivity, to say the least, would not go astray.

Proposals for Reform

Unfortunately, the Green Paper does not address the issue of bringing greater order and co-ordination to these programmes. For many practitioners and organisers this issue is as important as that of generating more funding for adult and community education. Putting more resources into an ad hoc and confusing scenario is simply to promote more ad-hocery and confusion.

To begin to sort out the existing mess I would suggest the following steps:

(1) This problem, like many other difficulties in adult education, is reflective of the fact that there is no co-ordinated strategic policy framework for adult education in Ireland. Most of the programmes and initiatives operate on a stand alone basis. It is essential that this policy framework has a European, national and local element. In practice this would mean that all issues and initiatives relating to an area such as adult education should be co-ordinated by one Department.

(2) All initiatives and funding relating to adult and community education should be channelled through one local body which has a statutory base. This would go a long way to removing the current chaotic, wasteful and piecemeal nature of many initiatives which are sanctioned from central Government and other agencies. I would suggest that the current Adult Education Boards of the VECs could easily be adapted to perform this role.

If we do not make these policy and structural reforms, we will continue to develop "the bits and pieces" approach which has bedevilled adult education provision. The current situation is very much characterised by Marie Antoinette's dictum that if people are looking for bread we can give them cake. While the piece of cake will leave a nice taste in one's mouth for a while it does not solve the problems of long term hunger. Similarly, with short term independent initiatives which give people a short term boost in well being, but which fail to provide the long term support in dealing with unemployment, marginalisation and poverty.

Book Reviews

Walls Around My Mind
(An Education Resource Pack)

Walls Around my Mind, audio tape and booklet, is a dramatic story in words and songs of a young traveller in trouble with the law and the effect on his young wife and family. It was designed to encourage discussion of situations which have led to gaol sentences. The script was developed and acted by the Hillside Travellers in Galway. The booklet takes a wider view, looking at the range of offences that result in travellers being jailed, and then relating these to their traditional life-style and the changes brought about by urbanisation.

In many ways the volume charts the history of the traveller from the time of the barrel wagons, when they plied their trade as tinsmiths throughout the country. We have a graphic description of the hardships endured: the constant fight for survival and the strength of the family unit, where everyone was involved in meeting the economic needs of the family.

The first few stories trace the way the traveller culture has developed over the past few decades, and would prove very useful as source material in a Reading and Writing class with travellers. It would help them to understand how their way of life has evolved from a time when everyone was involved on a day-to-day basis in the family economy with strong family control by parents and minimal crime.

In those early days when travellers roamed the countryside, halting sites were unheard of as people just pulled into the side of the road. But they were still dependent on the good will of the settled community and, if that was not forthcoming, the guards were sent for and they were moved on. In some ways, things have not changed, as one of the writers describes: "Many traditional halting sites have been fenced off and blocked off with 'No Camping Signs'. In other cases, travellers have been physically removed by guards from sites where they have lived for years, because their presence offends the settled community. Perhaps, that is why most halting sites are built in out-of-the-way places, near dumps and graveyards".

The origins and persistence of clan fights over many years are traced in 'Learning the Rules of Violence'. Violence within and without the family is quite usual. With many families intermarrying, feuds can erupt and be carried from one generation to the next. In this way the culture of violence is learned early. As one writer puts it: "Travellers respect a good fighting man." Sometimes, weapons are used. It usually happens on a special occasion when there is alcohol involved and past grievances are raked over. In this way, the young traveller sees violence and alcohol as being a part of their culture, but this outlook is not confined to the travelling community. It would be unfair to suggest that alcohol and violence are the prerogative of the travelling community. The settled community has its share of battered wives and the problem runs right across the economic spectrum, usually aggravated by problems with alcohol.

For many, stealing cars, joyriding and petty thieving is an antidote to the boredom of their lives. Most leave school without any basic literacy skills. The normal school leaving age is

twelve. Some only attend for a short while in order to make their confirmation. They are segregated from the settled children in school, with a large proportion in special classes. There is no reference made to their history, language, culture, or traditions. What children are taught is usually about settled people.

It is often women travellers who have a vision of a different way of life. Women's issues, including domestic violence, are highlighted in the song "I want a Better Life" The travelling community has always been, and to a large extent still is, a patriarchial society with many women being beaten regularly by their husbands. I have worked as a literacy tutor for the past ten years and I am presently working with a group of travelling women in a group housing scheme. Some have been living in their houses for twenty years and in reviewing the book with them, we talked about the changes that have occurred for women. All of them had arranged marriages. While some had known their husbands since childhood, one had only met him three days before the wedding. Things have changed now because a lot of young people are rebelling against the arranged marriage. One woman has her separated son living with her which would not have happened before. Two of the women are on separate dole payments. These women have set up their own business and, while they may be unusual, it does show that there is a movement against the restriction imposed on these women, although marrying young is still the norm.

Since most of the experiences have been written by travellers who prefer not to be named, Walls Around my Mind provides authentic source material for traveller students in an adult learning situation. It is particularly useful as a jumping off point for a discussion of Irish society, which generally views travellers as an embarrassment that refuses to go away. Provided as they are with very poor amenities, and castigated for not being suitably grateful, peoples' untapped energy often finds an outlet in crime. Alienation from a society which has no need for their energy or creativity leaves the youth with no place or identity within society and, therefore, no commitment to anyone, whether from the travelling or settled community.

I would recommend this collection of writings for use in community training workshops, women's groups and local adult education centres. The 1916 Proclamation may claim to treat all the children of the nation equally but obviously it does not include travellers. Walls Around my Mind shows the restrictions and limitations imposed on a group of people by a society which treats them as sub-human and then points the finger of scorn at them for not measuring up to their view of the ideal.

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Radical Agendas? The Politics of Adult Education

Edited by Sallie Westwood and J. E. Thomas
(National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education 1991)

Adult education issues, experiences, practices and developments in the U.K. are of more than passing interest and significance to adult educators in this country. With its long tradition of WEAs and relatively significant support from local and central authority and third level institutions, adult education in the U.K. has been (at least until recently) underpinned by a well developed infra-structure which we in Ireland might be forgiven for envying at times. This is a book which is always informative, instructive and interesting, sometimes infuriating and seldom inspiring.

A NIACE publication, it consists of a selection of eight articles published in "Studies in Adult Education" between 1971 and 1991 and deemed by the editors to represent the most significant contributions to that journal during the past two decades. It also contains three new papers designed to provide a context for the earlier pieces - one each by the joint editors as well as one from Alan Tucker, who is no stranger to our shores.

Tucker's contribution offers an interesting and instructive account of adult education's progress in the U.K. from the optimistic summer of the early seventies through the perilous winter of the eighties struggling to survive under a series of swingeing Thatcherite assaults. As Tucker puts it, this was when "the metaphor of the marketplace led to the dance", when self-financing ordinances (doesn't that sound familiar?) became the hallmark of central and local government's "narrowly instrumental priorities". It was during this period that "liberal, general, multi-purpose adult education" ceased to be perceived as an "investment good" and became instead "a consumer good" to be paid for by the consumer rather than subsidised by the state. This attitude is succinctly encapsulated in the assertion of a local councillor that "people don't want to pay for tap-dancing on the rates".

J. E. Thomas' piece offers an overview from the perspective of University adult education. His comments offer a balanced and frequently incisive reflection on the implications of various contributors. Thus, referring to Tom Lovett's community development work in a Liverpool Educational Priority Area (EPA) setting, he notes that, while his initiatives manifested collaborative efforts between many adult education agencies, this did not mean "that it was necessarily approved of and *evidence that it was not* may be found in the *almost total absence of any attempt to emulate its practice* in other university departments or in the WEA". Westwood offers an initially interesting "tentative and exploratory" foray into the inclusion of adult education in the current debate in postmodernism, which is presently engaging the social sciences and cultural criticism. This she sees as "having profound implications for the social sciences... and for adult education". The exercise, while initially interesting and stimulating, is utlimately disappointing, not least because its perspective is largely focussed on the U.K. and consequently lacks global reference. However, as an initial foray, it offers a useful starting point to a debate which has hardly yet begun in adult education.

Turning to the remaining eight papers which form the core and raison d'etre of this

publication, their unifying theme is well captured by the title "Radical Agendas?" including the non-rhetorical quizzical question mark. The key issue addressed throughout is whether adult education is an agent of social change or an instrument in the maintenance of social stability and the status quo. The latter position is espoused by W.K. Paterson (1974) which is a classic (and to one reader, at least, infuriating) example of an exclusively linear, logical and cognitive analysis and discussion of "The Concept of Deprivation" which seems to incarnate the "Ivory tower" mentality.

The interface between radical adult educators and the political establishment and the manner in which the latter "spancelled" suspect adult tutors through the power of the Foreign Office and the self-maintenance/preservation mechanisms of employing agencies in the colonies and the role of the British Council between 1925 and 1950 makes interesting reading (R. Fieldhouse 1985). Adult education initiatives seeking to promote social change are well illustrated in the remaining chapters. Thus, "Education at the Bottom" (D. Head 1977) describes an adult education intervention with 'drop outs' and 'winos'. It reveals the essential dignity inherent in even the most apparently broken and marginalised people and the challenges confronting the adult educator brave enough to venture into this twilight zone. Other similar chapters include "A University Adult Education Project with the Unemployed" (K. Ward 1983) and "Gender and Education...." (G. Highet 1986).

Perhaps the most thoughtful and stimulating paper is that entitled "Adult Education and Social Change" (Thomas Harris Jenkins 1975) which outlines a theoretical framework in which adult education and social change might be considered. It proposes "A Continuum of Change" based on a conflict or consensus model of society and value or norm oriented perceptions as determinants of attitudes towards social change. Theorists who are norm oriented and consensus focussed perceive adult education as instrumental - "a means of transmitting the inherited knowledge and culture of the whole society" and value judgements "are concerned with cognitive rather than social and political values". Theorists of the opposite persuasion, by contrast, hold that a central objective of adult education must the production of changes in a society's basic outlook and goals. The continuum of attitudes outlined extends from revolution to reform to maintenance to conservation. While there are conceptual difficulties with this continuum (acknowledged by the authors) it does offer a useful way of attempting to clarify ideological standpoints in adult education.

By way of conclusion, it is clear from this publication that adult education is and should be political - it is not merely a neutral, 'objective' social phenomenon. The underlying ideological assumptions and the responses of the political establishment (positive or negative) are central to an adult educator's task and unless they are recognised, clarified and consciously espoused or challenged, adult education will continue to languish in the margins of irrelevancy to which it is all too often consigned. This little book offers us all a valuable starting point.

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Learning and Leisure
A Study of Adult Participation in Learning & Its Policy Implications

Naomi Sargant
National Institute of Adult Continuing Education 1991, UK £12.95

"Adult Education Matters". These are the opening words of the foreword of this book. Naomi Sargant's book is a study of the largest survey ever undertaken in Britain of adult participation in learning. Over 4,000 people aged 17 and over were interviewed in England, Wales and Scotland. It was designed to provide a comparison with a similar survey undertaken ten years earlier and as such charts the changes or otherwise of our perception of adult education.

My overall impression was of a study that is not necessarily pertinent to Ireland. I realised that I had learned perhaps only three things:

(1) That there had, in fact, been little change in the patterns of education in learning in the last ten years.

(2) The problems seem to remain the same, i.e., funding, or the lack of it.

(3) Surprise, surprise! women, especially working women, have less free time, are less mobile, are less likely to get employer-based training, and are more likely to be dependent on local community provision of opportunities to study.

This book is geared towards policy makers and those who have some control over adult education, and as such, there were certain aspects of the book that are important both here and in Britain.

Whilst reading the book, particularly the part which deals with who provides classes for adults, I did find myself searching through my dog-eared, college copy of "The History of Education in Britain since 1800", looking up the history of the Mechanics' Institutes and the Workers' Educational Association. It is gratifying to realise that the WEA is still active today, and that its courses are mentioned in the survey.

The development of adult education classes for women by women has meant that adult education has come to some communities that might not otherwise have responded to the conventional "night school" image. In many areas it has responded to community needs and in that process it has begun to move towards vocational needs. Similarly the use of EC funds for the concept of Education for the Unemployed has brought into play new ideas and expectations of adult education. I feel Ireland is entering into a new era of adult education and the survey on "Learning and Leisure" was commissioned by the ILEA prior to its demise on April 1st 1990, a time when one third of local authorities were cutting adult classes.

Although one of the main aims of the survey was to produce data that would be of use to adult education planners across Britain, obviously there were areas in the survey that would apply anywhere. Some of the findings were interesting and would be relevant in Ireland. Two of the major challenges that it posed were:

(1) The need to make learning opportunities available to all adults who seek them, wherever they live, and -

(2) To stimulate adults in all sections of society to become active learners.

These have to be the universal aims of all of us involved in adult education. Points that I considered to be important would not necessarily be the ones considered as important by planners of educational courses and resources.

There is a clear trend in the survey indicating that as post-school educational opportunities open up to adults, the role of the formal institution as the main deliverer may well decrease. There was in the survey a redefining of some activities previously seen as learning; they are now leisure activities, e.g. sports and handicrafts.

Perhaps the best thing to come out of the whole survey, in my opinion, was that reading is on the increase - more people listed reading as one of their principal leisure activities. Despite the growth of electronic and other media over the past ten years, reading, as a pursuit remains a favourite pastime.

Throughout my study of this book, I kept coming back to the point, is this book relevant to Ireland? - did I need to know that people in East Anglia had the lowest awareness of the organisers of adult education, but the highest percentage of people attending courses whereas Scotland had the highest overall awareness and the lowest percentage of attendance? I am aware that this would have been more meaningful if it had, perhaps, been Edenderry and Ballydehob. Maybe Ireland needs to be surveyed so that planners and organisers can formulate policy. Certainly chapters headed "Patterns of Learning and Leisure in Scotland, Wales and English Regions" held little interest for me, whereas points raised about the financing of part-time study and the failure of policy makers to come to grips with providing a proper framework of support, although specific to Britain, with its student grants and student loan schemes, has implications for funding for adult education in this country too.

Throughout the book there was a continuous emphasis on the fact that it was the AB and C1 social classes, who had also been educated beyond the age of 18 who availed most often of adult education classes. Participation in classes continues to be most affected by prior educational experience. The chapter on "Non-Participation" was, I think, particularly important as it highlighted the fact that the key to opening up opportunities for adults lay with their initial education: "More than one half of non-participants who did not want to learn in the future left school before the age of 16". The survey quoted from an ACACE Report of 1982 that emphasised the point: those with minimum, initial education, manual workers and the elderly are consistently under-represented.

Regional imbalances were also mentioned. These are important points within the survey that Ireland could learn from. A particularly significant discovery made by this survey was that when specifically targetted by the ILEA the two lowest income-earning groups (D and E socio-economic levels) were more involved in learning than their equivalents living in other regions. More women, another target group, participated in London than elsewhere. In this fact alone the survey highlights the value of an informational campaign locally tailored to the needs of specific groups.

Entitlement to further education was another important question asked and lack of money was one of the main reasons why people were unable to follow up courses. The chapter on

"Latent Demand" was also informative as there seemed to be a need for more provision of adult education to be maintained across a broad sweep of continuing educational opportunities. Finally, there was the acknowledgement that adult learning needs and interests are clearly broad-based and open-ended and are still a long way from being satisfied adequately.

It is obvious that I have gained some knowledge from reading this book, but it's value as a statistical survey is somewhat wasted on me, as I am not in a position of power as a planner or an organiser. I would urge all you planners and organisers out there to read it. Nevertheless, because it is a survey about Britain, it is tailored to look at some of Britain's specific problems such as ethnic minorities and an aging population. This report comes at a time when Britain is axing its adult education services; in its foreword it admits that the picture for adult education is "pretty grim". With a current Education Minister who is recruiting a "Mum's Army" to teach in primary schools, perhaps we should look very carefully at what is happening in Irish adult education and be on our guard.

As a teacher of adult classes I felt one vital question was missing from the questionnaire: "Did you finish your courses? If not, why not?" The $64,000 question - how many of us start the year with an enthusiastic 22 and end up with a faithful 7?

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