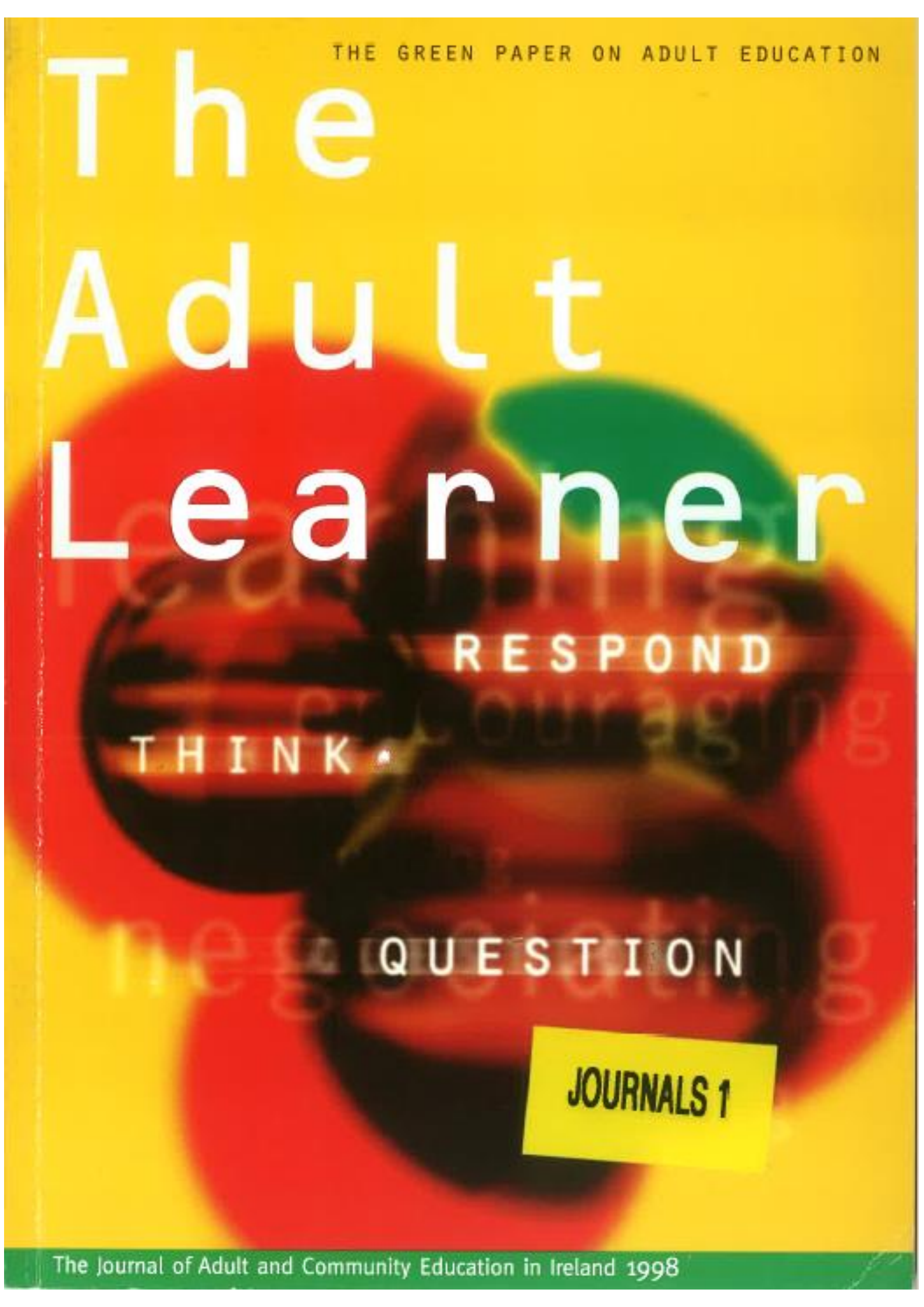
THE GREEN PAPER ON ADULT EDUCATION

The Adult Learner



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The Adult Learner

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Editorial Comment

There is word of a Green Paper and once again, the Eco Warriors of adult education are peering over the parapet and looking to the sun. Once again expectations are raised and they dare to hope - they who, for years, have been learning, teaching, facilitating, negotiating, discussing, encouraging, enabling and doing it all at little cost to the state and with no thought of the cost to themselves.

For this edition of **The Adult Learner**, we have assumed that there will be a serious attempt at establishing a system of adult education. Accordingly, we gathered together a group of people active in the area of adult and community education with the purpose of identifying the issues to be addressed and the priorities to be established in any paper which might emerge. The process was interesting and after a good deal of debate, discussion, argument and agreement, the articles that are presented in this edition represent the collective wisdom of this particular group regarding the form and contents of a Green Paper on adult education.

The need for adult education to maintain an independent voice was one of the major concerns addressed in the group. The vision outlined by Ted Fleming in his keynote article calls for an adult education service which "is both part of the apparatus of the state... and highly critical of it". It is essential, he argues, that adult education be committed to maintaining an open, free discourse which allows adults "to assess critically the validity of their ways of making meaning and explore more open perspectives". We are not talking about a take-over by the state with the imposition of a dominant ideology, we are talking about the state providing the means and the structures within which adult education can pursue its agenda of democratic participation and discourse.

The manner in which this vision can be given expression in devising structures and formulating policy issues is explained in other articles, where contributors emphasise the importance of equity, participation, support and partnership.

Most importantly of all - how can all of this be reflected in the structure? In his thoughtful contribution on this crunch issue, Kevin Hurley proposes an inclusive effective model, which will reflect the three properties of wholeness, transformation and self-regulation. And to those who are involved in the framing of the Green paper and in the decisions which will follow from it, I can do no better than echo Kevin's words - "*Let vision and courage be combined to effect radical change in pursuit of the common good*".

Finally, my thanks to all who contributed so much to the production of this issue and to Ms. Celia Gaffney, who worked so hard to ensure that printing deadlines were met.

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Learning for a Global Civil Society

Ted Fleming

Introduction

The imminent publication of the Government's Green Paper on Adult Education is an opportunity to review the way we think about and plan a policy and legislative framework for adult education. I intend in this paper to articulate a set of ideas which could inform such a policy, legislation and practice. It is an attempt to outline a philosophy or vision, which relates not only to the situation in which we find ourselves as educators but also to the general social context in which we operate at the end of the century.

This paper will:

1. Outline the concepts of state, economy and civil society as a framework for discussing Irish society and a role for adult education.

2. Identify how in a state (representing vested interests) and in an economy, (pursuing free trade and profit) we can find a civilising process that will pursue values such as love, friendship, trust, compassion, equality, etc.

3. Clearly associate adult education with the project of developing a critical citizenship interested in learning and transforming the state, economy and civil society.

The State, Economy and Civil Society

Cohen and Arato outline a three part model of society in which there is the economy, the state and civil society[1]. Civil society is composed primarily of the intimate sphere (the family), the associational sphere (voluntary organisations) and social movements. These social movements and associations promote collective interests, trust and co-operation.[2] Civil society includes the extended family, neighbourhoods, community groups, youth clubs, local businesses, voluntary associations, women's groups, churches, farmers organisations, trade unions.

Though the Reagan and Thatcher era is past, they leave behind economic policies which, according to Welton, are;

> *...not simply a tough-minded way of doing business efficiently. It is not just about economics, or the new relationship of the state to the economy. It is an illegitimate and very dangerous attempt to 'colonize*

the life-world'. By attacking the notion of universal social welfare provision, the neo-conservatives undermine forms of solidarity that were previously protected by the activist state.[3]

The state supports the economy through its policies and civil society is under threat from both the state and the economy. The system is not an ally of the life-world. The life-world is;

> *the reservoir of implicitly known traditions, the background assumptions that are embedded in language and culture and drawn upon by individuals in everyday life.*[4]

The relationships of mutuality, trust and reciprocity built in civil society develop slowly and can be easily undermined. The development of Tallaght is a good example of how this happens. In moving people from their original places, a vast network of connected relationships of support and trust was demolished. The social capital of their original location and of their connected world was lost. But in a subsequent restructuring of the inner city, the state and the economy rebuilt the physical fabric with grant aid and designated area status. As a consequence, the residents lost a considerable amount of cultural capital and civil society was undermined.

In the National Lottery the fund raising capacity of the voluntary sector was taken by the State who donated back to the original organisations the money they now find difficult to raise. Of course, the economy makes huge profit by gaining the licence to run the lottery. We do not need evidence of business handing over large sums of money to politicians to see that the economy and the political system work together.

The economy plays a crucial role in our society, creating wealth and providing jobs. But its agenda and values dominate public discourse. Society is willing to go to great lengths to implement the requirements of the economy. When the state and the economy combine, as they do frequently, they are a formidable coalition ensuring that the interests of the economy are served. Academic economists act as cheerleaders for the Celtic Tiger, celebrating tax cuts for business and the wealthy (corporation and capital gains taxes were reduced in the 1998 Budget) while advocating that tax concessions for workers in Partnership 2000 be abandoned (The Irish Times 6/6/1998, p. 18). Meanwhile, the state is considering the introduction of compulsory work programmes (The Irish Times 18/6/1998, p. 22).

The State, Economy and Adult Education

In education too the needs of the economy are strongly felt. Adult education is seen by the state as predominantly a matter of supporting the economy. But an education policy based solely on the needs of the market is deeply flawed.

Frequently, adult education has allied itself with the system rather than the life-world. The system has, however, adopted the discourse of lifelong learning that almost always involves the adaptation of *"isolated, individual learners to the corporate-determined status quo of the economy"*.[5] I shall deliberately avoiding the concept of lifelong learning here as it is too frequently associated with the agendas of the political and economic system.[6]

Adult education is both part of the apparatus of the state (by engaging in policy making, delivering programmes and services) and highly critical of it. The relationship between the state and adult education is complex and frequently includes elements of resistance and contestation as well as reproduction.

Youngman found that, in Botswana for example, the dominant classes exert control over the state so that the state's activities serve to promote the conditions necessary for maintaining capitalist accumulation and the political power of the ruling elite. However, the control does not go uncontested and education, as an institution of the state, shares this dual character. Education can give people the skills needed to enable them question patterns of domination in society.[7] Too often literacy programmes, for example, become exercises in reading, writing and numeracy as an end in themselves rather than a vehicle for democratic and transformative change of unjust structures. This could just as easily be applied to Ireland.

Adult education has little merit, in the view of the state, unless it supports learning for jobs and work. The Irish Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs recently restated the commitment of the Government to supporting education for those on social welfare as *"further evidence of the Government's commitment to tackling unemployment..."*.[8] We are talking about the contrast between system and life-world.

Will adult education serve the system or the life-world? The increased role of the system in education, family life and community activities leads one to identify a new *"problem zone that has arisen on the borders separating the system and life-world"*.[9] A deskilling of the life-world has been facilitated, at least partially, by adult education and its persistent involvement with the system. Habermas calls this expansion of the state into community life *"the colonization of the life-world"* and it is characterised by the cult of efficiency and the inappropriate deployment of technology.[10]

To say that the life-world and civil society is under threat from the system is not an exaggeration and one example may illustrate the point. At present the objective evidence indicates that there is a problem with contamination from the British nuclear industry. Moreover, the state, as regulator, has a vested interest in the military applications of the nuclear reprocessing plants. This coalition of state and economy is anti-life-world. Adult education needs to be seen as creating spaces for critical discourse, collective actions, strategies for resistance and as developing alternative approaches to development.

Civil society, like adult education, may be regarded as a contested space where attention is focused on the potential for opposing exploitation and oppressive elements of the status quo while aware that there is also the risk of promoting further the dominant ideology. The current interest in civil society is partly because of its connections with ideas of democratisation and it is frequently seen as a locus for limiting the power of the state.

Many social movements such as women, peace, human rights campaigns, environmental and pro-democracy groups have become locations for contesting domination. Adult education has a history of being involved with such movements and these have identified themselves as having a significant learning component.[11] It is not always the case however that such movements are in search of freedoms. Too many modern movements are of a fundamentalist nature and oppose such liberatory agendas.

There are two different kinds of adult education. One has to do with state programmes. This is adult education in the system world. The other is most often called popular education for the development of civil society. I am not however suggesting that transformative learning and education can only take place outside the system world. There ought to be a lively contest taking place in the state and economy about working in solidarities for change in the system. This raises the important question as to how one might work for a critical pedagogy within the system world of state and economy.

It is also important not to romanticise civil society. Frequently, the state and dominant classes achieve their hegemony through the organisations of civil society. We therefore need to interrogate our practice and thinking in community education carefully and always examine what we are doing. For instance, some adult education may serve to reinforce sexist assumptions about women in society and therefore perpetuate their subordination. A number of programmes dealing with home economics and personal development may reinforce restrictive stereotypes of women's position in society. On the other hand, much of the momentum for change has come from adult education and movements in civil society.

Civil society operates on the basis that the government is not fully representative of the people. There is a democratic deficit - a gap between actual democratic practices and the ideal. The feminist movement, for example, has always identified a democratic deficit and bias in the system world. The agenda of civil society is influenced strongly by this analysis of undemocratic or partial democratic achievements and by a certain conception of what democracy might mean. Civil society has the dual function of ensuring that those who exercise power do not abuse it and of transforming the system to regenerate more democratic practices.[12]

In this context, Youngman states that adult education is opposed to;

> *economic exploitation and accompanying divisions between classes and nations; imperialism and maldevelopment in the South; uncontrolled industrialisation and environmental destruction; poverty, inequality, and social domination; the exclusion of the majority from decisions which affect their lives; the processes of globalisation and homogenisation of cultures; injustice and violence; values of competitive individualism and ideologies of racism, ethnocentrism and sexism.*[13]

This critique of capitalism, the state and economy informs adult education, which at its best, proposes a change not within existing structures but a fundamental transformation of these structures. Adult education, in this vision, will be most effective when it supports the possibilities of collective social action rather than only enabling individual development. The practical task for adult education and the Green Paper is to develop a transformative pedagogy for adults.

But before outlining what this transformative pedagogy might mean there is one more piece of this complex world we should address. Globalisation is a theme of our age.

Globalisation

Market economies are global. Capital, raw materials and commodities are produced and sold in a global market. There is free movement of investment and goods (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade). But all this is not a wonderful development. We are told we have no choice in this as dominant forms of globalisation are powered by the unrestrained drive to maximise profits. There is no accountability, beyond the drive to make profits, and many of the players in this process are larger than the states in which they operate. Global speculation is not accountable to any democratic process.

The state is also being rapidly globalised through the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and OECD who exert growing power on the poorer states on behalf of the wealthy states.[14]

There are other globalisations too. A global civil society is beginning to emerge which is founded on a global concern for the interests of civil society - the environment, women's issues, etc.[15] This has within it the idea that world economies and state powers should be made subject to the demands of a global citizenship.

If globalisation is a reality and threat then the solution may be the creation of global civil society. We must begin to think of ourselves as citizens of the planet. This is the precondition for being able to change the globalised markets and state. The task of becoming in one's thinking and acting a member of the planet requires the kind of learning that is a valid and exciting goal for adult education.

This is already happening in environmental and feminist movements. The environmentalists have contributed to this through mobilisation and awareness raising and some success has been achieved. The women's conference at Beijing underlined the local and global dimensions of the changes they are bringing about.

In contrast to the way capital and goods are moved freely around the world, the producers of these goods are deglobalised or nationalised. National boundaries are less permeable for workers than for capital and goods. At borders foreign workers are excluded and refugees are treated poorly in many parts of the world.[16]

Any wish to change this situation involves a learning process that sees democracy and misery as ethically incompatible. Through adult education, another kind of globalisation needs to be forged, which will re-affirm the primacy of the ethical principles which constitute democracy, equality, freedom, participation and solidarity in diversity. This can be done by strengthening civil society locally and globally.

Democracy, Civil Society and Adult Learning

In the final stage of this exploration, I will turn to an interesting set of ideas which link democracy, civil society and adult education. In reconstructing the concept of civil society, Cohen and Arato build on the critical theory of Jurgen Habermas.[17] In doing this they connect civil society with democracy and a particular kind of discourse. This is the same discourse that Mezirow describes as the process required for engaging in transformative learning. Civil society and its learning are essentially learning for democratic citizenship. This kind of learning is not usually supported by the state and the economy and is indeed often in conflict with their values. The emerging task

is to democratise the state, the economy and civil society globally.[18] This implies a different understanding of the learning society compared to the concept usually discussed, where learning is a narrow world-of-work oriented concept. A democratised civil society *is* a learning society.

As early as 1962, Habermas had been emphasising the crucial role of public discussion and debate in the formation of the needs, interests and aspirations of individuals.[19] The way to reach a true understanding of people's needs and interests is to engage in a democratic debate in which these needs are shared and in the discourse clarified and transformed. The core of Habermas' critique of capitalism is that this public sphere or public discussion has been reduced by the activities of politicians, advertisers, public relations and the media in general. This theme has emerged again in his more recent work where he links the concept of a public sphere with that of civil society to provide an account of how control can be exercised over markets and bureaucracies.[20] In a complex modern society, the quality of democracy ultimately depends not on politicians but on the existence of this public sphere, on people's intelligent involvement in politics and on organisations and associations which help form opinion through discourse. A vibrant civil society is essential for democracy. The conviction that free, open, public discussion has a transformative function is central to Habermas' thinking.

But what kind of discussion is he talking about? He is talking about discussion that is aimed at resolving practical disagreements and involves the implicit commitment to a set of rules. These rules of discussion involve the equal rights of all concerned; an obligation to provide reasons for challenging what others assert; having appropriate evidence in support of arguments; and the examining of alternatives and other people's perspectives.[21]

In this never realised ideal speech situation validity claims, tacitly agreed in normal conversation, become subject to explicit critique and debate. Disputes about what may be the truth are resolved through argumentation and agreement is reached solely on the basis of the better argument. In this discourse we anticipate a form of life characterised by *"pure"* (unconstrained and undistorted) intersubjectivity.[22] Could this not be called love?

Discourse requires freedom and justice - freedom to reach agreement on the basis of the better argument alone and justice based on mutual respect. This discourse is both rational and emancipatory in its intention because the process of reaching agreement is accompanied by revealing the ideological, coercive and non-democratic structures, which hinder a genuinely democratic process.[23]

I am proposing that this kind of discourse is also the foundation for a democratic society as it points to freedom, equality and care. It is also now well established in adult education theory that it is the foundation for adult learning. Democratic participation and discourse are essential elements of the learning process.

This ideal speech situation, though never realised, is anticipated in all communications. The conditions for fully participating in discourse and in adult learning are the same. It is assumed that all participants;

a have accurate and complete information
b are free from coercion and distorting self-deception
c are open to alternative points of view - empathic and caring about how others think and feel
d are able to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively
e are able to become aware of the context of ideas and critically reflective of assumptions, including their own
f have equal opportunity to participate in the various roles of discourse
g are willing to accept a resulting best judgement as a test of validity until new perspectives, evidence or arguments are encountered and subsequently validated through discourse as yielding a better judgement.[24]

It is now well established that this process of engaging in a discourse free from domination is a core principle of transformative adult education. This respectful, critical and thoughtful group learning experience is precisely what Freire means when he proposes that adult education is dialogic interaction.[25]

On this basis I am suggesting that civil society, democracy and adult education have in common the ambition to create opportunities and places for discourse. The same process underpins each. Our commitment is to a form of living together in which we attempt to reach agreement about difficult matters in a discussion that is free from domination. A teacher of transformative learning attempts to create the identical process, i.e. a learning society. In order to have full free participation in discourse there must be freedom, equality, tolerance, justice and a valuing of rationality. These are precisely the values of civil society as outlined earlier. The learning community implied in discourse is precisely that required for transformative learning; the recreation of the life-world; the development of civil society and the emergence of truly democratic systems and society.

The role of the adult educator is therefore one of encouraging and creating situations and classrooms which encourage the fullest participation in discourse, allows adults critically assess the validity of their ways of making meaning and explore more open perspectives. Too much adult education has been about work, skills, instrumental learning and how to do things. It has been preoccupied with defining learning tasks and outcomes, behavioural

objectives and measurable competence. Too much has been about the system, the formal state sector, the economy and training. These are important and need support but a different kind of learning is being proposed. It involves a critical reflection on assumptions, which underpin our beliefs, a discourse to justify what we believe and taking action on the basis of the new agreed understandings. Then needs assessment, learning objectives, teaching methods, research methodologies and evaluation are defined and identified in a different way.[26] They are formed in the discourse.

The task of the adult educator is to create, practice and teach how to create spaces for discourse. In this way democracy, transformative learning and a civil society are possible. The full potential of a learning society may be realised. A global civil society might be able to influence the global market and state so that they too become democratised rather than representative.[27] The old maxim was to think globally and act locally. Now we may need to think, feel, act and educate globally and locally. This bottom up globalisation of civil society is about reclaiming the life-world and in the process transforming the system and society towards a more democratic and just world. This is a philosophy for adult education.

Such a philosophy helps locate adult education in the arena of the state and the economy. But more importantly, this vision of adult education locates the task of adult education in the community, in the life-world and in civil society. It raises the context for the discussion from a national one to a global stage and connects adult education with a global agenda. It connects adult education with the radical possibility of a more caring, just, and democratic world.

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Footnotes

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Education for Transformation: Towards the Green Paper

Teresa McCormack

I was asked by the Editor to write a short piece outlining *"what I hoped would be in the forthcoming Green Paper on Adult and Community Education"*. Before doing so, it is appropriate to welcome the decision to publish a Green Paper. The publication of the Green Paper may herald the end of the inferior status traditionally associated with adult and community education in terms of educational policy in the Republic of Ireland. If so, this will be part of a growing international trend. While, in some countries, the importance of adult and community education has been recognised for many years, it was not until the 1990s that policy makers in general began to try to make lifelong learning a reality for all members of society and not just for *"certain privileged groups"* for which it is already *"a natural feature of everyday life". (OBCD, 1996).*

It is probably true to say that much of the new-found commitment to lifelong learning can be attributed to economic change - the impact of new technology, changing patterns of employment etc.. However it is important for educators to ensure that the rationale for adult and community education is not based entirely on economic considerations. It is necessary to recognise the role of learning in creating a more civilised society by, for example, promoting culture and identity and by strengthening families and communities.

On the basis of this wider rationale, the Education Commission of CORI has, for many years, been promoting adult and community education as a way of liberating individuals and transforming society towards an alternative vision of the future (CMRS, 1993; CORI, 1997; McKeown, 1998). CORI's vision is of a society in which individuals, families and communities can participate fully in the social, economic, political and cultural structures, which shape their lives so that they can live life with dignity. We see economic and social divisions as major impediments to the achievement to this kind of vision and we advocate policies which minimise these divisions and promote social inclusion.

We have been arguing, on behalf of CORI, that one of the ways in which education can advance this alternative vision is by ensuring that adult education is *"the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world"*. (Mayo, 1995, p.16, attributed to Freire). Ideally all forms of adult education would have the characteristics described by Freire. In practice

however, these characteristics are most likely to be found in adult education which is community based (i.e. community education). For CORI, adult and community education are particularly important in the context of tackling social inequality because, in the first place they can represent a 'second chance' for those adults who have not benefited from their schooling. Almost 40% of the adult population left full-time education before the age of 15 and we know that these adults are much more likely than others to have families that fall into poverty.

Secondly, community education can be a very powerful strategy in efforts to overcome poverty and the educational disadvantage to which poverty gives rise. Educational disadvantage - even though it is typically experienced and often portrayed as individual failure - is strongly linked to social class position and this, in turn, is typically mediated through the local community where one lives. In this sense, poverty and disadvantage are as much about the experiences of communities as about the experiences of individuals. This implies that educational disadvantage requires an approach which combines both individual development with community development. Conventional educational strategies have often failed to make a significant impact on disadvantaged communities, essentially because many of their potential leaders leave the community after improving their level of education. This process is aggravated by the state's housing policies in local authority estates, which tend to promote community instability. Community education strategies are deliberately designed to build up and retain resources within communities thereby invigorating them.

Community education can also impact on educational disadvantage by addressing its underlying causes at the level of society as a whole (e.g. inequalities in the way power and resources are distributed). This potential arises from the fact that community education is designed to initiate and develop activities, processes and structures which enable and empower people in disadvantaged communities to take more control of their own lives. This involves creating opportunities *'for people to analyse the reality in which they live, to identify the difficulties and blockages which they encounter in various aspects of their lives and to engage in social action to change the structures which adversely affect them and their community'* (CMRS, 1992). In other words, community education focuses on the empowerment of marginalised groups so that they can make links between their situation and the structures in the wider society. When marginalised groups are empowered in this way, it ideally leads to social action aimed at changing societal structures (the transformation of society).

Against this background I will, in the rest of this paper, make seven suggestions about the forthcoming Green Paper.

1. An Explicit Vision of Society

Earlier I tried to highlight the extent to which positions on education ought to be influenced by a vision of the future of society. My first suggestion, therefore, is that the forthcoming Green Paper would include a spelling out of the wider social, economic, political and cultural goals which the paper's educational proposals are intended to serve. In particular, I hope that the Green Paper will pay equal attention to the many different purposes of adult and community education (those related to employment, those related to other aspects of individual development and those related to collective or communal development). It will be interesting to see how our Green Paper will measure up to a series of questions put by Stephen McNair about the recent British Green Paper *"The Learning Age"* (Department of Education and Employment, 1998).

He asked

> *"is the paper too family focused on a narrow employment related agenda or could it imply a broader notion of work and skills to embrace voluntary work, parenting skills, community participation etc.? Does it deal adequately with issues of citizenship and culture?" (McNair, 1998)*

By calling for a balanced approach to the different purposes of adult and community education I do not mean, of course, to downgrade vocational considerations. It will be extremely important for the Green Paper to address the many urgent training and retraining needs of adults, especially those who are long unemployed. Therefore it will need to provide a framework for collaboration among the various partners in the area: learners, providers, the state, employers, unions. In this regard it is worth noting the extent to which traditional boundaries are breaking down. Vocational training, for example, is increasingly no longer concerned solely with providing workers with specific skills related to particular industrial applications. Rather it is concerned with concepts like flexibility, learning how to learn, and the capacity *"to deal critically and creatively with reality"*. Thus, people who are involved in training may be empowered to identify and challenge unjust economic structures (e.g. large wage differentials). Similarly efforts to provide vocational training for unemployed people are increasingly community-based and seek to empower those involved not just to access existing jobs but to create new opportunities within their own areas (see Mayo, 1997; Kirby & Jacobson, 1998).

2. Principles

My second suggestion is that the Green Paper should be based on a clear statement of some of the very fundamental principles discussed in the introduction to this paper. Three principles seem to me to be particularly important.

- **Collective as well as individual advancement.** As indicated earlier, one of the defining characteristics of community education is its concern with the development of communities as well as the individuals who make up these communities. It is this process of linking the individual to the community and understanding both in the context of broader social structures that gives community education its **transformative** potential and which makes it of particular benefit to those who are disadvantaged and marginalised.

- **Empowerment and participation.** This principle reflects an understanding of the process by which individuals and communities must be the central agents in their own development and transformation. For example, it implies that the needs of individuals and communities should shape the content, delivery and timing of educational interventions. It also implies that educational interventions should not be introduced to communities by state agencies or professionals without an extensive consultation process in which the members of the communities are centrally involved.

- **Lifelong learning.** Now that this concept appears to have widespread acceptance, I think that it is important that we try to reach a common understanding of what it actually means. For me, it involves more than recognising that learning can take place at a number of discrete phases of one's life. Instead I see it as a commitment to a belief that education is important at all stages of our lives and that learning can take place in many different ways and in a variety of different contexts. To the extent that there are *"sectors"* associated with different phases of learning, these sectors are interdependent, equally valid and underpinned by a coherent philosophy of education based on principles including those which are characteristic of community education. Acceptance of the principle of lifelong leaning would mean that it would be very difficult to maintain the inferior status currently given to adult and community education.

3. A Commitment to Equity

If the Green Paper is to generate a worthwhile debate, it is important that there is an unequivocal acknowledgement that existing provision is inadequate and inequitable. For example:

- in 1996, the Department of Education and Science spent just over £2 million on adult education (about 0.2% of overall educational expenditure)
- current expenditure on community education is about ££6.3 million, of which less than 5% comes from the Department of Education and Science (McKeown, 1998)
- participation in adult education in Ireland - at approximately 30% of the adult population - is much lower than in other OECD countries (Morgan, Hickey, Kellaghan, Cronin and Millar, 1997)
- those with least education tend also to be those least likely to participate in adult education and people in employment are more likely to participate than people who are unemployed
- numbers' participating in programmes such as VTOS and ALCE are far lower than the numbers in the population for whom these programmes are designed.

The points that have just been made indicate clearly that adult and community education are not benefiting those who are disadvantaged to the extent that is either possible or desirable. This poses a serious challenge to the existing system, which the Green Paper needs to recognise. On this basis, I believe that it is essential that the Green Paper sets, as its overriding priority, the development of adult and community education strategies that address inequality and disadvantage.

Part of the response to this challenge will involve a radical reform of funding and I will come to that next. However it is clear that there are many barriers and obstacles to participation by those who are disadvantaged in adult and community education which are only partly related to finding. This calls for an innovative outreach approach involving many different learning sites, learning methodologies and new collaborative provision. This is an area in which the British Green Paper, drawing on the Kennedy Report (1991) sets out some interesting proposals which could be relevant in an Irish context also.

4. Reform of Funding

One of the most obvious ways in which the Green Paper can respond to the challenge just posed is by giving a commitment to a radical reform of funding of adult and community education. This reform will, in the first instance, involve a very significant increase in the level of expenditure by the Department of Education and Science. The Green Paper will also need to begin to *"address the issue of duplication fragmentation and methods of*

funding in the provision of training, second chance education, adult and community education" (Commission on School Accommodation 1996). This fragmentation reflects the lack of a cohesive vision for the sector as a whole.

In this regard, it is worth noting again the extent to which community education has benefited in recent years, albeit inadvertently, from developments outside the institutional sphere of education. As a general principle, the distribution of funding for adult and community education needs to be based on innovative mechanisms. Conventional mechanisms such as capitation funding or annual budgeting are rarely appropriate for community projects.

5. New Structures

CORI has argued for a number of years that one of the reasons for the lack of development in adult and community education has been the failure to put in place appropriate structures for decision making and administration. CORI continues to favour an intermediate education structure, which would take responsibility for all aspects of education in an area. This option has been effectively ruled out by the present Minister for Education. Nevertheless there is some scope for useful reform in the proposals of the Commission on School Accommodation (1996) for the reorganisation of Vocational Education Committees. I hope that the Green Paper VHI take these proposals on board.

The Green Paper will also represent an opportunity to advance some of the ideas in the 1995 white Paper for structures at national level, most significantly perhaps the establishment of a Further Education Authority. In general I would hope that whatever structures are being considered, they will be designed to enable people to:

- analyse their own social, economic, cultural and political realities
- create an alternative vision of the future
- acquire the individual and collective skills needed to make that future a reality.

6. Promoting the Community Sector

It is probably accurate to suggest that the education sector has been slower than other sectors in appreciating the role that can be played by voluntary and community groups in developing and implementing social and economic policy - especially in relation to overcoming poverty and disadvantage. The forthcoming Green Paper provides an important opportunity for the education system to include the community sector as a more crucial player in its work and to support those community efforts which are endeavouring to address poverty and disadvantage by linking individual and community development This implies that the role of the community sector needs to be explicitly recognised and supported in policy and practice as an integral part of adult and community education. It is particularly important that, in recognising the role of the community sector, its *"radical edge"* is preserved.

This will mean, for example, that community groups are not co-opted into dominant ways of looking at issues or seen simply as consumers of services provided by others. Rather the aim will be to empower groups to advance their particular vision of the future (Crowley, 1993; Zappone, 1998).

7. Accreditation

One of the practical ways of building adult and community education is by developing mechanisms for accrediting this form of learning so that its value - both individually and collectively - is explicitly recognised. At present, the lack of agreed forms of accreditation poses a significant impediment to the funding and development of this form of education, particularly from conventional education and training agencies, including the European Social Fund. Lack of accreditation also acts as a disincentive to become involved in this type of education since, as Kelly (1996) has pointed out *"securing credit for effort is long understood to be a motivating factor in encouraging people to achieve their potential"* (p.xii). Conversely, an accreditation system *"could assure the quality of the work and enhance both the status of the individuals concerned as well as the groups and organisations working in this sector"* (Kelly, 1994, p.6).

In conclusion, I see the Green Paper as an exciting opportunity to promote an alternative vision of society and forms of education, which will advance that vision. It will allow us to consider education not merely in instrumental terms but as a means of liberating individuals and transforming society.

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Community Education: An Anti-Poverty Strategy

Joan O'Flynn

This paper sets out to discuss the role of adult education with regard to social equity, social justice and combating poverty. In particular it highlights the opportunity that current policy contexts provide for a re-evaluation of traditional models of education and for agreeing new approaches to achieving greater equality in education for adult learners. Community-based approaches to adult education are discussed in detail as they are an important aspect of anti-poverty work and of initiatives to empower people to make decisions affecting their own lives. In this context issues relating to women's education are specifically highlighted. The paper concludes that new approaches to achieving greater equality in education for adult learners must be enhanced. As well as this being necessary for the realisation of education as a social right, it will also contribute to greater parental support for young people experiencing educational disadvantage. However, the underlying causes of poverty and inequality must also be tackled if greater social justice and equity are to be achieved.

Poverty and education

Poverty is about being denied the standard of living that is considered the norm in society because of inadequate resources. Such a view of poverty takes account of people's social, emotional and cultural needs as well as basic physical needs. Thus poverty is about more than a lack of money; it includes isolation and a sense of powerlessness. Poverty affects both urban and rural communities. Unequal distribution of resources and opportunities is the main reason for the relatively high level of poverty in Ireland where 9-15% of the population lives in *'persistent poverty'*.

Education alone cannot adequately address the inequalities in Irish society. Some groups will benefit more from education than others regardless of how it is organised. Wider social change is a necessary accompaniment for real equality in education.

Education is however a key element of any anti-poverty programme. It can perpetuate poverty or it can be a key mechanism for preventing and providing routes out of poverty. There are established links between levels of educational achievement and access to employment and between education and earnings from employment. A very low earning capacity usually correlates to low or limited formal educational qualifications.

Education also plays a key role in promoting and determining values in society and it has the potential to promote principles of social justice, solidarity and equality. These relate to the concept of shared citizenship which, in turn, is closely related to the idea of the common good: that there are common values over and above individual interests and backgrounds.

Policy contexts

Education is a fundamental social right and education provision, both formal and informal, should strive to provide equal treatment and deliver equitable outcomes to participants. The White Paper *Charting our Education Future* has been criticised for its lack of recognition of Irish adult education.[1] In this context, the government's commitment to a Green Paper on Adult Education is especially welcome and provides a valuable opportunity to explore a broad vision of education's role within Irish society.

Sharing in Progress, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy[2] provides another very important policy context. This government initiative aims to halve persistent poverty levels in Ireland by 2007. The strategy is underpinned by a number of fundamental principles that should also inform the Green Paper on Adult Education. These are:

- Ensuring equal access and encouraging participation for all
- Guaranteeing the rights of minorities especially through anti-discrimination measures
- The reduction of inequalities and in particular addressing the gender dimensions of poverty
- The development of the partnership approach building on national and local partnership processes
- Actively involving the community and voluntary sector
- Encouraging self-reliance through respecting individual dignity and promoting empowerment and
- Engaging in appropriate consultative processes, especially with users of services.

These principles provide a framework for strengthening the capacity of individuals through empowerment strategies; for personal and citizenship rights and for the rights of participation. The anti-poverty strategy identifies a number of policy actions as part of an integrated strategy to address educational disadvantage from early childhood through to adulthood. Other strategies for income adequacy, long-term unemployment and urban and rural poverty are also outlined. For lifelong learning the Anti-Poverty Strategy makes the following commitment:

> *"Support lifelong learning, second chance education and community-based education and training. Participation could be facilitated particularly through the provision of childcare. Disadvantage among adults will be tackled through the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme and by ensuring that programmes are in place for those who wish to overcome literacy and numeracy difficulties"(p11).*

This commitment is important for the realisation of individual ability and support for the development of life-chances. It identifies a three-strand approach to adult education and a specific focus on literacy, numeracy and training schemes.

Community-based education

There has been an increase in the volume of community-based education and training programmes within disadvantaged areas in recent years. The aim of many of these is to help people examine the circumstances which contribute to poverty and disadvantage, actively develop strategies to combat disadvantage and empower people to make decisions affecting their own lives, plus those of their families and communities[3]. A 1994 study[4] highlighted the concerns of voluntary organisers, participants and tutors regarding community-based courses. Some of these are summarised below.

Access

Lack of finance continues to be a significant factor deterring adult learners in disadvantaged communities from participating in community based education and training courses. In particular the self-financing rule was criticised as ensuring that adult education is a middle-class pursuit reflecting middle-class values. It echoes the view of the Commission on Adult Education whose report, fifteen years ago, highlighted inequity in adult education:

> *'various correlations reveal that there is a relationship between participation in adult education and the amount of education already received and social class and social grouping'.*

This suggests that adult education repeats the pattern of other education arenas where the privileged have the resource capacity and the power to maintain advantage in the education system for themselves.

Resources

The absence of adequate and long-term funding militated against community-based education providers being able to meet the demands for courses. The self-financing rule again militates against the provision of courses, créches and training in disadvantaged communities.

The unmet demands for courses in disadvantaged communities is a strong counterpoint to the assumption that additional knowledge and skills are most valued by those who already possess relatively more knowledge and skills.

Structures

Fragmentation and lack of coherency are often typical of the provision of community courses. Piecemeal access to unrelated short-term courses is often all that is available, which restricts ongoing personal, educational and vocational development. There is therefore a need for structures that help to build common approaches and to facilitate progression.

In particular this suggests that there is a need for an inter-Departmental response to adult education, particularly including the Departments of Education and Science; Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Social, Community and Family Affairs.

Accreditation

Many community-based courses award certificates to participants who complete particular programmes. However, there is a need for formal recognition, accreditation and progression routes into other education, training or employment. A variety of approaches to accreditation need to be developed which take account of adults' different accreditation needs.

Support & Guidance

The level of personal support offered in community-based education is often missing from formal provision. Related to this there is a need for a guidance service to assist people to make informed decisions in selecting education or training courses which best suit their needs.

Childcare support

The unavailability or inadequacy of childcare support is a significant obstacle to women's participation in adult and community education and training courses. The next section addresses this issue in more detail.

Childcare

The commitment in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy to adult and community based education acknowledges childcare provision as a necessary element of provision in this area. This is important but the commitment to childcare, which is largely aspirational, could be strengthened in the Green Paper on Adult Education. Childcare is viewed as an essential provision to counteract inequality between men and women. Women continue to carry the bulk of childcare responsibilities. In the absence of any state-provision of childcare, one way of reducing barriers to adult learning opportunities, particularly for women from low income backgrounds, is to provide quality childcare facilities as an integral part of adult education provision.

There are four potential gains from this approach. Firstly, the capacity of mothers from low-income groups to participate in lifelong learning opportunities is increased. Secondly, social, recreational and development opportunities for children from low-income groups are increased. Thirdly, childcare provision as an integral aspect to supporting adult learning may also provide examples of good practice in the area of early childhood education. Fourthly, parental education levels seem to be important to children's school performance.

A mother's education is particularly important and research evidence suggests that children of less formally educated mothers do less well at school and leave school earlier than children of mothers who have benefited more fully from the education system. In this context, facilitating the participation of mothers in lifelong education is important for personal, social and developmental opportunities and economic capacity and it can contribute to breaking the intergenerational nature of disadvantage and poverty. The report from the Working Group on Childcare, under the auspices of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform should inform this aspect of the Adult Education Green Paper.

Education for social change?

Commentary on the White Paper on Education[5] suggests that the White Paper accepts that education has no role to play in helping to eradicate social injustices of Irish society such as poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, powerlessness or alienation. Will the Green Paper on Adult Education adopt the same approach? For many involved in community-based education, this would present an overly restrictive view and would be a major disappointment. The Combat Poverty Agency considers that the education system should provide a vision of society that is committed to the values of social equity and justice. It considers that this approach would challenge inequity and intolerance and that its ultimate outcome must be to create a society where inequalities are challenged.[6]

Many community-based courses in disadvantaged areas put this theory into action. The aim of many of the courses or programmes is to help people examine the circumstances which contribute to poverty and disadvantage, to actively develop strategies to combat disadvantage and empower people to decisions affecting their own lives and those of their families and communities[7] The values underpinning the courses are ones that support community-interest rather than individual-interest and that respond to community needs rather than individual needs. Community-based education seeks to address civil, economic, social, political and cultural contexts in which people live. This distinguishes community-based education as an initiative for social change rather than for the more limited concept of social cohesion.

In community-based education, local groups take responsibility for and play a key role in organising the courses, deciding on programme content and recruiting tutors. This is another distinguishing feature of community-based education as in other educational provision, the 'dominant' ideology may define the programme content, notions of intelligence and knowledge, tutors perceptions and expectations of learners, assessment procedures and teaching styles. The self-interest of dominant groups and the dominant culture is more likely to produce norms and values that are less likely to promote social change.

Community-based education tries to put into practice one of the fundamental principles of education generally - to work with the knowledge, skills and experience a learner can offer. These are considered valid and significant rather than opposite to the cultural domination that may exist in other programmes. They seek to work with people rather than for people and take account of the particular socio-economic, cultural and other needs and situations of participants. One of the potential outcomes of this approach is an educational experience that responds more appropriately to the diverse needs of class, gender ethnic, disabled and other groups. However experience from the feminisation and rationalisation of education in the UK in the 1970s points to the limitations of this approach where a focus on teachers and learners changing their behaviour is inadequate without wider structural change in society to address inequalities. This returns us to the importance of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and its potential to build a fairer and more equal society.

A new paradigm

Community-based education can offer a new paradigm for adult education for the next millennium. The Green Paper and future White Paper on Adult Education provide the opportunity to adopt new models of educational provision that are built on models of participation, collective thinking and less hierarchical decision-making. It means conceptualising education as an agent of social change. This is sometimes dismissed as 'social engineering' but supporting a more equal sharing of power in education and society is a valid objective.

Initiatives to promote the Irish language, enterprise, gender equality or relationships/sexuality, are valid in adult education as in other areas of education. For the Green Paper to embrace this new paradigm means acknowledging that this thinking is a challenge to the existing structures and stakeholders including professionals, managers, administrators and policy-makers.

One commentator[8] encapsulates it well when she describes participatory strategies as being about reducing the privileges of the privileged. Ultimately this suggests that the mediators of adult education themselves become agents for change.

In conclusion, education is one institution of social organisation that has a profound effect on unequal economic, social and cultural reproduction. Adult education can play a valuable role in tackling educational disadvantage. Community-based education in particular suggests a range of different values and innovative modes and institutions that provide an alternative to the traditional hierarchical models within education. It provides one of the mechanisms for responding to the experience of poverty such as inadequate resources, isolation and a sense of powerlessness.

However the underlying causes of poverty and inequality must be addressed and their levels must be reduced in society if structures of power are to be transformed. The National Anti-Poverty Strategy has adopted the reduction of inequality as one of its principles. It commits to supporting adult education, including life-long learning, second-chance education and community-based education. Coupled with the Green Paper's purpose as a discussion paper on future policy for adult education these two policy contexts provide important opportunities for agreeing new approaches to achieving greater equality in education for adult learners and enhanced parental support for young people experiencing educational disadvantage.

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Footnotes

1 O'Sullivan D. *Education Blueprint or Missed Opportunity* in Poverty Today June/July 1995 No. 28, Combat Poverty Agency (1995)

2 Sharing in Progress, National Anti-Poverty Strategy, Stationery Office, Dublin (1997).

3 Kelly, M. *Can You Credit It? Implications of Accreditation for Learners and Groups in the Community Sector*, Combat Poverty Agency (with AONTAS and NOW Programme), 1994).

4 Kelly, M. *op. cit.*

5 O'Sullivan D. *op.cit.*,

6 *Education, Inequality and Poverty*, A Response to the Green Paper on Education, Combat Poverty Agency, March 1993 .

7 Kelly, M. *op.cit* p.xii.

8 Connolly. B 'Community Development and Adult Education: prospects for change?' In *Radical Learning for Liberation*, 1996. Maynooth: Centre for Adult and Community Education.

Adult Education and Brownpaperbags

Ad Hock

In compiling this article, I am indebted to Aodhagan O'Malai, research student and trailblazer extraordinaire at Bologna Adult Grammar School (or BAGS), whose thesis entitled *'Supporting Democracy: a study of favours neither given nor received'* is an invaluable reference work for all serious students of the Brownpaperbag phenomenon.

Some years ago, I was engaged in an adult basic education project in the outer reaches of Dalkey. The project, which was aimed at understanding the flux in the financial markets and facilitating financial flow where necessary, came under the general heading of Launder Your Money - a guide to Offshore Accounting. Following some indepth investigation by a team of scuba divers in the area of Bullocks Harbour, there came into my possession some highly privileged, very confidential, specially classified and unusually sensitive information, which constituted a serious threat to the ship of state and all those who sail in her.

One morning, on arrival at my office in the prefab, which had been specially provided for this important adult education project, I found placed on my desk a brownpaperbag. Inside was a cheque for a substantial amount of money accompanied by a handwritten note which said: Please find enclosed cheque for a substantial amount of money in return for which favours will neither be expected nor received. Yours sincerely, Democracy Supporter. Strange, I thought, very mysterious indeed but, ever the pragmatic and discreet person, I cashed the cheque and forgot all about it. One's memory in these matters is notoriously fallible but, to the best of my recollection, the cheque was made out to cash and for a four figure sum - £1 .17s.5d. I think. Anyway, I drew a line in the sand in Dalkey beach and successfully brought the project to a conclusion before taking a well deserved holiday in the Cayman Islands.

Horses for Courses

I was reminded of this bizarre incident recently with the announcement of the Horses for Courses commission to examine payments to adult educators. It brought to mind also another bizarre event which occurred in the late sixties in a well known county in the south of Ireland which for obvious reasons I cannot name but which, for the purposes of this story, shall be referred to as Cork. It seems that a Very Weird Individual living in a rural hinterland was anxious to provide classes and courses for adults long before this kind of activity was desirable, fashionable or even necessary. In

particular, this Weird Individual was anxious to provide courses in Supporting Democracy, which was perceived as the most pressing need at this particular time in this particular place. An advertisement was placed in the local newspaper, seeking permission to build an Adult Education Centre and inviting tenders for which favours would neither be expected nor received.

Naturally enough, since no one had ever heard of such a thing, the announcement aroused the most extraordinary curiosity for at least one mile around, and Builders and Developers Anonymous, who as it happened were gathered at a treatment centre nearby, immediately abandoned the therapy and went looking for the contract. Tenders came flooding in, enclosed in brownpaperbags and accompanied by cheques for substantial amounts made out to cash and supporting democracy. In due course, replies were received and it was pointed out that, while the cheques were good, the quality of the paper in the brownpaperbags was inferior and would have to be improved significantly if the tenderers were to have any chance of landing the huge contract. Immediately the Builders and Developers responded by forwarding reinforced waterproof brownpaperbags in great quantities, some indeed enclosing further cheques signed *'just in case'*.

Well, the end result of all of this bizarre activity is that there is a Very Weird Individual living in style in one of those so called eastern democracies, where corruption is rife and there is very little regard for integrity in public life, and there has been erected in a well known county in the south of Ireland a Very Weird Adult Education Centre, built entirely from brownpaperbags and offering nonstop courses in Supporting Democracy.

Structure: Towards an Inclusive, Effective Model

Kevin Hurley

There is evidence of a consensus that a discussion on structure will be central to any attempt to enhance the condition of adult education in Ireland. Furthermore, equity demands that, in any such attempt, priority must be given to facilitating the participation of those who are in greatest need of re-engaging with educational activity. It is salutary to be mindful then that structures and institutions can constitute and raise barriers to participation. And these must be held to be partly accountable at least for one of Naomi Sargent's key findings regarding participation in the UK - "over half of all upper and middle-class (AB) respondents are current or recent learners, compared with one third of the skilled working class (C2) and one quarter of unskilled working class people and people on limited incomes (DE)". How fares Ireland in comparison? Certainly, in one sphere - higher education - the structural arrangements for facilitating admission must be deemed to be accountable, in part at least, for the comparatively abysmal rate of participation by mature students.

Effective Structure

Structure, to be effective, must be informed by the purposes of adult education. If these were to be reduced to a typology, the present inchoate arrangements would suggest the following:

- compensating for the lack of fulfilment during school experience;
- fostering personal and community development;
- developing skills;
- contributing to the enlargement of knowledge;
- fostering citizenship and independent living;
- widening participation, access and mobility in education.

However useful this may be for classification, something more unifying and definitive is required to animate an optimum model. This paper will therefore seek to outline a structure which attempts to reflect three properties - wholeness, transformation and self-regulation - which have been identified as defining structure. These properties, I suggest, are difficult to discern within present arrangements:

- *wholeness* - what aims and principles are invoked to inform the present arrangements? How are these evaluated? What measures are in place to achieve coherence and equilibrium and avoid disconnection and discontinuity?

- *transformation* - how can a learning society be achieved considering the suppression and marginalisation of adult education? How can development be achieved without a comprehensive framework for dialogue and policy formulation? How can radical change be achieved and sustained when the voices, energies and impulses are invariably exercised in isolated milieus and characteristically dependent on combinations of voluntarism and short-term funding?

- *self-regulation* - while, on the one hand, much of adult education - the voluntary sector - could be said to be self-regulating, how can such issues as funding, quality, accreditation, mobility, be reasonably resolved in the absence of a systematic, integrated dynamic-inducing infra-structure? How can coherence be achieved in the face of fragmentation and compartmentalisation (e.g. VECs, FAS, Partnerships)? How can a structure be self-regulating in the absence of such norm-forming bodies as the Open College Networks and the Access Validating Agencies long operating in the UK?

Due realisation of such properties awaits due structure as part of the process of empowering all who subscribe to adult education.

Earlier Representations

The issue of structure has been addressed at regular intervals.

In 1983 the Commission on Lifelong Learning recommended the appointment of local Adult Education Officers for every post-primary school catchment (or analogous) area; County and County Borough Adult Education Boards - with links to the VECs; a National Council for Adult Education and an enhanced role for the Adult Education Section of the Department of Education.

In the mid eighties, following the issue of a circular letter in December 1984, VECs began to set up Ad Hoc (sic) Adult Education Boards.

In 1992, the publication of the Green Paper *"Education for a Changing World"*, prompted debate, despite its reserved tone on the question of structure. At a symposium at Maynooth, the Adult Education Organisers' Association was reported as recommending the establishment of A National Central Executive Agency within the Department of Education and an independent local statutory body in each county.

One workshop at the seminar recommended *"a national and local structure..."* each with specific functions and distanced from existing structure.

Combat Poverty also commented on the Green Paper and focused on structural issues such as the number of courses on offer and the timing and

flexibility of access. Otherwise, on the issue of structure, it contented itself with supporting AONTAS' call for the establishment of centres of adult learning.

In 1993, the National Education Convention identified structure as one of the four key issues. It rehearsed the recommendations of the 1983 Commission's Report but observed that Adult Education Boards should be more representative. However, the Convention did give rise to a relatively radical proposal for the wider field - namely that Regional Education Councils/Boards be established.

In 1994, a Position Paper elaborating on this proposal recommended the devolution of some of the functions carried out by the Department of Education and the development of new and existing functions and activities such as adult and vocational education and training.

In 1995, the White Paper *"Charting our Education Future"* was published. Its proposals on adult education were predicted on the emergence of the RECs. These in turn were to be subordinate to a Further Education Authority.

Neither the Regional Councils/Boards nor the Further Education Authority have come to pass.

However, the White Paper elicited a strong response from AONTAS which, among other representations, set out substantive proposals on structure; these were animated by a particular concern that structures should take adequate account of the dynamic nature of the community sector. AONTAS recommended the establishment of: (i) Local Structures (ii) Regional Structures predicated on the establishment of Regional Educational Councils and (iii) a national body to be known as The Adult and Continuing Education Authority.

Most of the foregoing sets of recommendations were accompanied by outline functions.

Current Arrangements and The Learning Divide

Surely one of the great tasks to be undertaken as a prelude to what Ted Fleming characterises as *'the project of developing a critical citizenship'* is the harmonisation of continuing education and continuing training. Despite occasional crossover, these largely occupy separate spaces and are sustained by separate structures. Consequently there is little scope for the cross-fertilisation through which each sector can be enriched by encounters with the other. This disjunction is compounded by restrictions emanating from EU legislation. How remarkable then that the EU Commission has chosen to portray all member states as adherents of the view *"that the separation between education and training is becoming less and less clear"*. And that is merely to echo the contention of the Round Table of European Industrialists -

which is approvingly quoted by the Commission - that *"the essential mission of education is to help everyone develop their own potential and become a complete human being, as opposed to a tool at the service of the economy; the acquisition of knowledge and skills should go hand in hand with building up character, broadening outlook and accepting one's responsibility in society"*.

Knowledge and skills are already positioned to go hand in hand with the development of character, outlook and social responsibility in one of the EU's most recent adherents, Finland. In Finland - not unlike Ireland in terms of location, history, population and recent economic experience - the separate National Boards of General Education and Vocational Education were replaced by a single National Board of Education in the early nineties. The Board has a separate unit for adult education. The purpose of the reform was *"to eliminate overlapping administration and bureaucracy, as well as to transfer decision-making power and resources to the level where the planning and implementation of education actually takes place"*. The properties of wholeness, transformation and self-regulation begin to be discernible. Ireland's binary system, in contrast, exhibits the grossest distortion. With few exceptions, Adult Education and Adult Training are confined to their separate holdings. And the two can be likened to the holdings of Dominick McEvoy and Yellow Sam in Carleton's *"Poor Scholar"*. Adult Education can be likened to McEvoy's, clinging to *"a hard, barren hill"*. Adult Training, by contrast, can be likened to Yellow Sam's reposing in a *"sheltered inland ..... rich and warm looking"*.

A strategy to promote human resources and to support local development is being implemented apace under the National Development Plan 1994-99. A brief examination of the following table reveals how adult training - in addition to early training - is being furthered under the plan.

Human Resources Operational Programme 1994 - 1999

(Total allocations for the Measures and Sub-Programmes in question)

Continuing Training for the Unemployed		**IR£**
Industry Training for the Unemployed		278,853,332
Local Enterprise		40,153,000
Total		**319,006,332**
OBJECTIVE 3 - SOCIAL EXCLUSION		
Counselling, Guidance and Placement		12,551,000
Community Employment		751,078,333
Re-Integration Training		81,245,000
Community Training		86,994,000
VTOS		91,808,345
Training of Ex-Offenders		856,000
Training of People with Disabilities		240,685,000
Total		**1,265,217,678**
OBJECTIVE 4 - ADAPTATION TO INDUSTRIAL CHANGE		
Training Support Scheme		50,531,000
Training Services to Industry		22,788,000
Total		**73,319,000**
IMPROVEMENT OF THE QUALITY OF TRAINING PROVISION		
Vocational Training	*(Dept of Ed.)*	182,130,667
Infrastructure	*(FAS)*	10,199,335
	(NRB)	33,580,000
Total		**225,910,002**
Training of Trainers (Dept of Ed.)		48,058,326
	(FAS)	1,800,000
	(NRB)	7,445,000
Total		**57,303,326**
Promotion of Equal Opportunities.	*(FAS)*	4,000,000
	(Dept of Ed.)	3,500,000
Total		**7,500,000**
Technical Assistance		5,178,233
Overall Total		**1,953,434,571**

Source: Government of Ireland (1995) *Operational Programme 1994-1999 For Human Resources Development*, Dublin, Stationery Office

While the potential for empowerment through training, which such resources imply, is to be celebrated, the lack of wholeness and the eschewing of transformation is to be lamented. Adult training, in the absence of intercourse with education, runs the risk of sterility. Reciprocally, to uncouple adult education from training runs the risk of inutility. Meanwhile, it is the plight of Adult Education to forage at subsistence level. The stark contrast can be illustrated by invoking the relevant figures for one of the years in question:

1996

Expenditure on the measures - *Continuing Training for the Unemployed, Social Exclusion (incl. VTOS), Adaptation to Industrial Change, Improvement of the Quality of Training*	IR£ 317,000,000
Total expenditure on Education	IR£2,205 135 000
Expenditure on *Adult Education (incl. Adult Literacy and Community Education)*	IR£3,571,403

Source: Government of Ireland (1995) *Operational Programme 1994-1999 For Human Resources Development,* Dublin, Stationery Office

Thus, in 1996, the resources allocated to Adult Education amounted to a mere 1.1% of those awarded to Adult Training; they amounted to a mere 0.16% of the total expenditure on education - this in the much-trumpeted European Year of Lifelong Learning.

The foregoing facts are cited to illustrate profound disequilibrium and the resultant impoverishment of Adult Education and to invite an exposition of the rationale for this. For example who will explain why basic (including literacy) education continues so under-resourced? And community education? Why such an absence of guidance for adult learners? Among its several functions structure must facilitate discourse about these and other issues in the course of policy formulation.

It is at least somewhat encouraging to report that the discourse has commenced, though neither always apparent nor primarily focused on adult education. Most of the fora in question are government originated and thus present as top down. They include an interdepartmental committee on adult education, established in the early nineties and with a yet unfinished agenda; the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) with its "wide-ranging agenda for change and renewal of the Public Service based on a renewal of the relationship between Government and people"; the second annual report of TEASTAS with its recommendations on a National Qualifications Authority; the National Anti-Poverty Strategy containing a radical but unpublicised proposal for the re-prioritising of adult education.

This latter point is notable for the attention it draws to the opportunity to re-distribute the dividend arising from significant demographic change and begin to build up a robust, vigorous, confidence-inducing adult education culture.

Other factors urging this discourse include the OECD's report illustrating the challenge to be addressed in the several areas of literacy; Leargas' study *"Guidance for Adult Education in Ireland"*; the Universities Act, 1997, which has firmly established the facilitation of Lifelong Learning as a central object of a university.

Most importantly, reverting to government again, at the time of writing we await the long-heralded publication of a Green Paper on Adult Education.

Recommendations in Search of an Inclusive Structure

Those who have addressed themselves - whether directly or indirectly - to the issue of structure for adult education are unanimous in their recognition of the need for a structure which operates as closely as possible to the learner. It is possible also to identify a demand for a new model. Extrapolating from the literature in general, it is possible to invoke a host of criteria and principles on which such a model should be based. Perhaps the foremost of these would require that structure should: be clearly predicated on the centrality of the learner, and should, as a corollary, promote practice characterised by respect for autonomy, parity of esteem, equality of opportunity and positive discrimination towards those who are in greatest need of accessing and participating; help to eliminate barriers and constitute a continuum between participant at local level and broker at national level; incorporate provision for promoting participation and facilitating shared identity of needs; facilitate optimum movement laterally and vertically, especially through accreditation routes; incorporate advice and guidance provision.

The Model

The following model is therefore proposed around the central organising principle that there should be a unitary National Authority for Continuing (Adult) Education and Training which derives its authority from parity of representation and participation by all the stakeholders subscribing to the foregoing criteria.

Emanating from these, a structure should be organised as follows:

At local level

Officers, in the manner of the present Adult Education Organisers, and accountable to the Authority at county level, should be employed to identify education and training needs, in dialogue with local groups and bodies, and to co-ordinate its effective provision.

At county level

County Boards should be constituted at County, County Borough and Riding level to promote continuing (adult) education and training, to prioritise and respond to identified needs, to develop policy and to manage all related financial transactions;

The membership of the Board should comprise:

- three (3) learners;
- three (3) non-statutory providers;
- three (3) statutory providers;
- three (3) employers;
- three (3) trade union representatives;
- three (3) rural interest representatives (in urban authority areas these might be added to the co-options);
- three (3) co-optees to represent minority groups e.g. travellers, refugees.

The members should be elected at annual meetings convened of all stakeholders for the purpose of establishing policy and returning members. To ensure gender balance one place in each of the groups identified should be reserved for women candidates.

The affairs of the Board should be conducted by a Chief Executive Officer employed for the purposes by the National Authority. The Board should report annually and submit a budget to the National Authority.

At national level

Firstly, there should be a National Authority for Continuing (Adult) Education and Training whose responsibility it should be to:

- commission research into continuing education and training needs;
- co-ordinate national policy, especially in relation to accreditation of learning;
- advise the Minister for Education and feed into the Strategic Management Initiative;
- achieve synergy;
- propose legislation as appropriate;
- manage the allocation of funding to the constituent county boards.

The membership of the Authority should comprise:

- a chairperson, appointed by the Minister for Education;
- two representatives of the Department of Education;
- one representative each of the Departments of Social, Community and Family Affairs, Enterprise and Employment, Justice, Agriculture;

- nine members elected at the Annual National Convention from among County Board delegates, three of these places being reserved for the voluntary sector;
- a representative of FAS
- a representative of IVEA
- a representative of AONTAS
- a representative of CNEASTA
- a representative of NALA
- a representative of TEASTAS
- a representative of CHIU
- the Secretary General, in a non-voting capacity.

Secondly, there should be a *National Convention*, combining a Conference and a Policy Forum and comprising delegates elected from among the membership of each county board. The Policy Forum would debate the annual report of the Authority, presented by the General Secretary of the Authority, together with motions submitted by the county boards. Motions passed by the convention would be transmitted to the Authority for consideration; each motion, and the action undertaken, should be reported in the Annual Report for the subsequent year. The Convention should be presided over by the Chairperson of the Authority.

The membership of the Convention should comprise:

- three (3) delegates from each of the County Boards, a place in each delegation being reserved for the voluntary sector;
- all members of the National Authority;
- each Co. Board Chief Executive Officer (34);
- the General Secretary of the Authority.

Such structure would constitute significant advance on the present arrangements. It would also introduce the real possibility of the properties of wholeness, transformation and self-regulation being present and acting as dynamics to ensure an integrated, coherent, equitable system. It has been argued repeatedly and vociferously that adult education is disenfranchised by its marginal, malnourished condition. Adult education will unquestionably enjoy greater parity in the foreseeable future as its role in contributing to the well-being of society becomes increasingly manifest. Why undertake the customary rituals of ebb and flow? Let vision and courage be combined to effect radical change in pursuit of the common good.

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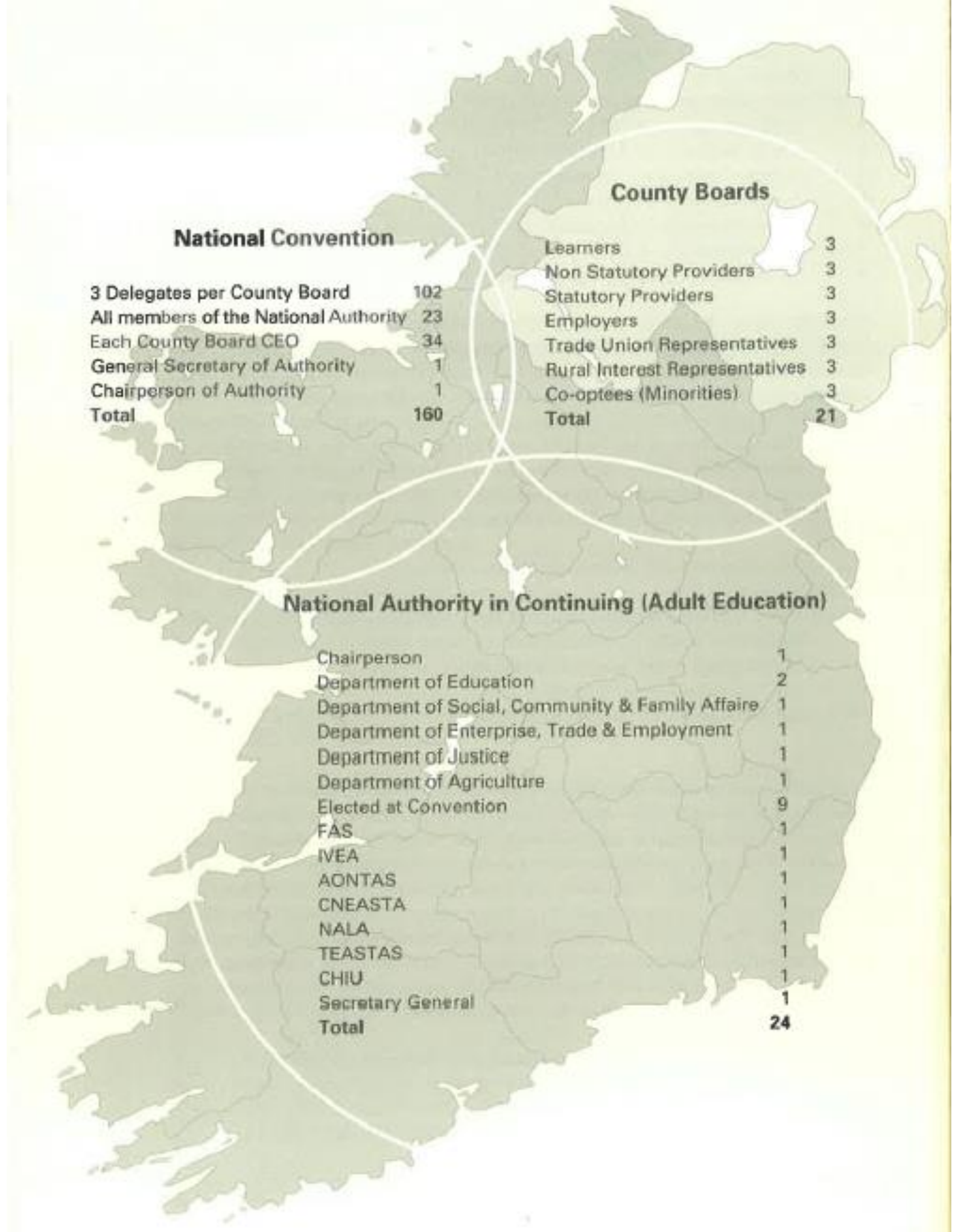

National Convention

3 Delegates per County Board	102
All members of the National Authority	23
Each County Board CEO	34
General Secretary of Authority	1
Chairperson of Authority	1
Total	**160**

County Boards

Learners	3
Non Statutory Providers	3
Statutory Providers	3
Employers	3
Trade Union Representatives	3
Rural Interest Representatives	3
Co-optees (Minorities)	3
Total	**21**

National Authority in Continuing (Adult Education)

Chairperson	1
Department of Education	2
Department of Social, Community & Family Affaire	1
Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment	1
Department of Justice	1
Department of Agriculture	1
Elected at Convention	9
FAS	1
IVEA	1
AONTAS	1
CNEASTA	1
NALA	1
TEASTAS	1
CHIU	1
Secretary General	1
Total	**24**

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Partnership: Lessons for Change

Bernadette Sproule

It is the aim of this article to uncover some of the lessons which can be learned from the experiences of Area-Based Partnership Company activities over the last seven years particularly in relation to education measures for the long-term unemployed. In looking at what is an initiative targeted specifically at the unemployed, it is also possible to make recommendations for good practice in adult education generally, especially that provision which attempts to tackle the longer-term problems of early educational disadvantage and which can hopefully be reflected in the future Green and White Papers on Adult Education.

While this article will focus on education measures, it will not always be possible to draw a distinction between what is *"education"* and what is *"training"*, although these distinctions often determine mainstream activity. In relation to the needs of the individual unemployed person, education and training needs often go hand-in-hand and must be responded to in this way. In a similar way, there are two strands of educational activity relevant to Partnerships, which are different but not mutually exclusive. One is learning which relates to vocational skills and access to employment. The other is a more radical model which happens at community level and is about developing critical awareness of issues which affect ones life and the life of the community and leads to a more active involvement in tackling those issues.

Partnerships

Area-based Partnership Companies were first set up in 1991 under the Irish Government's Programme for Economic and Social Progress. Initially 12 Companies were set up on a pilot basis as a response to high local levels of long-term unemployment and related disadvantage. Partnerships were established in areas experiencing the most serious social and economic disadvantage where whole communities were being devastated by unemployment and emigration. Since the pilot phase, the number of Partnership Companies has risen to 38 covering both urban and rural areas. In a number of these areas, Local Employment Services are being developed through the Partnerships to offer guidance and mediation to unemployed individuals in relation to accessing employment, training and education.

Both these initiatives developed out of a recognition at European and national level that unemployment is a serious social and economic concern affecting the quality of life of large numbers of people. One of the key objectives of the Partnerships is:

"...to work with people who are long-term unemployed and those in danger of becoming long-term unemployed in order to improve their skills and self-confidence, their involvement in the community and to increase their opportunities of getting a job or starting their own business." (Guidelines, 93,3)

As area-based responses, the involvement of the local community was seen as a fundamental at all levels of activity - community representatives are included on the Board and working groups and many programmes are delivered through the community infrastructure. This has developed in differing ways in different areas and community involvement is strongest where that infrastructure was already established before the Partnerships arrived.

Despite a recent upturn in the national economy and the availability of many more jobs than in recent years, there are still many people who are not finding it any easier to get work which will give them an income sufficient to their needs. There are still many pockets of concentrated disadvantage around the country, particularly in large urban areas in Limerick, Cork and Dublin where the great majority of adults are unemployed and the prospect of them accessing employment is bleak. Long-term unemployment has become endemic in these areas where two and three generations of families have not known any form of stable employment. The experience of those working in these areas is that education is a key to overturning this trend. However, because of a history in these areas of low-skilled employment and negative experiences of school-life, motivation to become involved in education and training activity as an adult is low.

Education and Training

It is well established that education levels and socio-economic background are linked to unemployment. The 1996 Labour Force Survey shows that 35% of long-term unemployed people had no educational qualifications compared to 15% of those at work. Almost 75% of long-term unemployed people had left school without a Leaving Cert. qualification. The situation is worst for those over 35 years of age. The seriousness of this in relation to unemployment is recognised in the 1996 report from the National Economic and Social Council.

"Education and training policies play a major role in promoting employment and countering social exclusion. Increasingly, the divide between the employed and unemployed is defined by educational attainment.." (1996,179).

However, the present education and training structures as they apply to adults have not met the needs of this group and this has been the driving force behind some of the measures undertaken by Partnerships and outlined

in their Action Plans. All of the 12 original Partnerships became involved in raising awareness of existing education and training programmes, lobbying for more unemployed people from the area to access courses and influencing training and education programme design. Other areas of activity included identification of disincentives, provision of guidance and counselling services, provision of feeder training, support for mature students accessing third level programmes and the establishment of education and training centres where no appropriate establishments already existed. Overall Partnership strength lies in the ability to identify local need and to initiate dialogue between relevant agencies. Difficulties often lie in removing the barriers to participation and ensuring real co-operation and integration of existing services. I will now give examples of some of the specific areas where lessons can be learnt from the Partnership experience in relation to these issues.

Guidance and Information Services.

One of the earliest identified areas of difficulty for people in relation to accessing education and training was the inadequacy of information and guidance. A number of Partnerships tackled this through setting up local adult guidance and information services. A pilot guidance service was set up in association with the Department of Education in 1993 in three Partnership areas (PAUL, Northside, Finglas). The Dublin Inner City Partnership established a community-based service in two locations within their area. These services aimed to provide a more intensive, client-centred approach to supporting the long term unemployed in accessing work. The Options Guidance and Placement Service in Finglas is an example of one such service which offers one-to-one assistance to unemployed people in deciding on a self-determined action plan for their personal, social and work lives. A Jobs Club Programme and information library are also part of the service.

Lack of access to good quality information is frequently mentioned by adults as a reason for not getting involved in education and training. In Cork, North Lee Development Partnership developed a computerised information system which is accessible in a range of centres used by unemployed people and provided information on all education, training and related information.

All of these services have now been subsumed into the national Local Employment Service, having established the need for good quality guidance as an essential part of any programme to (re)-integrate adults into the labour market. The incorporation of a *"counselling"* element into these services shows the importance of recognising the need to address the personal and social effects of unemployment. This experience reflects that at European level where education guidance services are part of many local initiatives (EUROCOUNSEL, 1994).

While this is a welcome development, it is important to highlight the importance of the non-directive approach of these services. The integration of guidance services into the LES could mean that only education options, which are directly related to work opportunities, are considered appropriate. McGivney describes two opposing views of the aims of education provision of the unemployed. One is that it is *instrumental*, that is, that it helps people fit in. The other view is that it is *expressive* and so aids overall self-development through the nurturing of the individual's ability to choose freely. This is the approach needed in both guidance and education. The change to a knowledge-based society and the complex effects on the individual of being left behind in this transition call for a sophisticated model of intervention. As the final report of EUROCOUNSEL, an EU research project on guidance and counselling measure for the unemployed, states

> *"To handle these transitions, personal and social skills are required as well as regularly updated work skills." (1996,5-6)*

All adults are effected by this *"transition"* and so the argument can be made for accessible guidance services for all adults trying to identify their own learning needs.

Barriers to Partnership

All the Partnerships in the early years put an emphasis on education (developing confidence, skills and knowledge) rather than training as, *"an essential precursor of more intensive involvement in various training, enterprise and employment programmes"*(Evaluation of the Global Grant, 69). The initial experience of Partnerships was that those who are unemployed and/or educationally disadvantaged are least likely to get involved in education or training. Research showed that 83.5% had not been involved prior to their contact with the Partnership in any form of adult education. This phenomenon is recognised generally in studies of participation in adult education. A great deal of effort was therefore put into identifying the barriers to participation and removing them.

One of the factors, which acted as a disincentive to participation, was the timing and length of courses. For example, many unemployed women were only able to get involved in part-time morning courses because of their childcare responsibilities. Also, many people were put off by the content of courses while the levels of qualification needed to access courses excluded many. For this reason, Partnerships worked with agencies such as FAS, the VEC and CERT to design more flexible courses aimed at the needs of the client group. In the Dublin Inner City Partnership, *"Feeder"* and *"Taster"* courses were introduced to give unemployed people a chance to try out a

course for a short period of time before committing to it and a chance to prepare for further more intensive training. These were first funded by Partnership funds and are now funded by City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee. This is an example of where successful measures can be mainstreamed.

Many Partnerships designed innovative courses, which catered for the needs of long-term unemployed people and were geared toward real jobs in the changing local economy. For example, the Tramlines programme in Ballymun which provided high level computer training in association with a major computer company, an adult apprenticeship scheme in Dundalk and programmes for women in South West Kerry which involved access to language and business skills. But none of these could have operated without Partnership and/or European Initiative funding e.g. Horizon and NOW. State structures are often not flexible enough to allow such initiatives to be mainstreamed. This is a waste of the learning and experience that should be transferred to other groups nationally. The Green Paper must acknowledge the expertise, which already exists, and allow for the dissemination and replication of good practice. The problem of unemployment in a changing economy compels the education and training system to change.

Childcare is another area, which is highlighted again and again by Partnerships as constituting a serious barrier to participation in education, training and work. A lot of Partnerships have become involved in this in one way or another. Some Partnerships have supported community organisations in developing quality, full-day childcare facilities often building on an already existing service, for example, the Larkin Centre in inner city Dublin. Other Partnerships, for example the Dundalk Employment Partnership, have initiated new facilities where a gap existed, The ADM Childcare Initiative has provided much-needed funding for capital costs for these centres. This has meant that there has been an increase in quality, subsidised childcare places in recent years but there are still not enough to meet demand. There are many supports still needed, including suitable, accredited training for staff, security of funding for staff, running costs and after-school and collection services. Subsidies are expected to be paid by the Department of Education and Science this coming school year for VTOS and Youthreach students. Though limited, this is a welcome development but availability of places is still an issue and much more funding is needed. The Department has responsibility to ensure that lack of childcare places does not remain an obstacle for unemployed people trying to access education.

Although schemes such as VTOS are free of charge, along with childcare, there are other hidden costs for anyone returning to education. For those going into third level courses, travel, books, equipment, typing and so on often eat into social welfare payments because the grant is not sufficient. Some Partnerships provide support costs to these students, which help them continue and succeed in their courses. As yet there is still a problem for those

who are studying in part-time or non-statutory institutions where grants are not available. What is now needed is a comprehensive system of supports nationally along with the development of

> *"systematic paths entry to second chance education that are centrally negotiated with the mainstream education providers and subsequently put into operation throughout all Partnership areas or throughout the country." (Haase et al, 71)*

As well as mainstreaming activities already piloted, all state agencies need to work more closely with Partnerships to identify ways in which they can be more responsive to the needs of the long-term unemployed and so enable more of this educationally disadvantaged group access to education, training and the labour market. In doing this, they could give consideration to ways in which integration of education and training can be achieved where appropriate and useful.

While not by any means a homogenous group, many long-term unemployed individuals have significant gaps in their basic education skills, including difficulty with reading, writing and numeracy and low levels of general knowledge, self-confidence, study skills and motivation. Rigid divisions between education and training bodies do not assist this group. Pre-training in the form of *"return to education"* courses as well as the inclusion of communications and other basic education modules to training courses are seen to be necessary if the most disadvantaged are to benefit from training for jobs. The former build confidence and motivation in an adult-centred atmosphere while the latter acknowledge the basic skills needs of many long-term unemployed people which can prevent them from gaining specific skill competencies. The basic skills of reading and writing are crucial for personal, family, social and economic fulfilment and must be given priority in any future planning for adult education.

Eligibility criteria also exclude many people who wish to avail of adult education provision. The State tends to see education and training primarily as a way of preparing people for the labour market and therefore a means to decreasing the unemployment figures. These figures are decreased not only by the success of those who return to work after a period of re-training but also by those who remain off the live register while involved in a course of some kind even though they may re-register as unemployed afterwards, allowing their place to be taken by another *"trainee"*. At the same time, many people who wish to avail of education and training options are excluded by the criteria for eligibility - for example, places for lone parents on state schemes such as the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), many of which provide accredited, professional training are greatly restricted, while many VTOS centres report huge interest in education and training among this group. Lone parents then find C.E. schemes an attractive option because income is increased but yet the training included in these schemes may not be comprehensive enough to allow them find permanent work afterwards.

All of this activity is aimed at preparing people to access work. This is a main aim of Partnerships and is reflected in their action plans. Yet Partnerships were not set up simply to get people into jobs. Hugh Frazier, in the final evaluation report on the 12 pilot Partnerships stated that

> *Two particularly pressing problems confronting Irish policy makers are the exceptionally high level of long-term unemployment and the extent to which some communities have become increasingly marginalised from the economic, social and cultural mainstream and are experiencing very high levels of multiple disadvantage. There is a high correlation between these two.*

Education for Critical Reflection

In the Evaluation of the Global Grant (a main source of funding for Partnership companies) it is noticeable that education and training are reported as *"training and education relevant to enterprise creation, business development and the general improvement of employability"* with education described as the essential *"precursor of more intensive involvement in various training, enterprise and employment programmes"*. Community-based adult education is only mentioned briefly and capacity-building for community involvement is limited to organisational development (Haase et al, 96).

While an essential element of tackling long-term unemployment is to find someone a job, the marginalisation of which Frazier speaks belies the simplicity of this solution. Whole communities have become excluded, not only from the labour market but also through generations of multiple disadvantage, from a sense of their own power to influence and change the conditions in which they and their children live. In thinking that by offering assistance with access to the labour market through state-run education, training and guidance programmes alone that the problems of structural and generational long-term unemployment can be solved, the state is failing to recognise the impact of the alienation felt by many of the people they wish to help. There is a second strand to the educational measures needed to tackle disadvantage in these communities and that is education for critical reflection which leads to action in relation to tackling injustice and inequalities which are at the base of poverty and unemployment.

The White Paper on Education, *Charting our Education Future*, put the emphasis for education on the development of an enterprise culture and training for high skilled employment. In its short section relating to adult education, vocational training is again a priority with the objective for adult education and training being to *"update their occupational skills and to continue their personal development, irrespective of their educational and training attainments."* (p77) There is no reference to the potential of adult education as a means for social change or distribution of opportunity. The Green Paper on Adult Education must take a broader view.

Area- based Partnerships are briefly referred to in the White Paper (p80) as community development initiatives with which adult education should interact. But what do personal development and community development mean? Are they separate concepts or two sides of the one coin? Partnerships were set up as local development initiatives building on the long history in this country of community self-help and development (Haase et al, 4) so how is it that this is being translated in educational terms as access for individuals to jobs important as this is. Partnerships, if they are to model a much needed radical response to structural unemployment and disadvantage must take not only a community development approach - involving those whom they were set up to serve - but a radical community development approach which gives real power to local communities to control their own futures. Adult education in this context is then not only about offering vocational skills, important as this is to increase income, but about developing in individuals and communities the level of analysis and challenge which helps them determine the way forward for themselves. Education in a Partnership context then must also be about capacity-building among communities in relation to planning, development, management and evaluation, that is, all aspects affecting the community, not just seeing individuals as *"clients"* of *"services"* and programmes handed out by the state.

Partnerships have played an important role in facilitating this kind of participation at local level. The PAUL Partnership in Limerick has designed and provided many courses in this area. A Green Paper on Adult Education should recognise and support this all important role of adult education in empowering people to take charge of their own, their children's and their community's future development in a real way. Community Development and Leadership training provided by some Partnerships have been seen to be successful in creating a local leadership base and in involving more people in planning and implementing change in their areas. For example, in the Markets area of Dublin inner city, MACRO, a community network, has grown out of community development training to offer a range of community services.

Community education is a developmental process about not just tasks and knowledge but about dialogue and raising awareness, about learning to listen and to articulate. This kind of activity has been happening in women's education for years where stereotypes have been rejected and vested interests challenged. Women's education has coined the phrase "the personal is the political". In radical adult education personal development goes beyond the personal to raise awareness of social and political issues. It is often after this process has happened that people see the relevance of training and enterprise in the context of their own lives and that of their community. Some very successful community enterprise has stemmed from community

development training. The Sunflower environmental recycling project in the Northeast inner city is one example. In this area too, The Community After Schools Project has shown how parents interest in their children's education can lead to a renewed interest in their own development and the development of services in their community for other families.

This relationship between community development and adult education is well described by Brid Connolly in the following passage from her article, *Community Development and Adult Education: Prospects for Change?*

> *Adult education and community development are interdependent: each has a vital role to play in the implementation of the other's principles. Community development not informed by adult education remains domesticated and hierarchical Adult education without community development stays personal, isolated and socially less powerful. Together they combine to create an emancipatory model of collective action. This model will ultimately underpin an equal and just society (1996)*

So the task for the Green Paper is great. It must support a variety of learning needs for adults who have not benefited from the education or economic system to date. Structures and initiatives are needed which are flexible enough to encourage those who have been marginalised from the system to gain access. This includes broadening the eligibility criteria to include all those who wish to learn, removing barriers in relation to timing of courses, providing childcare and guidance supports and ensuring content is relevant and attractive to those taking part. Partnership between all the actors must be increased so unnecessary divisions between education and training is blurred and training relates to real jobs. Basic skills needs must be catered for in all contexts.

Aligned to this, the Green Paper must encourage the development of the community education sector particularly in relation to education for community development at whatever level this is needed. The seriously underfunded community education sector is at the core of the community development process and is active in transmitting personal and vocational skills in disadvantaged areas all around the country. It is the sector which plays a key role in bringing together the various facets of adult education at a level which reaches the most disadvantaged. This sector must be supported to grow through the provision of facilities and resources and the development of suitable structures including those for tutor training, appropriate certification and progression routes.

In these ways, the Green Paper can initiate a coming together of at least some of the many strands of adult education in a way that puts the learner and his/her family and community centre stage as the main actors in their own development.

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Adult Basic Education: Into the Rose Garden

Ursula Coleman

> *"All knowledge is constructed, and the knower is an intimate part of the known.. To see that all knowledge is a construction and that truth is a matter of the context in which it is embedded is to greatly expand the possibilities of how to think about anything, even those things we consider to be most elementary and obvious."*[1]

The issues I am attempting to address in this article can best be framed as a series of interconnected questions: What kind of Adult Basic Education (ABE) service is required in Ireland as we approach the twenty first century? What might its core values be? How might it be characterised? And perhaps most important of all, what kind of expertise should be consulted and valued when it comes to designing such a service? At the outset, however, I want to clear the ground by commenting on some commonly held misconceptions.

Some people fear that ABE may be a contradiction in terms. Surely, they argue adults by virtue of their status as adults neither need nor want basic education. They may even be insulted by the term. Surely all adults are capable of slotting into some aspect of general adult provision. It is important, therefore, to consider the statistical evidence we now have at our disposal. Until the publication of the Irish results of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) in 1997, the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) relied on estimates which suggested that between five and sixteen percent of the adult population experienced some degree of literacy difficulty. Now we know that the figure is much higher than that. Twenty-five per cent of Irish adults (between the ages of sixteen and sixty-four) were not able to get beyond level one when tested i.e. were able, at best, *"to locate a single piece of information in a text, when there is no distracting information and when the structure of the text assists the search"*[2] This percentage amounts to approximately 500,000 adults. A further thirty per cent of the population could not get beyond level two, which required survey participants to locate, comprehend and integrate two or more pieces of information in a text which one might reasonably expect to encounter in everyday life. Survey participants who scored at the lower levels were significantly less likely than their higher scoring counterparts to have participated in any form of adult education or training. They were also less likely to have attended concerts, the theatre or the cinema and were often reluctant to participate in voluntary and community activities.

I would suggest, therefore, that if we neglect ABE we may, albeit unwittingly, exclude large numbers of Irish adults from a host of valuable learning opportunities. Jenny Derbyshire, writing more than a decade ago in the first volume of this journal, pointed to the importance of ABE in the larger context of access to, participation in and benefit from other forms of adult education. *"Adult Basic Education merges into more general adult education, but it needs special emphasis, as it is often the starting point for people who have felt that education was not for them."*[3] Recent research carried out by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) confirms this view.

> *I always had a thing that I hadn't done my Inter Cert. and my Leaving Cert. I would have had low self esteem in England when I would be with people that I felt were better educated than I was, even though I read a lot. Looking back on it I feel I wasted a lot of years. I did some courses... craft courses and different things... more social rather than academic. If I went into a class, say an English class; I would feel that my standard was so low that I wouldn't be able to compete with people in the class. Writing would have been my problem - stringing good paragraphs together and that kind of thing. (Woman in her forties)*

A considerable number of adult students who were participating in basic education programmes told researchers that they had been deterred by certain features of existing adult education provision. Many are wary of school buildings, of formal enrolment procedures which involve queuing and form-filling, of the traditional classroom setting, of the traditional teacher student relationship, of being expected to learn too much too quickly. In contrast, students tended to be positive about their experience of ABE provision; the relaxed, non-formal approach appealed to them and they began to discover themselves anew as learners with potential.[4]

A second concern that readers may have is that the thinking behind my argument for the provision of ABE arises out of the 'deficit mode' theory of educational disadvantage, which, O'Sullivan argues, informed the Irish White Paper on Education.[5] Such a model locates deficiencies within students themselves, or within their sociocultural backgrounds, rather than problematising the education system. My understanding of ABE, however, is that of a service which meets the developmental needs of adults whose formative education needs *were not adequately met* within the school system. Many adults who return to basic education have *never* had the opportunity to explore their interests or develop their potential within a gently structured learning environment. Students who participated in the NALA research project reported negative views of themselves, as learners, prior to attending the literacy schemes. They spoke of the acute embarrassment and shame they had felt about their low level of educational attainment and about the crippling memories of their school days which continued to haunt them.

The painful irony of the situation, however, is that adult students themselves, particularly those with little or no confidence in their own cognitive abilities, have actually internalised the 'deficit mode' theory. As one student in her sixties said to me recently, 'If you're told often enough that you're stupid, you begin to believe it'. Adults with reading and writing difficulties often believe that it is their own fault, that there is something wrong with them. And there is little doubt in my mind that uninformed, insensitive or patronising comments by members of the general public, whether in their personal or professional capacities, can reinforce these views. One research participant expressed it powerfully in her interview;

> *Down the Day-care Centre you had to go up the stairs and on the left of you was the Alcoholics Anonymous, and then the people to help you to learn to read and write were on the other side. At that stage I wished I were an alcoholic because it would have been easier for somebody to accept me as an alcoholic than as somebody that couldn't read and write. I don't think anybody can understand why a person can't read and write. They really think that we're stupid. (Woman in her thirties)*

It is crucial, therefore, that the principles and rationale informing ABE provision should not emanate from any version of the *'deficit mode'* theory. A responsive and responsible ABE service must have the capacity to provide students with a gently structured yet richly textured learning environment. Such an approach will facilitate, as an integral part of skill development, a growing sense of confidence among students, a realisation that their insights are valid and that their voices are necessary when it comes to constructing a knowledge base in this field. They possess, in fact, an expert voice and if we accept the constructivist view in the quotation at the beginning of this article i.e. that the knower is an intimate part of the known, then we realise that ABE students are in possession of a form of expert knowledge that no one else can have. This view informed the approach to the research strand of the NALA/Integra project, in the course of which 159 ABE students from a variety of locations throughout the country were interviewed. Their insights and their voices will be heard echoing throughout the remainder of this article.

The Development of ABE in Ireland

When considering how an ABE service for the twenty first century might be characterised, it is helpful to remember how adult literacy provision began in Ireland. Although the Murphy Report, in 1973, officially recognised for the first time that there was a need for an ABE service in Ireland,[6] the initial response from professional educators (there were a few notable exceptions) was a slow and somewhat grudging one. The fact that Ireland had such a literate tradition and "prided itself on the quality of its first level education" made the acceptance of the fact that there was a serious functional literacy problem among Irish adults a difficult pill to swallow.[7]

It was, in fact, largely female volunteers who began to address the problem, both by providing tuition on a small scale and by bringing the issue to the attention of the general public. Throughout the seventies this proved to be an uphill battle. Most tuition, at that time, was on a one-to-one basis and took place either in the tutor's or student's home. A few schools offered *"basic"* classes for adults, usually in the evenings and often taught by retired teachers. Materials had to be designed by tutors themselves in the absence of appropriate adult friendly texts. From 1985 onwards, with the establishment of the Adult Literacy and Community Education (ALCE) budget, literacy provision began to develop in a more co-ordinated manner. Gradually literacy schemes were set up in virtually every county in Ireland. Despite the ALCE budget however, which at the time of writing stands at approximately £4.3 million for the whole country, recent estimates suggest that eighty five per cent of the work is still done by volunteers.

During the early years there was very little information available about what constituted good ABE practice. Even in Britain, the adult literacy movement was in its infancy in the mid seventies. Over the last twenty years, however, ABE has developed in the Irish context as a distinctive field of practice. Its philosophy, its methods, its materials, its approach to preparation for examinations and other forms of assessment, have been developed collaboratively from the ground up with the involvement of adult students at every stage. As a field of practice, ABE involves trained volunteers and professional educators working side by side within an organised and effective model of adult education. As a system of provision, it has developed almost entirely outside the formal school network. Consequently it has had a measure of autonomy and flexibility which has facilitated a participative, student-centred model of organisation.

Listening to the Expert Voice

The students who participated in the NALA/Integra project were quite clear about what was important in ABE provision. Most of them pointed to the personality, attitude and behaviour of the tutor as *the* crucial element, whether in a one-to-one or group situation. Tutors, they felt, should be specially trained to teach basic skills to adults; they should be able to encourage students and build their self esteem; they should also be able to *really listen* to students' needs and be flexible enough to respond to them as helpers and guides in the learning process. *"Genuine kindness is vital,"* we were told on several occasions. Students should be treated as adults and with care and respect. The setting and atmosphere are also key features of effective provision; informal seating arrangements, not being put on the spot to answer questions or read aloud, a relaxed, non-competitive atmosphere - all of these were deemed to be important. Anything that gives you that *"school feeling"* is simply not acceptable.

The research participants proved remarkably astute when analysing their experiences. They were quite clear about what, *from their point of view*, constituted good practice in terms of tutoring methods. As adults they attended classes voluntarily and were simply not prepared to continue with tuition if the approach and teaching methods were not helping them to progress. In the light of recent suggestions that adult education be brought *"into the mainstream"* [8] it is important that those who are making important policy decisions listen carefully to their voices.

> *No this was the first class I went to, I went to another one when I was about seventeen...I didn't like the way they taught. They taught me like as if I was a child... You went into a school then and they showed up 'A' and they showed up 'B'. I stuck it for four weeks and then I said, 'That's it. I know I've a problem but I don't need this.' Nobody said to me, 'What do you want?' They were too into the teacher and pupil thing. (Woman in her thirties)*

> *Your man asked me to spell and I just, you know, I just got stumped. I did go back, but I had to write on a copybook like for an exercise. It was just like school. I just froze when he corrected me and I never went back after that. (Man in his forties)*

> *I went one morning. I thought it was a bit too like school, sitting in desks. That put me off, sitting in desks. That kind of gave me a school feeling and I didn't really like that. I just left. I never thought any more about it for years and years. (Woman in her fifties)*

Each of these students had tried to return to education at an earlier stage in their lives, one woman at the age of seventeen. But they did not persevere. It *felt* too much like school, a painful experience they simply could not bear to revisit. The experiences they record date from the late seventies and early eighties. Such experiences can all too easily recur today, however, if ABE provision is not solidly grounded in a student-centred philosophy and set of practices. The following experience dates from the '95/'96 academic year.

> *The group was geared towards Junior Cert. but there were problems with it. It went on down in the secondary school and I really didn't know what to expect...there were three men and I was the only female the first night. The teacher asked me to read aloud soon after I got there. It was a school situation - desks and she sat at the top. I could read. I was lucky. The next night then there was an extra student, a woman. I found the class difficult that night as well... we weren't enjoying it... By Christmas all the men had left. It all changed then. We came in here [into the literacy scheme premises] as a group with a different teacher. It was amazing. I did the exam in June and did very well. (Woman in her forties)*

The benefits of a personalised, student centred form of ABE provision were articulated clearly by many of the research participants. When students are treated as equal and knowledgeable partners in the learning process, when their talents are praised and nurtured, when their individual needs are recognised and addressed, when their dreams and aspirations are encouraged and supported, then ABE students rediscover themselves as capable and intelligent human beings. Gradually they develop a more confident sense of themselves and they learn to speak less hesitantly with *their own voices*, realising that their perspective on issues is both valid and important.

> *I think when you are in a relaxed atmosphere and you are feeling comfortable with the people around you, that's how you learn. And when you are allowed to make mistakes... I have done a lot of courses. I would be very aware of tutors, people who facilitate courses, and I feel that the tutor can learn from the student. If the tutor realises they don't know it all, they can learn from the student. (Woman in her fifties)*

> *Working in the group I realised that I had a lot of general knowledge that I never gave myself credit for... As time went on I was encouraged to take a place on the committee. I stood for election. I've changed so much it's unbelievable. (Woman in her sixties)*

> *Yes, it has definitely changed my life. I'm in the army and I have just finished the NCO's course. That was the real reason I started because I had to come off two of the courses because I hadn't enough education behind me. And I went on a life saving course, I did a fork lift course as well and then I did a computer course... it has made a big, big difference to me. (Man in his forties)*

> *I'm getting more confident week by week. - getting the skills in literacy encouraged me to go back and try my Leaving Cert. on VTOS. I am able to sit an exam like anybody else. I enjoy getting up in the morning now. I left school in 1990...but I always wanted to get an education for myself. (Man in his twenties)*

> *I know I can go out now and I can mix... It is so important because you can talk to people, that's the thing. You don't feel you have nothing to say. I always knew I had something to say but I hadn't the confidence. (Woman in her fifties)*

Veronica McGivney argues that one of the principal reasons for non participation in adult education is the unresponsive nature of the education system itself.[9] It is often difficult for educators and policy makers, whose sole experience of education has been one of either significant or spectacular success within the formal system, to actually understand and *empathise* with those whom this same system has so spectacularly failed. Furthermore it can

be difficult for them to even imagine a different kind of system, one with core values quite different from, but perhaps potentially complementary to, those of the formal system in which they are so deeply embedded. Sometimes they cannot even hear, let alone give validity to the voices of those they perceive as *"uneducated"*, as one of the research participants who sat on a number of committees discovered:

> *You can sense people with a higher education, especially if they are not friendly. Sometimes they can be ignorant and cast you aside. They mightn't even look at you when you are speaking... (Woman in her forties)*

Highly reflective ABE students and tutors (and I am sure many others engaged in non-formal education) are, through their praxis, gradually bringing into blossom the seedling of an alternative system. The great danger is, however, that because the principles and values of this still fragile model are as yet inadequately conceptualised and often poorly articulated, it may not actually be recognised as a *valid system of education*. Thus when more funding becomes available, when greater "accountability" is required, when formal, academic qualifications for tutors become compulsory, when performance indicators based on certified achievement within a given time frame become established, in short when ABE is brought into the *mainstream formal system*, this precious seedling may wither and die simply because those in control of the required nutrients regarded it simply as a wild flower or a weed, something at any rate not worthy of serious cultivation. If this does happen, the sense of sadness and regret that I and hosts of others, both students and tutors, will experience is best expressed in the words of T.S.Eliot.

> *Footfalls echo in the memory*
> *Down the passage which we did not take*
> *Towards the door we never opened*
> *Into the rose-garden.*

Developing a Root and Branch System

Educational projects that develop from the ground up with a strong voluntary input tend to have a distinctive ethos - one that is warm, homely, and supports the growth and development of each individual. As services develop in a more "professional" manner, they often become less personal, less flexible, and less easily able to respond to unanticipated demands. Virtually all of the basic education centres dotted around the country began as small voluntary projects. Most of them still operate on a largely voluntary basis and in community-based premises. Organisers, as the Co-ordinators are called, usually started out themselves as trained voluntary tutors and so have a genuine understanding of the process, which is at the core of the service. Most organisers still do some tutoring themselves; in other words the job is

not generally perceived solely in terms of organisational management. These are the conditions in which the seedling referred to above, germinated. But seedlings need to be potted up in order to develop the necessary root system; and the eventual aim, of course, is that they grow strong and healthy enough to be transplanted to a variety of settings.

If this seedling is recognised as a delicate and precious plant worthy of cultivation, how might it be possible for us to start developing a healthy root and branch system? How might we ensure that, when proper resources are made available to ABE, the service would actually be constructed on solid foundations? Students' voices suggest that certain principles are of crucial importance; ABE centres should continue to be homely public spaces where adults who have been failed by the formal system can feel comfortable and safe, all tutors should be trained and supported to respond with patience and care to the genuine needs of each of their student's assessment demands should not be allowed to drive the educational process, accreditation systems that are "intelligence fair", in Howard Gardner's sense, should be devised,[11] students, tutors, and organisers should be active participants in research and evaluation measures i.e. subjects rather than objects of the process. What takes place in ABE centres should be quality education from the *students' point of view* and the achievements of *all students*, but particularly the most silenced and vulnerable, should be acknowledged and celebrated.

Conclusion

The Irish ABE service is at a critical moment in its relatively short history. It needs a significant injection of funding, funding which should be used judiciously to support and develop the alternative model that already exists in seedling form; in short, ABE requires mainstream funding but not an imposition from the top down of the formal structures usually associated with mainstream ventures. What actions, then, are required in order to develop and support this alternative model? This is not a question that can be answered definitively because we now find ourselves in unmapped territory. I would suggest that the ability to listen, to empathise and to imagine are some of the tools we will need as we attempt our mapping. Patience will be the cardinal virtue required as we undertake this work; poorly researched interventions with short time frames will be of little use. Adequately funded action research projects, which involve reflective ABE students, tutors and organisers in the construction of the knowledge we seek, should be the first step in the process. One of our guides, in this respect, might well be the innovative work of Mary Belenky and her colleagues in charting the birth and growth of what they term *"public homeplaces"* in both the United States and Germany and the unacknowledged tradition of developmental leadership which has produced astonishing results in educational terms amongst the most marginalised.[12]

The vast majority of Irish adults who choose to return to learning through ABE did not *feel* cherished or valued within the formal system during their school days. Many were physically abused. Others were deprived of continuing general education simply because they were poor. Yet others, many of them still quite young, felt alienated because of the culture and ethos of the schools they attended. It is crucial, therefore, that those in influential positions do not, through their policies, simply create for ABE a newly packaged form of the structured learning environments *they* know best - schools. We do not need adult schools. What we do need is to develop new structures that will support a *qualitatively different kind of learning environment*. In order to construct the knowledge we require for this purpose the voices of all - students, tutors, organisers, academics and policy makers - must be heard and valued. Only then can we, with any semblance of integrity, hope to *"bend.. to the work of mending what is broken in us"*.[13]

Ursula Coleman works as a tutor, trainer, and researcher in the field of Adult Basic and Continuing Education. The views expressed in this article are personal and do not presume to represent any organisation.

Footnotes

1 M F Belenky, B McV Clinchy, N R Goldberger & M J Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing*, New York, Basic Books, 1997, reissued, p137, 138

2 Department of Education, *International Adult Literacy Survey: Results for Ireland* Dublin Stationary Office, 1997, pvii

3 J Derbyshire, *"Adult Basic Education: Choice, Control, Creativity" in The Adult Learner*, Vol 1, 1985, p22

4 NALA (forthcoming), *Access and Participation in Adult Literacy Schemes: Final Report*, Dublin: NALA. The student quotations throughout this article can all be found in this report.

5 D O'Sullivan, *"Education Blueprint or Missed Opportunity"* in Poverty Today, June/July 1995

6 Report of Advisory Committee *Adult Education in Ireland* (Murphy Report) 1973

7 B Brady, *"The Changing Focus of Adult Education in Ireland"* in *Issues of Adult and Occupational Education in Ireland and Finland* edited by M Morrissey & H Roussi, Helsinki: National Board of Education, 1995, p51

8 Department of Education *Charting our Education Future: White Paper on Education*, Dublin Stationary Office, 1995, p77

9 V McGivney, *Education's for Other People: Access to Education for Non-Participant Adults*, Leicester: NIACE, 1990

10 From T S Eliot's *Four Quartets*, London: Faber & Faber, 1959, p13

11 H Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*, New York, Basic Books, 1993, p176

12 M F Belenky, L A Bond & J S Weinstock, *A Tradition That Has No Name*, New York, Basic Books, 1997. This fascinating book is reviewed in this journal.

13 From *Literacy Class, South Inner City, 1987* by Paula Meehan. This poem was commissioned by NALA in 1997.

Adult Education: A Changing Rural Scene

Jim Phelan and Anne Markey

Introduction

The particular problems of rural areas in Ireland and indeed in rural Europe are well documented: depopulation; declining agricultural incomes; migration; poor off-farm income opportunities; declining service provision; lack of diversification of income-generating activities; poor demographic structures; and concerns for countryside management. The EU concerns articulated in *"The Future of Rural Society"* (CEC, 1988) and more recently in the Cork Declaration (CEC, 1996) place these issues at the heart of current and future rural development efforts. As rural areas have changed most strikingly over the last twenty years, so also has the demand and delivery of adult education which the authors take to mean, in its broadest sense, education for adults outside the formal education system.

The purpose of this paper is to outline these major changes. Before outlining these changes, it is important to understand the context in which they are occurring.

What is Rural Development?

There is no universally accepted definition of what is rural and what is urban. In Ireland rural is defined as all areas outside towns of 1,500 or more. In 1996, 42% of the Irish population lived in rural areas (CSO, 1997). This percentage varied enormously from only 26.5% in Leinster to almost 78% in Ulster. Figures from the 1971 Census of Population showed that 53% of the population at that time were rural. While the percentage of rural people in the overall population is dropping, rural areas still account for approximately 80% of the land area of the country. Prior to the 1950s, rural households were predominantly farming. However, this has changed and farm households currently account for only 36% of rural households (Table 1). This figure varies greatly from region to region as many areas of the country still have a heavy dependence on agriculture.

Views regarding development have changed. Conventionally development has been thought of in purely economic terms with policies and programmes delivered in a centralised manner from the top. Most now agree that development must not only bring an improvement in physical and social conditions but also sustainable improvement in the capacity of people to control and sustain these conditions (Buller and Wright, 1990). Therefore development is now much more people-focused. This is reflected in the policies and programmes of the EU and the Irish government which

concentrate on integrated area development. These still emanate from the top but are planned and administered from the bottom. Examples of such initiatives are LEADER I and II and Area Partnerships. In response to these initiatives and the current emphasis on bottom-up development hundreds of community development groups are now in existence. Adult education and human resource development are significant components of the activities in all of these initiatives.

Education

The Committee on Rural Development Training, established by Teagasc in 1992, recognised that *'...training and the development of human resources are vital if income and employment are to be maximised in rural areas'* (CRDT, 1993). However, the level of formal education achieved by all rural households is the lowest in the State (Table 1).

The low levels of formal education achieved by farm households has been well articulated. In the past it was brawn not brains that was considered as the essential tool for young entrants to farming. When labour requirements on Irish farms were high, the potential successor was withdrawn from the school system to serve his apprenticeship under the watchful eye of his father. The essential skills of farming could best be learned by doing. Indeed the young entrant was discouraged from getting ideas from outside as these were regarded as a distraction rather than a useful addition to the work on the farm.

Table 1 Heads of Household Classified by Education and Household Type, 1991

Household Type	All Households		Primary*		Second Level				Third Level		Not Stated	
					1st Stage		2nd Stage					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Family Farm	169,893	16	106,371	63	26,452	16	26,661	16	7,526	4	2,884	2
Other Rural	298,002	28	140,127	47	53,946	18	66,686	22	31,576	11	5,667	2
Urban	592,749	56	194,336	33	107,106	18	168,507	28	101,341	17	21,459	4
All	1,060,664	100	440,834	42	187,504	18	261,854	25	140,443	13	30,010	3

* Includes no formal education

Source: CSO, 1998, p16

Table 1 also shows the low levels of formal education attained by other rural households when compared to urban households with 47% completing at primary level. This information must be interpreted in a current climate where there is extensive rural depopulation and where education is viewed as an exit strategy for many young people who want to find jobs in Irish cities or towns or in similar locations across Europe or America.

The low level of formal education of rural households reinforces the need for adult education, particularly when income diversification and the establishment of rural enterprise are seen as major solutions to rural problems.

Adult Education

There is a long history of rural adult education in Ireland. Prior to the 1950s rural adult education focused mainly on agricultural education. Around the time of the great famine of 1846 and 1847, an English land agent William Blacker established a system of itinerant instruction and adult education in Ireland to improve the plight of the poor peasant farmers. The itinerant instructor travelled from town to town organising meetings at local schools to educate farmers in more efficient production methods. This system of adult education still exists today. However, its focus is not the poor peasant farmers but rather those wealthier and better resourced farmers who are willing to pay fees for advice to improve their efficiency and to develop their methods of production.

Adult education in Ireland today is delivered by a plethora of state, semi-state, commercial and community organisations with little co-ordination in terms of needs identification, delivery or accreditation. It is very difficult to disaggregate adult education figures for adult versus youth education and for rural versus urban.

The key training providers identified are mainly the statutory agencies with a mandate for education and training (Teagasc, FAS, VECs, RTCs, Universities, County Enterprise Boards and CERT) and to a lesser extent other state and voluntary agencies. CRDT (1993) estimated the annual expenditure in Ireland on broad rural development training to be in the region of £100m per annum. Below, the activities of the major State and semi-State agencies and voluntary groups with respect to adult education are described.

State and Semi-State Agencies

Teagasc is the State body responsible for providing research, training and advisory services in agriculture. In 1996 Training accounted for 19% (approx. £14m) of Teagasc's total expenditure. The Teagasc Training Programme caters for rural adults already engaged in agriculture and also for those who seek opportunities for generating additional income and employment through the establishment of other rural businesses. In 1996 courses were provided by Teagasc for some 7,000 adults (DAFF, 1997).

The Vocational Education Committees play an important role in adult education. There are 246 vocational schools, 61 community schools and 16 comprehensive schools in Ireland (DE, 1997, p39). If we exclude those in Dublin and city areas, there are 189 vocational schools, 37 community schools and nine comprehensive schools which may cater for rural areas. In 1995/6 there were 135,142 part-time students enrolled in adult education courses in vocational, community and comprehensive schools of which over 73% were female (ibid p44). If we exclude Co. Dublin, this figure is reduced to 77,501.

In the Regional Technical Colleges in 1995/6 there were 6,620 part-time students enrolled in adult education courses (DB, 1997). All of these colleges are placed outside Dublin.

The functions of FAS include the operation of training and employment programmes, the provision of an employment/recruitment service and support for co-operative and community base enterprise. FAS has a staff of 2,042 and a network of 20 training centres throughout the country. In 1996 FAS had a budget of £437m and ran training and employment programmes for an estimated 85,000 unemployed people (IPA, 1998).

CERT is the national body responsible for co-ordinating the education, recruitment and training of personnel for the Irish tourism industry. Training is delivered either in partnership with third-level institutions, directly by CERT or within industry. Every year over 11,000 people follow full and part-time tourism and catering courses.

The universities supply on an ad hoc commercial basis individually designed courses for rural communities. These courses vary in length and content and are usually unaccredited. The greatest exception in this regard is the undergraduate Diploma in Rural Development designed and delivered in a partnership between the four NUI colleges. It is a distance learning course designed for rural community leaders, implemented in outreach centres over a two year period. To date 80 rural adults have completed this course, two-thirds of whom are female.

There are 35 County Enterprise Boards (approximately 27 outside the major cities) established in 1993. Their key task is to develop enterprise action plans, to create local enterprise awareness and to develop an entrepreneurial culture.

Voluntary Groups

There are 34 area based LEADER II groups (all rural), 38 Partnership companies (approx. 20 rural) and hundreds of local rural community groups all of which organise training programmes for adults. These groups don't use

terms like *'adult education'* and *'adult learning'* to describe their educational activities. Terms such as *'animation'*, *'capacity building'* and simply *'training'* are however commonly used to describe their activities in the field of adult education.

For the 34 local action groups and the two collective bodies in the LEADER II Programme in Ireland, 11.2% of total public funding is allocated to 'Training' while 14.4% and 5.3% are allocated respectively to *'Animation and Capacity Building'* and *'Technical Assistance'*, giving a total of approximately £24m of public funds dedicated to training (Kearney, 1997). The majority of this is targeted at rural adults.

The Area Partnership Companies also have a significant input into adult education and training. In 1997 the target spending on complementary education and training by rural partnership companies is 8.4% of total budget, while for rural community groups it is 23.5%.

Both LEADER and the Partnerships are typical of the response and need arising from a bottom up demand for adult education and training.

Changes in Adult Education for Rural Areas

From discussions with State education providers and local community groups and the information presented above, it is clear that a number of changes are occurring regarding adult education in rural areas. Figure 1 summarises these changes as perceived by the authors.

The reduction in the numbers involved in agriculture and the need for diversification on farms means that courses now must encompass more than agriculture. Indeed it is likely that for many courses the participants will be from mixed backgrounds. If one examines participation in current courses, the increasing involvement of women is very noticeable as is a strong focus on developing the community as well as the individual. Traditionally courses were held at centralised institutional locations; increasingly courses are more likely to be organised at local venues with little institutional involvement in their organisation. There is also a big increase in the number and variety of suppliers. While on the one hand this is good, it has, however, in some cases, led to duplication and competition between agencies. In addition, accreditation and mainstream progression to more formalised education are becoming increasingly important.

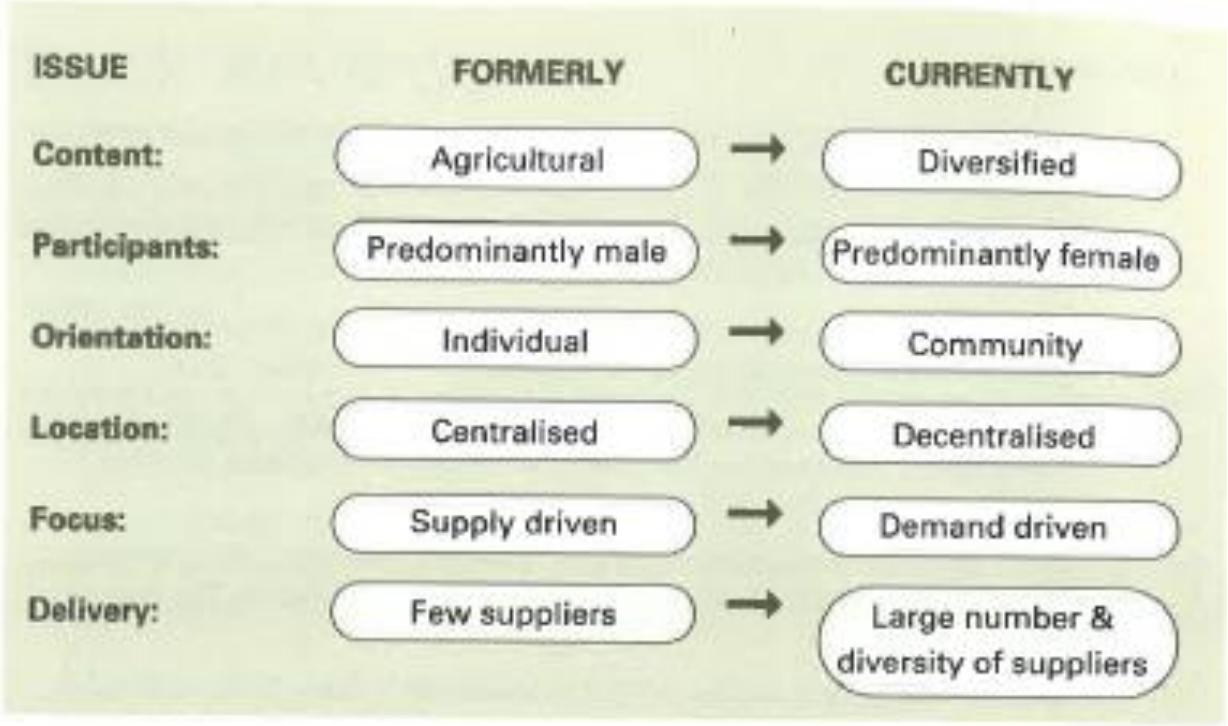

Figure 1: Perceived Changes in Rural Adult Education

Conclusion

There is a new vibrancy with regard to adult education in rural areas. This has come about because of increasing problems in rural areas and an increasing focus on rural development as a means to solving these problems. The focus of education is changing and while agriculture is still important, a greater diversity in the content is appearing. Personal development, capacity building and enterprise are key areas in this regard. There is increasing awareness of the need to support rural areas as a means of combating population drift and several agencies see these emerging areas as outlets for their expertise. Indeed if one looks at the demand side, the statistics presented in this report show that there is still a long way to go in creating a better balance between rural and urban areas in terms of attaining an educational equilibrium.

There is need for an overall reform of the provision of adult education in rural areas. This reform should address issues of overlap, co-ordination and accreditation. The development of a modular system at different levels with proper certification and accreditation, allowing progression through the different levels and into the formal education system should be a priority. These issues present a challenge for conventional providers of adult education, local development groups and the State to become partners in meeting the changing requirements for rural adult education. Adult education has a key role to play in helping rural people create sustainable fixtures in rural areas for themselves, their families and their communities.

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Book Reviews

College Knowledge: Power, Policy and the Mature Student Experience at University. By Ted Fleming and Mark Murphy. Maynooth Adult and Community Education occasional series. 84 p.p. £8.00 ISBN 0901519936.

Everything to Gain - A study of the third Level allowance scheme.By Margaret Healy. AONTAS 73p.p

These two timely publications reflect the growing interest in the relatively small but increasingly significant number of mature students studying full time in Ireland.

College Knowledge is essentially a report about the experience of mature students returning to full time study at University - specifically N.U.I. Maynooth. The students who are the main focus of the report are on the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs Third Level Allowance Scheme (T.L.A.). Everything to Gain is a study, which examines the extent to which the employment prospects of participants on the Third Level Allowance Scheme had improved as a result of that scheme.

College Knowledge provides a unique insight into the experiences of full time mature students in a university setting in Ireland. This study differs from most other studies, which attempt to explain mature student provision and experience. The experiences of the students are built into the research process, unlike many other studies which have tended to rely on quantitative data to explain student experience. Interestingly the authors reject a class analysis based upon income as the most useful way of understanding the issue of access for disadvantaged students to higher education. The study is essentially an analysis of the cultural differences between the university and the student and how the student negotiates these differences. The authors contend that it is how the student negotiates these differences that determines whether the student succeeds at university or not. The term College Knowledge is used to describe the culture of the university.

The report is written in a clear concise manner and packs a lot of information into its 84 pages. I would suggest that it is required reading not just for policy makers and practitioners but mature students themselves.

Factors

- Access routes
- Reasons for going to University
- The learning process (passing of exams)

Focus group findings indicated that 14 out of 20 students took part in some form of access course before they came to Maynooth. One surprising finding (or maybe not) indicated that those students who did not take part in an access course were more successful at exams than those who did. Although the report doesn't specifically address the reasons why this may be, one could surmise that these students had matriculated on the basis of Leaving Certificate and were probably little older than the mainstream student cohort. Some access courses, though, were more successful than others - university foundation courses bad a higher success rate than the VTOS/Leaving Certificate course and the Return to Learning Courses at N.U.I. Maynooth. Those access courses that most closely match the reality of first year university life appear more likely to produce the most successful students.

The findings also reveal a correlation between the reason why people go to university and examination success. Those who go to university to gain a job-orientated qualification do better than those who go to college for the sake of knowledge or to prove to themselves they could do it.

I was particularly interested as an adult education practitioner in the final section of the report on the learning process. The process whereby students acquire their study skills and essay writing skills is one of constant compromise with the demands of the institution, of a giving in to authority - one that won't accept the student's own experiential knowledge. In this power game the university never compromises. The students can never win, or as one student aptly put it, the learning process is *"like running with the hare and dashing with the hounds"*, These students who can negotiate their way around College Knowledge appear to be the more successful. ,

This section will be of interest to *"students"* of education and references to the works of Bauman, Freire, Mezirow and Weil are well documented. Susan Weil's work on mature students is particularly relevant in the context of the author's own research for this report.

The authors, of course, do not suggest that social class and gender are not issues, they clearly are. One of the biggest problems facing socially and economically disadvantaged mature students in entering higher education is actually reaching a stage educationally, psychologically and economically, where they are in a position to apply. The role of Access/VTOS providers cannot be underestimated in this process.

This is an excellent report and should be read as widely as possible. The policy proposals for the Department of Social and Community Affairs, VTOS providers and N.U.I. Maynooth are all well grounded and should be seriously considered. The innovative approach utilised by the researchers provides a unique insight (in the Irish context) and enhances our understanding of what makes a successful mature student and the proposals for *"at risk"* students should be acted upon to ensure that the educational experience of a statistically small but growing number of mature students is as rewarding as possible.

Everything to Gain is a valuable addition to our understanding of the Third level Allowance Scheme (T.L.C.). This concise study was commissioned by the department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and conducted by AONTAS. It is an attractive publication with well designed graphical detail. The appendices also contain valuable information on research methodology, social economic groupings, classification of colleges in Ireland and, for anyone researching in this area, a substantial references listing.

The publication had emerged as a result of the increased participation on the T.L.A. Scheme from 67 students in 1990 to its present level of over 3,000 students (1996/97). Each section is sprinkled with student quotes, adding to the vigour of the publication. Chapter one provides a profile of participants on the T.L.A, and confirms many of the findings of "College Knowledge"- participants tend to be young, generally under 35 years old, suffered periods of unemployment during the two years prior to entering the scheme, 67% were living in Leinster with a high proportion living in Dublin, a third of those attending universities attended N.U.I. Maynooth and studied the arts.

The publication also confirms that T.L.A. students had a very positive experience of access and the value of V.T.O.S. programmes is significant. Difficulties experienced in college were in the areas of managing money, family problems and "doing coursework".

The report comes to a number of conclusions and confirms in particular that disadvantaged adults are not availing of the scheme. This confirms other research which suggests that most mature students in Ireland tend to be middle class, particularly lower middle class, and the rate of representation of working class students is not significantly better than among non-mature students.

This is a well-researched and useful publication and should be widely distributed to all practitioners to ensure that in the future the benefits of T.L.A. can be extended to all ever-increasing number of mature students in higher education, particularly those who have experienced educational disadvantage.

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VTOS Spells Success
Eds. Helen Keogh & Tony Downes
Dept of Education 1998

Historically the educational debate in Ireland has been dominated by issues of structure, power and status. Traditionally this debate centred around State vs. Church control. However, in recent years with the decline in the power of the institutional Church, the power debate has evolved between different educational institutions and sectors. It is significant that when the Minister of State for Adult Education, Mr. Willie O' Dea T.D., referring to the upcoming green paper on Adult Education was quoted as saying that Adult Education would have an independent structure, it caused a major uproar among the present 'owners' of the system. Ultimately the Minister felt it necessary to state that he had been "misquoted" i.e. he felt the heat of complaint from those who were threatened. While these interminable petty debates take place, the voice of the learner is very often lost. If for no other reason, the present book "VTOS Spells Success" is to be welcomed in that it gives a voice and an outlet to those who have experienced adult education.

The book is a collection of stories (82 in all) written by students who have participated in the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS). This is an educational/retraining scheme set up in the early 1990's for long-term unemployed people with the aim of giving them education and training opportunities which will enhance their employability. While there have been many structural and statistical evaluations done of the VTOS., this is the first national evaluation which has been done using the direct voices of the students. And what a story they have to tell and how they tell it. These stories are coming with the passion of life where people talk of their fears, their handicaps and how, through a positive educational experience, they have managed to overcome these obstacles. To identify and abstract all the layers of wisdom of this book would require another book. Nevertheless I would like to highlight 3 core themes that run through most of the stories:

Negative Experience of Previous Schooling.

Many students highlight the fact that the positive experience of VTOS contrasts sharply with the negative experience of their early schooling. Nearly all the articles state that the critical factor, which helped people through the programme, was the positive relationship they developed with the staff. This contrasts sharply with the negative experiences of school.

> *"The teachers were always shouting at you" (p.42).*
> *"The teachers 'would look down on you' " (p.90).*
> *"I was punished severely" (p. 118).*
> *"I hated school" (p.128).*
> *"I experienced emotional and physical abuse" (p.182)*

If we are to continue to create a more humane and successful system of education then it is critical that we learn and understand the experience of those whom society classes as failures.

The Helping Relationship

Douglas Robertson, in a recent review of exemplary adult education practitioners, concluded that the key ingredient for promoting transformative learning was to establish educational helping relationships between educators and learners. This type of relationship is characterised by trust, honesty, support, unconditional regard, empathy etc. If anything dominates these series of articles it is the way in which the students describe this relationship as being at the core of the V.T.O.S. success story. The following are a tiny sample

> *"We were encouraged to participate" (p.16)*
> *"They (the staff) constantly keep me motivated, encourage me, and build up confidence and self esteem" (p.53)*
> *" the thing we all liked.... was the respect we got from the teaching staff" (p.74).*
> *"Help was coupled with great tolerance and understanding" (p.105)*
> *"There was a great relationship between tutors and students"... (p. 178)*

Education as Transformation.

Another constantly recurring theme is how the VTOS experience has led to a radical change in the life of the participants. In the words of Mexirow they have been helped to *"elaborate, create and transform their meaning schemes"* (2) It is this deep personal transformation which is the most fundamental benefit of VTOS. Again a small sample of the students comments illustrates the point.

> *"As a result of VTOS, I feel motivated, confident, ambitious, enthused and happy" (p4)*
> *"My personality has transformed beyond recognition" (p57)*
> *"My rebirth ..." (p.78)*
> *"As time went on I was becoming a new person" (p81)*
> *"Never again will I be scared to try anything or be afraid of failure..." (p.172)*
> *"For me VTOS was a very major catalyst ..."*

Freire would have enjoyed these descriptions.

The stories also bear witness to how successful the VTOS scheme is in opening up opportunities for people who have been excluded in our society. I hope that the Minister for Education and Science, Micheál Martin, who

wrote the forward to the book, takes cognisance of this fact and brings in some badly needed reforms such as more flexibility in the admission criteria and a more realistic allocation of funding to provide better facilities and services such as counselling.

The layout of the book is excellent and in particular I like the personal touch of including the photographs of the contributors. The book should be compulsory reading for anyone working in adult education. If we read these stories in a meditative and reflective way, then we will come to know in a deeper way what good and effective education entails. Wisdom is on our doorstep, all we need to do is open our eyes and ears.

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Facilitators Resource Pack: Resource Pack for Rural Development Facilitators, Eds. Marie Costello, Sarah Dean and Kathleen Quinlan, published by Centre for Adult & Community Education, NUI, Maynooth, 1998

Facilitation has become a buzzword these days, with a variety of individuals and organisations offering to impart their skills in this regard. As a form of participatory democracy, it certainly complements the view that any educational or developmental programme needs to draw on and actualise all the talents of the participants in order to achieve maximum benefit.

People are also being increasingly encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and their communities, and consequently, the role of local people is being further emphasised at all levels of the political spectrum, from local areas themselves to national government and the European level. It is, therefore, necessary to harness the talents of these highly committed volunteers coming forward by ensuring that the facilitators working with them are of the highest calibre.

The Centre for Adult and Continuing Education in Maynooth has produced a Resource Pack for Rural Development Workers in co-operation with the EU INTERREG II Programme. Rural development facilitators will find this pack of particular interest in their development work with groups, as it provides them with a structure in which effective and strategic planning can take place in the context of local community development.

Aiming as it does at experienced facilitators who are already working with groups, this resource pack would provide an excellent back-up support to those who wish to further their competency in this area. Both the background information and the suggested activities for use with groups are designed to enable facilitators to promote sustainable local development.

The Pack is not meant to be used rigidly as a manual, but rather as a genuine resource. Community groups have their own needs and expectations. Therefore, facilitators will want to select and adapt material appropriate to the particular groups with whom they are working at any particular time. The book does lend itself to this kind of use as it is divided into three sections:

A. An Introduction
B. Facilitator 'Tips Manual'
C. Units Section

The "Tips Manual" covers essential and relevant aspects of facilitation, starting with the most basic, e.g. can people find the venue? Is there a flip chart stand with paper and markers? The other tips covered include:

- The role of the facilitator in groups
- Physical arrangements and group size
- General pointers for working with a group
- Techniques for group facilitation
- Difficulties and how to address them
- Conducting a session

Under "Difficulties and How to Cope with Them" are found the very real problems encountered in a group, e.g. age difference, punctuality, alienation, monopolisers, silent members, hostility and dependency.

This section then concludes with a useful Summary/Checklist, Recommended Reading and Bibliography.

The bulk of the Pack is contained in Section 3 in which the authors offer advice and guidance on a wide range of issues:

1. Planning for Local Development
2. Gender Awareness
3. Community-Based Rural Tourism
4. Local Heritage
5. Group Skills for Community Development
6. Group Structure and Organisation

Planning for Local Development equips facilitators with the skills to guide a community group in planning their activity. The various steps in this process are clearly set out under headings such as: Unit Aim, Outcomes, Things to Do, Why Plan? What is a plan? Useful discussion points are highlighted in summary form on several pages, which should prove helpful to the facilitator in keeping a checklist of points covered.

The Community Planning Process discusses the three stages necessary in the preparatory process and lists appropriate activities under each stage, e.g. under the first stage, which is Consultation, options on how to do this include door-to-door calls, questionnaires and public meetings. I find such an approach a sensitive combination of brainstorming activities, which are then harnessed by a methodical framework of careful planning leading to appropriate action.

I was particularly pleased to see a unit on Gender Awareness, in the light of the barriers that still remain to be broken down in ensuring that the talents and contribution of half the population are recognised, utilised and rewarded. Some very relevant issues regarding gender inequality are highlighted with suggested approaches for dealing with them, e.g. discussion on why women tend to be under represented at decision-making level in local development and the identification of any barriers blocking women's participation in decision-making. At first sight, development of some particular tourism attraction may seem relatively easy and obvious to local groups, fired as they are with zeal for their local heritage. But having already considered the need for a community planning process, this unit will enable facilitators to properly investigate the potential for community driven rural tourism in a particular area.

While the layout is mostly well structured, I would prefer if there were other suggested activities apart from talking ones based on discussions, which are certainly of primary value. But in my own experience of being in such groups for a few hours at a time, I would welcome some kind of physical energising sessions, such as a few creative or game playing approaches to problem solving and other issues. It would also help the user to find a particular section more easily if the name of each section or unit appeared at the top of the relevant pages. But they are minor points in an overall excellent Facilitators Resource Pack.

By providing background information in the form of bibliography, useful contacts and resources, combined with group activities, such as discussion, buzz groups, worksheets, talking points, this unit points the way towards the development of a rural tourism initiative. Other considerations include how the project fits into an overall strategy, a consideration of the barriers confronting the project, the management and integration of services and amenities, and finally the environmental, economic and social sustainability of the proposal.

The educational principles underlying the approach in this pack are rooted firmly in respect for the knowledge, skills and experience of the members of the community group being facilitated. Emphasis is always on starting with what the people know, not what the facilitator knows, which is the oldest and truest pedagogical rule, according to Andreas Fuglesang in About Understanding: Ideas and Observations on Cross Cultural Understanding (1982).

Therefore, the approach arising from such emphasis is rooted in a faith in people's existing knowledge and beliefs as a starting point for any kind of genuine and lasting development. The facilitator must trust the people's own analysis of their situation, based on their immediate experiences, not someone else's opinion of their problems. This is particularly true the further the rural area is from Dublin which is often perceived as the source of imposed "solutions" without a true picture of the local area in question.

The Resource Pack is available from: The Centre for Adult and Community Education, Nul Maynooth, Co. Kildare at a cost of £10 + £1.50 postage.

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Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed
By Paulo Freire with notes by Ana Maria Araujo Freire
Published by Continuum: New York (first published 1992, English translation 1994, this edition republished 1997)

This is not a very long book; there are only seven chapters, consisting of about two hundred pages in all. However, between the covers is a great depth of insight and wisdom. It is written in an easy-to-read, autobiographical style - which anyone who struggled through his classic text, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, which brought Paulo Freire to international prominence in the 1970s - will find very different, attractive, and yet complementary to the first book as it returns to clarify some of the key ideas expressed in the original. This book is really a personal narrative by Freire, like a series of journal entries in which he reminisces about the journeys, both physical and philosophical, he has made throughout his life as an educator. One gets a real sense of the frustrations, the fears and the occasions of happiness he experienced. He recalls his movement into the world of education and away from his original career as a lawyer, and the subsequent development of his ideas about learning which were to prove so controversial and eventually lead to his exile from his native Brazil. His first wife, Elza, features prominently in his 'journeys' and his appreciation of her role in his life and work reveals a warm, loving and humble human being.

Freire's humility and openness to learning from others is revealed in a powerful story of his own conscientization - from his early days as an educator - in which he describes the clearest and most bruising lesson he ever received in his life, His 'teacher' on that occasion was a man of about forty - *"worn out and exhausted"* - who responded to a presentation by Freire, and in respectful but not uncertain terms, explained that the good 'Doctor' came from a different world to that of the workers he had just addressed. Freire discusses it with Elza on his way home, *"I thought I'd been so clear, I don't think they understood me"* - to which she responds: *"Could it*

have been you, Paulo, who didn't understand them?" He carried with him this lesson, that even with so-called 'progressive educators': when one must speak to the people, one must convert the *"to"* to a *"with"* the people. Thus he reminds educators of the need to have an understanding of, and respect for, the "knowledge of lived experience" of the people.

However, it is clear that Paulo Freire was also a very assertive and strong-willed individual who believed in vigorously arguing his case against opponents - of which he clearly had many. In particular, he doesn't hide the anger he feels about those who discriminate on either class or racial grounds, and forcefully rebukes 'sectarian thinkers' of all kinds, whether in the sphere of education or politics

More than once in the book, he commends the ability that he and others had to argue and to disagree without offending or abusing each other. In most cases, he issues an unrepentant endorsement of his thinking in Pedagogy of the Oppressed. However, he readily agrees with one particular criticism or the book -that concerning the sexist language - for which he was roundly and justifiably criticised by feminists. To his credit, Freire takes ownership of the criticism rather than off-loading it as being a flaw in the translation. Instead he admits the sexism was there in the original Portuguese and recalls how he reacted *"under the impact of my conditioning by an authoritarian, sexist, ideology"* to the first letters or protest he received from women. His considered reflection upon them however, concluded *"it is not a grammatical problem, but an ideological one."* He goes on to explicitly state his indebtedness to those women who corrected his use of language and enabled him to come to the view that *"changing language is part of the process of changing the world."* If this displayed a willingness to admit error in one instance, the tenacity and fervour with which Freire holds on to his beliefs and theories is equally evident in his response to many of the other criticisms made of Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

He rejects for example, criticism regarding the *"unintelligibility of the text"*. He remembers meeting a group of young people in Washington DC who were having difficulties with the text, when a black community activist of about fifty years of age intervened on several occasions to clarify points raised in the discussion. He recalls the man's conclusion: *"If some of these youngsters tell you they don't understand you because of your English, don't believe them. It's a question of the thinking that's expressed in your language. The problem is, they don't think dialectically. And they don't yet have any actual experience of the hard life led by the sectors of society that suffer discrimination"*. His response to accusations that the original text is so difficult is really a defiant "So what? it's meant to be difficult!" One must struggle with it and not try to over-simplify complex ideas. Freire restates that the educator is never neutral, nor classless, and that an ethical education *"of its very nature is directive and political"* must be coupled with a respect for the educands which consists of neither pushing one's knowledge upon them,

nor, for the sake of *'being in touch with the people'*, unduly staying at that level and not attempting to bring them further. He confronts intellectuals both of the Left and the Right who judge themselves the proprietors of knowledge, and whose approach implies they have nothing to learn from the masses. He describes such educational approaches as 'authoritarian' as opposed to his ideal of 'democratic' education.

Education may be democratic to the extent that the educands have a role to play in the learning process and that they are not merely passive recipients of others' knowledge. However, this is not carried to the extent that the educator relinquishes his or her role in directing or facilitating the process, nor forgets that he or she is not completely neutral or apolitical.

Underpinning this approach is Freire's exhortation; *"consistent with their democratic dream, they respect the educands and therefore never manipulate them."* This respect is for both 'knowledges' - the popular and the erudite - that of the educands and the educators with a view to getting beyond both. This is the dialectic of which Freire speaks. The dialectic between the "world" and the word - between the material existence of humans and their awareness or articulation of their lives. He shows how it is impossible to have a democratic education without the constant stimulus of questions i.e. critically reflecting on all aspects of education - who selects the content? How is it taught? What is teaching? What is a teacher? What is a student? - and so forth.

As the title indicates, Freire is returning with hope to the ideas he explored in Pedagogy of the Oppressed. In his rebuttal of various criticisms - rejecting dogma from the Left and the Right (acknowledging the latter hold sway at present) - Freire recognises that his dream for popular education and a political transformation has not (yet) occurred. However he refuses to surrender his dream to the sectarian attitudes ever present, reminding us that in many instances, his principles and practices were frustrated by those in power or not followed through faithfully. This doesn't mean - as some of his critics have stated - *"the Freire era is over"*. Rather, he confidently asserts the core human need for hope - for the 'adoption of a utopia' not that suggested by the fundamentalism of the Left or the Right - but a utopia in which all would have the freedom to think critically, to disagree, and in doing so, to respect others and be respected. *"I do not understand human existence and the struggle needed to improve it, apart from hope and dream"* says Freire. He continues *"it is naivete to think that hope alone will transform the world.... But to attempt it without hope is a frivolous illusion."*

I recommend that adult learners/educators read Pedagogy of Hope. In revisiting many of the key ideas that were first raised two decades ago, this book provides an opportunity to reappraise them in the light of what has happened to the world since the original publication. Moreover, for those who haven't read the original book, this will be an encouragement to do so,

and would be an excellent study-guide as they grapple with the rather more difficult language and concepts of Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Overall, I recommend Pedagogy of Hope because it provides a timely reminder of the enduring validity of the principles and practices of *concientizaçao*, the process of consciousness-raising or conscientization - which will (one hopes and dreams!) - endure in spite of the sad passing of Paulo Freire from this world in May 1997

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A Tradition That Has No Name
Mary Field Belenky, Lynne A. Bond, & Jacqueline S. Weinstock
New York: Basic Books, 1997, pp.311.

The subtitle of this book - Nurturing the Development of People, Families, and Communities - gives us an insight into the tradition that Mary Belenky and her colleagues wished to explore, a maternal tradition of developmental leadership which, they report, still has no name. In an earlier book (Women's Ways of Knowing, New York: Basic Books, 1986) which was researched and written in collaboration with Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger and Jill Mattuck Tarule, Belenky explored the development of self, of voice and of mind as it was experienced by 135 American women from a variety of social and educational backgrounds. When the research data did not fit neatly into the categories devised by William Perry who had studied the epistemological development of Harvard undergraduates (all male), Mary and her colleagues courageously constructed their own set of categories which drew on Perry's work and other aspects of the literature and struggled to remain faithful to the lived experience of the women who had participated in the research project in so doing, they demonstrated in practice the philosophical approach made explicit in A Tradition That Has No Name (ATTHNN); they crossed the boundaries in an effort to creatively connect two polarities, neatly framed theoretical knowledge on the one hand and the rich, raw data of lived experience on the other.

In Part 1 of ATTHNN the philosophical concept of dualism, a mode of interpreting reality by dividing it into two radically independent elements, is teased out and illustrated. Examples of this classification system include: true/false, mind/body, thinking/feeling, rational/emotional, public/private, good/evil, right/wrong, and inevitably, of course, male/female. Each of these pairs expresses a bipolar understanding of human existence; we need both poles if we are to be faithful to reality. In Western culture, however, these poles are rarely thought of as equal in value. Instead there is a superior/inferior relationship between them, one pole representing a value to be sought and the other a negative to be avoided. ATTHNN documents clearly the effects of such dualistic thinking across a range of academic disciplines. Of particular interest, however, is the field of human

development. When one examines major research studies such as Perry's, mentioned above, one discovers that what has been studied is not , in fact, human development but simply male development. When men are defined as human, women all too easily are labelled as *other*, a type of deviation on the normal scale of human development. Such an approach, the authors argue, can have far-reaching consequences.

Part 2 of ATTHNN tells the story of the Listening Partners programme, a demonstration project which focused on a group of mothers of young children, all of whom experienced rural poverty in isolated parts of northern Vermont in the U.S. The basic question at the core of the project was: Would being a member of a group where people listen to each other with the greatest of care enable isolated mothers to gain a voice, claim the power of their good minds, and break out of their seclusion? Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used within an experimental research design. Great emphasis was laid on the ability of the researchers to really listen and to draw out the emerging thoughts of the participants. The conclusions drawn were: women tend to use metaphors of voice and silence as general indicators of their developmental status and sense of wellbeing: the most silenced and excluded of women begin to grow and develop when they have opportunities to speak in settings where people listen carefully to each other and work collaboratively to solve the problems they face; when women engage in mutual question posing and dialogue there is a good chance that they have entered into a developmental process that will perpetuate itself; and if women are drawn out and uplifted they are likely to draw out and uplift others, who in turn will reach out to others, and so an upward spiral of development is created.

Because metaphors of voice appeared to be so closely linked with significant aspects of women's development the authors of ATTHNN began to play close attention whenever they heard people talking about other projects and organisations created by women that were bringing people into voice. Mary Belenky subsequently embarked on a study of four grassroots women's organisations - three in the U.S. and one in Germany - all of which appeared to be highly effective in bringing an excluded group into voice. Part 3 of this book documents the growth and development of these organisations, described by Mary as *"public homeplaces"* because they reflect many of the goals and practices of highly nurturing, democratic families dedicated to sponsoring the fullest development of voice and mind in each and every member. The founders of each of these organisations - all women - demonstrate a model of developmental leadership which is guided by maternal thinking and practices. Just as mothers struggle to *"draw out"*, *"lift up"*, and *"raise"* their children, so this tradition of leadership is dedicated to nurturing and bringing into voice individuals and communities, but especially those who have been most silenced and excluded.

This is the tradition that has no name, the tradition that has remained unrecognised academically and unsupported financially because it does not fit into the mainstream model of *"human"* development. This is a tradition to which we, in Ireland, are no strangers. Community development projects, women's education groups, the adult literacy movement, these and many other grassroots initiatives operate out of a philosophy guided by the kind of maternal thinking described in ATTHNN. However the principles and values informing these initiatives are still inadequately conceptualised and often poorly articulated. Belenky and her colleagues argue that poorly articulated traditions are likely to be fragile and that without a common language, this tradition will not become part of a well-established, ongoing dialogue in the larger society. This book has, in my view, the power to illuminate the dialogue taking place among so many people in Ireland at present. It is an impressive and scholarly work, yet it is highly accessible to the general reader. It will cheer and uplift the hearts of many who have felt sidelined by funding agencies and hierarchically structured institutions. You will recognise yourself and your valuable work in these pages. I can best conclude by echoing the words of George Albee, former president of the American Psychological Association: *"If you read just one book this year, choose this one... If you read a second book this year, read this one again".*

Ursula Coleman

As we await the publication of a Green Paper on Adult Education in Ireland, this edition of the Adult Learner reflects critically on the priorities to be considered, the core issues to be addressed and the thinking that should inform any proposals to put in place much needed structures for the delivery of a comprehensive adult education service.

"Adult education is both part of the apparatus of the state (by engaging in policy making, delivering programmes and services) and highly critical of it. The relationship between the state and adult education is complex and frequently includes elements of resistance and contestation as well as reproduction."

"However, it is important for educators to ensure that the rationale for adult and community education is not based entirely on economic considerations. It is necessary to recognise the role of learning in creating a more civilised society by, for example, promoting culture and identity and by strengthening families and communities."

"Those who have addressed themselves - whether directly or indirectly - to the issue of structure for adult education are unanimous in their recognition of the need for a structure which operates as closely as possible to the learner. It is possible also to identify a demand for a new model."

"In thinking that by offering assistance with access to the labour market but through state-run education, training and guidance programmes alone that the problems of structural and generational long-term unemployment can be solved, the state is failing to recognise the impact of the alienation felt by many of the people they wish to help."

"We do not need adult schools. What we do need is to develop new structures that will support a qualitatively different kind of learning environment."

"There is a new vibrancy with regard to adult education in rural areas. This has come about because of increasing problems in rural areas and an increasing focus on rural development as a means to solving these problems. The focus of education is changing and, while agriculture is still important, a greater diversity in the content is appearing."

AONTAS

Adult Education Organisers' Association