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Neta

¿Qué hacemos en educación de personas adultas?

What are we doing in adult education?

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What are we doing
in adult education?

What are we doing
in adult education?

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Introduction

NETA: *What Are We Doing in Adult Education?* is a transnational project under the 2000 Call for Proposals of the SOCRATES II Programme. SOCRATES is a European Commission Action Programme in the field of education. The programme includes a number of Actions, all of which are related to education and training and among which is the Grundtvig Action for adult education and other educational activities. The NETA project is funded under the Grundtvig Action and is located in the following specific aims of that Action:

✓ to encourage individual adult demand for continuing learning opportunities;
✓ to respond to the needs of people lacking basic skills and qualifications;
✓ to strengthen equal opportunities for men and women.

The focus in the NETA project was placed, in turn, on the training needs of people over sixteen years of age who leave the education system with no qualifications, particularly young people at risk of social exclusion,

women with no qualifications wishing to access the labour market, and groups of immigrants who require initial vocational training. The goal of NETA was to maximise the resources devoted by authorities, local agencies and other organisations to such training, as well as promote the co-ordination of provision and the development of new definitions of skills and competencies.

The project began by asking the following questions, which are increasingly pertinent in Europe: Does current education and training provision meet the needs of the new Europe that is under construction? Does current education and training take into account the personal and social needs of learners as well as the European demand for increased production? Is there a system of qualifications within the European Union that accredits non-formal education and training courses organised by different institutions?

The project was co-ordinated by the Sub-direction of Professional Training of the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, with the following national partners: the Department of Schools and Vocational Training of the Castile–La Mancha Regional Government; the Department of Educational Advancement of the Madrid Regional Government; the Department of Vocational Training and Educational Innovation of the Murcia Regional Government; the Spanish People's Universities Federation (FEUP), the Training and Employment Foundation (FOREM) and the online educational journal *Comunidad Escolar*, the basic function of which is to disseminate news on the project's actions and results.

The international partners were the Further Education Section of the national Department of Education and Science in Ireland and the Viborg County Council in Denmark.

In general terms, NETA set up a partnership that was representative of existing formal and non-formal education and training provision at a regional level in Spain and Denmark and at a national level in Ireland.

In Spain, NETA focused on the new context that has resulted from the process of decentralising education to the regional authorities which are now responsible for organising adult education provision. The fragmentation of education provision that may arise from decentralisation could, in fact, hinder access to education and training for adults, since the goals of education authorities, institutions, non-profit associations, NGOs and trade unions all include continuing education and training for adults through a wide variety of provision. This fragmentation could lead, on the one hand, to duplication of provision and, on the other, to a failure to respond to people's specific needs.

Thus, the first phase of NETA in Spain involved the national project partners in compiling data on adult education in the respective regions, including the institutions and organisations working in adult education at a regional or local level and legislative developments (in the case of the education authorities). The subsequent analysis of these data was oriented towards identifying the strengths and weaknesses of adult education provision in each region, thereby enabling the needs of prospective learners to be compared with the actual provision of education and

training. The analysis also afforded the possibility of as-
sessing whether experiences that have been successful
in specific cases could be transferred to other locations.
Further, the analysis enabled the existing resources to be
maximised and the necessary modifications to be made
in provision. Finally, the analysis enabled the formulation
of new proposals to respond to the personal, social and
employment needs of the new Europe, focusing on the
three broad target groups of the NETA project.

At a national level in Spain, the project is thus based on a
concept of adult education as part of general education
and training policy, taking into account its particular char-
acteristics such as the fact that it operates at a concrete
level, is closely linked to the context in which it develops
and delivers provision in the communities where learners
are located. It also takes into account that in the search
for a combination of formal, non-formal and informal learn-
ing, the very concepts of education and training must be
extended beyond formal teaching and learning. The con-
cept of formal, non-formal and informal learning goes be-
yond education and training in the classic sense in that it
is best expressed by the term "lifelong learning" which
now goes beyond the status of a mere slogan since it
expresses a real commitment made by the European
Union Member States.

The Danish involvement in the NETA project through the
Viborg County Council - the regional authority for employ-
ment-related matters – concentrated on the regional per-
spective of adult education, within the new concept of life-
long learning. The chapter on the NETA project in Den-
mark describes how they focused on the learning sys-

tems which are aimed at achieving the ongoing, steady development of adult skills and competencies and which make available learning opportunities that promote employability, active citizenship, social inclusion and personal development.

The establishment of the first Danish regional agency for the review of competencies with a view to making recommendations for the development and implementation of political strategies has called for different adult education-related agencies and organisations to work in partnership. Positive results are being obtained and the work of the NETA project in Viborg County is a practical example of partnership which is of considerable interest to adult learning stakeholders. Through the contributions of the NETA project, the Danish partner has attempted to highlight the renewal that adult education must undergo in order for the *Europe of Knowledge* to be achieved. The NETA project in Denmark demonstrates that adult education should cover all formal, non-formal and informal learning within the model of lifelong learning that has been accepted by the European Union as being a cornerstone for economic development, employment and social cohesion in the future.

The NETA project in Ireland, 2000-2002, has been framed by the publication of two major documents, *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education* published by the Department of Education and Science in August 2000 just before the project began and the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* published by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in October 2002 just as the project was coming to a close. For the project the

publication of the White Paper was particularly timely in that it enabled the Irish partner in September 2000 to give a clear and comprehensive response to the central question of the NETA project, viz., *"What are we doing in adult education?"*.

The White Paper also described the national adult education context in which the NETA project in Ireland operated. Furthermore, it provided the very substance of NETA in Ireland – on an on-going basis and in a final overview - on the extent to which the implementation of the proposals in the White Paper (along with some additional measures) was contributing to increasing *internal* and *transversal* co-ordination, coherence and cohesion *within* and *between* adult education programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science throughout Ireland and between those programmes and the other sectors of the education system, primary, secondary, further and higher education. Attention was also be paid in the project to the effects of the implementation of the White Paper recommendations on co-ordination, coherence and cohesion between the adult learning programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science and those funded by other government departments. Particular attention was paid to the benefits to adult learners arising from co-ordination and coherence, especially the NETA target groups, namely, early-school leavers, women without basic education or vocational qualifications and immigrants.

The chapter on NETA in Ireland sets out the actions taken to implement the White Paper recommendations during the period of the project and the results of the implementation in terms of policy, structures, qualifications, provi-

sion and programme support in adult education. The impact on the primary beneficiary, the adult learner, is also described. The final section of the chapter looks at what has been achieved and what are the on-going challenges.

The **NETA Project:**
"What are we doing in
adult education?"
in Spain*

Esther Rubio Herráez

The project framework:
Adult Education in Spain

A brief legal overview will help us to put adult education in Spain in context.

The General Public Instruction Act 1857 (popularly known as the "Moyano Act") was a specific piece of legislation to

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* The origin of this project is due to Maria Jesus Angulo, Amparo Azorín-Albiñana and Alba Benito, without whose inestimable efforts the project would not have been possible.

regulate the education system, which provided for the education of adults as a responsibility of the State and thus also of the Government, who would be in charge of furthering and developing this type of education. Previously, adult education had been the responsibility of local authorities and district or provincial councils, which had set up and regulated the functioning of schools for adults, although certain non-government agencies, such as workers' organisations, had also concerned themselves with the cultural development of the underprivileged classes.

The objective of the 1857 Act insofar as adult education was concerned was to "extend and perfect the education provided in primary day schools". Owing to what was, to a certain extent, a supplementary function of formal education, access to these schools began at a very early age. However, owing to the different treatment provided under the Act along gender lines, girls could access adult education from the age of 12, whereas the minimum age for boys was 15. This discrimination was a consequence of girls' education being limited to the primary level. Although the law did not exclude secondary education for girls, in practice, there were no schools for them to go to and mixed classes were not allowed, so women suffered what amounted to *de facto* exclusion from secondary education.

Subsequently, in the light of persistently high illiteracy rates, in 1922 the Ministry of Public Instruction drafted a working plan jointly with the Pedagogical Missions, which consisted of setting up and implementing "night schools for the education of adults", to be staffed by both officially employed and volunteer teachers.
The Second Republic attempted to address the illiteracy

problem, which in 1931 affected 40% of the adult popula-
tion, but the process of implementing new legislation was
interrupted by the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in
1936 and the subsequent Franco dictatorship.

The General Education and Educational Reform Financ-
ing Act 1970 acknowledged the need for permanent edu-
cation for adults by stipulating specific rules, such as ob-
taining the School Graduate qualification (General Basic
Education certificate) and maturity tests for people over
18 years of age who wished to obtain a First Level Voca-
tional Training qualification.

The 1970 Act, besides providing for adult education as a
specific function within the national education system,
assigned responsibility for it to the Ministry of Employment,
which was to arrange for training for the labour market by
providing "functional and re-adaptation training for work-
ers derived from the immediate demands of employment
and social development policy".

Thus, during the 1970s education provision took shape
with the basic goal of compensating for educational fail-
ures during childhood while adapting curricular content to
adults' needs.

Several learning modes were, therefore, made avail-
able by the Ministry of Education, such as distance learn-
ing, through the setting-up of the National Distance-learn-
ing Institute (INBAD) for the Baccalaureate[1] in 1975 and

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1. Translator's note: Advanced-level secondary education qualification.

the National Centre for Basic Distance-Learning (CENEBAD) in 1979. These resources, which were targeted at the personal, professional and social development of adults, allowed, on the one hand, steady progress to be made through the education system, beginning with basic education, continuing through Baccalaureate studies, potentially as far as university entrance, while, on the other hand, they addressed the demands of industry by providing permanent training and adaptation to the needs of the labour market.

The General Education System Organisation Act 1990 (LOGSE) was passed as part of a political process to decentralise the education system. This new act extended the school-leaving age to 16 with the consequent creation of the Compulsory Secondary Education Graduate (ESO) qualification.

Adult education is dealt with in the 1990 Act as an integral part of the education system, largely focused on extending the ESO qualification among the adult population, although also providing for adult education and training directed towards the labour market, the exercise of civil rights and responsibilities and the personal development. However, basic education remains as the underlying, all-encompassing key element, since it is an indispensable condition for any subsequent learning and it compensates for any basic skills not acquired during childhood.

New legislation has recently been passed (the General

Education Quality Act 2002), which treats adult education as part of a lifelong-learning process.

Meanwhile, in the employment sphere, legislation has also been developed that affects the training of adults, such as the Basic Employment Act 1980, which fixes the criteria for vocational training, and the Workers' Statute to Regulate Ongoing Professional Training (also 1980). This process has recently been advanced with the passing of the Qualifications and Vocational Training Act 2002, the framework of which continues to be that of lifelong learning. The objectives of the National Qualifications and Vocational Training System instigated by the 2002 Act include "training for the exercise of professional activities, such that both individual needs and those of production systems and employment may be satisfied".

We may, therefore, conclude that the legislation currently in place in Spain conceives of adult education as being based on a lifetime of learning and acknowledges ongoing education as a basic principle of the education system, so that the goal of formal training for adults is to provide basic education and training that will enable people to:

✓ enjoy access to the different levels of the education system;

✓ improve their professional qualifications or train to work in another profession; and

✓ develop their ability to participate in social, cultural, political and economic life.

How adult education is organised

The structure and organisation of the adult education provided by the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD) may be summarised as follows:

Basic education for adults (EBA)

A basic education is considered to be essential for personal and social development, since a lack of such an education leads to marginalisation and social exclusion. From this perspective, it is a priority to ensure that EBA provision is available in order for everyone to be able to acquire a basic education.

EBA is divided into three levels: level I (literacy); level II (consolidation), which is equivalent to a primary-level education; and level III, which comprises Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) targeted towards obtaining the ESO Graduate qualification.

Baccalaureate-level education for adults

The Baccalaureate is a non-compulsory level within secondary education. The access gate for this level is the ESO qualification. The theoretical enrolment age is 16, with completion at around 18 years of age. The maximum duration of studies is four years.

Distance training for the Baccalaureate has also been gradually implemented. Night-school Baccalaureate classes can be attended by over-18s and 16–18-year-olds

who can prove that they are either in work or in excep-
tional circumstances that prevent them from studying for the
Baccalaureate under a normal arrangement. All students must
have previously obtained the ESO qualification.

Vocational training for adults

Intermediate- or upper-level vocational training is organ-
ised in training cycles with a modular structure, with a view
to strengthening the link between the production system
and a high level of response to technological, economic
and social changes. The modules have been devised as
a means of achieving the professional competence re-
quired by the particular labour market associated with each
vocational training qualification- the key point of reference
for defining this type of training.

The current design of this specific vocational training al-
lows adults access to this type of education, with the ESO
qualification being required for intermediate-level studies
and the Baccalaureate qualification for the upper level.
However, it is possible to gain access to this training even
if these academic requirements are not met, provided that
candidates (*i*) pass an entrance examination regulated by
the education authorities, (*ii*) are at least 18 years old on
the date of the examination; and (*iii*) can prove that they
have at least one year's work experience or have suc-
cessfully completed a Social Guarantee Programme (see
below).

Education through distance-learning is also available for
vocational-training modules at authorised schools.

Education leading to official qualifications

Adults can access the different types of education available either by attending classes or under a distance-learning arrangement, provided that they meet the relevant entrance requirements. For those who cannot meet these requirements extraordinary or specific entrance tests are in place to enable them to obtain the relevant qualifications (see table).

Qualification obtained	Access conditions	Training action
Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) Graduate	Over 18	Preparation of extraordinary tests
Vocational Training Technician	Over 18	Preparation of specific tests
Baccalaureate	Over 23	Preparation of specific tests

Source: Prepared by CIDE based on the relevant legislation.

Other education available for adults includes:

✓ Preparation for university entrance for over 25s;

✓ Foreign-language learning;

✓ Social guarantee programmes.

Assessment

The assessment of the teaching and learning process is educational, continuous and integrated. The assessment system must be in keeping with the skills, characteristics, aspirations, needs and interests of adults and properly adapted to the socio-economic and cultural context of the environment.

At the end of secondary studies, those who are assessed as having passed the fourth module of all the fields of knowledge covered are awarded the ESO Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) qualification. Those who fail to complete these studies receive a certificate from their schools listing which modules have been successfully completed and the marks obtained.

This structure and organisation of adult education under the auspices of the MECD has been substantially maintained during the process of transferring responsibilities for education to the regional authorities, which was completed in 2000. Subsequently, each of the regions has prepared and developed its own legislation in this respect, or is currently in the process of doing so.

The **NETA Project** in Spain

The European NETA Project is intended to contribute towards the development of partnership and cooperation between different education and training sectors at a national level (with the involvement of the regions and non-

government organisations) and transnational level, including countries from both within and outside the European Union (UE)—a goal that looks for support to experiences in other countries involved in the project while contributing experiences and results from specific practices at a national level.

The national-level project hinges on a concept of adult education as being part of general education and training policies, taking into account its special characteristics, such as the fact that it takes place at a specific scale, linked to the local environment and close to the learner. It also incorporates the view that the very concepts of education and training should be extended beyond formal education, by uniting formal, non-formal and informal learning processes. This concept, therefore, goes beyond the notion of education and training in a classical sense, being more attuned to the idea of "lifelong learning", which is now definitely more than just a slogan, since it expresses a commitment by the EU Member States to the development of education policy by uniting formal and non-formal education and informal learning processes.

In other words, while the concept of "ongoing education" has surpassed the traditional concept of the education system, by extending the concept of education to include society as part of the teaching and learning process,[2] the

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2. See *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow*, UNESCO, 1972.

idea of lifelong learning[3] implies a change in meaning, since it also values learning carried out beyond the ambit of educational institutions schools— what is known as informal learning, acquired by coexistence, living in a shared world—which is added to formal and non-formal education and training.[4]

The importance of this change becomes clear in several different ways, depending on the countries and contexts in which it occurs. In the specific case of the EU, there is a commitment to build a European Learning Space, which the European Commission is currently working on with the Member States.[5]

The European Commission's proposal to progress towards the "learning society" took shape at the Lisbon European Council in 2000, where it was established that "lifelong learning is a basic component of the European social model and a fundamental priority of the European Employment Strategy". In order to take the proposal further, in the same year the European Commission prepared the working document, *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*,

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3. It is worth recalling here that warnings have also been made about the potential hazards involved in a restricted concept of learning, i.e., when it is understood to be a purely individual responsibility and therefore a formula that leads to institutional responsibilities being abandoned in both the public and private sectors.

4. For further details see *Learning: The Treasure Within*, UNESCO, 1996, and *Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments*, UNESCO, Dakar, 2000.

5. *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*, European Commission, 2002.

to provide impetus for debate on this subject and propose the relevant development strategies in order to value "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective".

As a result of the subsequent debate on its *Memorandum,* the Commission has prepared a new document, *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality.* This document establishes cooperation based on new formulas in accordance with changing times as a key component of such a European learning space: "the creation of a European area of learning will need to be supported by innovative forms of partnership, cooperation and coordination at all levels between the actors involved in implementation."

Within this European framework, adult education is seen as one of the components of lifelong learning and a responsibility of the public authorities, which "are responsible for providing the necessary resources for -and ensuring access for all citizens to- compulsory education and training and post-compulsory basic skills provision, as well as ensuring that pre-school and adult learning opportunities are available".

This brief description enables us to contextualise the **"NETA: What are we doing in adult education?"** project. Within the framework of the Socrates Programme it takes place in the Grundtvig action—in the following action categories:

✓ "Fostering the individual demand for ongoing learning activities for adults."

✓ Focusing on "adults who lack a basic education and qualifications".

✓ Considering "equal opportunities for men and women" as a transversal element of the project, taking into account that when we refer to a human group it contains both women and men.

This project involves both formal and non-formal sectors. The former include the education systems: the MECD, which is the agency ultimately responsible for education, and the Education Departments of the Castille–La Mancha, Madrid and Murcia Regional Governments.

The project is coordinated from the MECD's Sub-directorate General for Professional Training and has the following national partners: the Directorate General for Schools and Professional Training of the Castille–La Mancha Regional Government; the Directorate General of Educational Development of the Madrid Regional Government; the Directorate General for Vocational Training and Educational Innovation of the Murcia Regional Government; the Federation of the Spanish Popular Universities (FEUP), the Training and Employment Foundation (FOREM) and the Internet-based educational-information newspaper *Comunidad Escolar*, the basic function of which is to further awareness of the actions being carried out as part of the project and the results obtained.

FEUP is an organisation that brings together several popular universities with the objective of cultural development, by encouraging social involvement, education and training. Most popular universities depend on local authorities, although some are run as non-profit associations. They operate throughout Spain as community social-development projects. Housed at the local authorities' cultural centres, their objective is to encourage participation in local life via training provision that includes both official and non-official actions.

FOREM is a non profit-organisation promoted by the trade union Comisiones Obreras, with representation throughout Spain. Its core activity is occupational and ongoing vocational training. It also participates in European training and employment access projects.

Our intention with such a partnership has been to achieve a geographical balance with national and regional representation. We also wished organisations or authorities with decision-making and management capacity over both formal and non-formal adult education to be present in the partnership.

The European partners are: the Viborg County Council (Denmark) and the Further Education Section of the Irish Department of Education and Science. One of the basic motives that has driven the NETA project is that Spain, like other European countries, has implemented a process of decentralisation of its education responsibilities, transferring them to the regional authorities. With this process complete, the regions are now also responsible for adult education.

The fact that the education authorities, many other institutions, non- profit organisations and trade unions whose objectives include adult education and training offer widely varying provision leads, on occasion, to overlap between provision, which in turn leads not only to a certain "scatter effect" but also to duplication of provision. This situation could be avoided by inter-institutional partnership and co-operation which would optimise effort and the use of resources by adapting them to actual needs, i.e. education and training needs that have become evident from the existing demand for education and training. This is the goal that lies at the heart of the NETA project in Spain.

The project, therefore, addresses two questions about adult education and training that are of increasing relevance within the European Union: a) whether today's education and training takes into account the personal, social and employment-related needs of the adult population, b) whether the current provision answers the needs of the the new Europe that is taking shape.

The NETA project planned to make a contribution towards finding the answers to these questions by setting up an experimental partnership between representatives of existing formal and non-formal education and training provision at both a national and regional level. These include institutions from the different countries involved: specific adult education centres under the auspices of the education authorities and trade unions, and non-profit organisations and associations also working in this field.

The situation was first studied and analysed in the partner countries and regions, with the partners subsequently working together based on the results. Common points have been sought, with an assessment also being made of the specific characteristics and peculiarities of the countries and regions, since these differences reflect experiences that have previously been consolidated in specific places and could potentially be innovative elsewhere if adapted to the actual circumstances.

The project has focused on three priority target groups: (*i*) young people aged over 18 at risk of social exclusion, (*ii*) women with no qualifications, and (*iii*) the immigrant population.

Development of the **Neta Project** in **Spain**

Through the partnership set up for this purpose at a national level, education and training provision has been analysed in each of the participating regions in Spain.

The first phase of the project consisted of data being compiled by the national NETA partners on adult education in the respective regions, including institutions and organisations that are involved in adult education at a regional or local level and, in the case of the education authorities, work on its development in terms of legislation.

Subsequent analysis of these data has been oriented towards detecting the strong and weak points of the adult

education available in each region, which has enabled, on the one hand, the needs coming from learners to be identified and compared with the provision, and, on the other, the potential for the transfer of experiences that have been successful in specific cases to be evaluated.

The permanent exchange of information has been maintained on an *ad hoc* basis via a Web site (www.mec.es/adultos/neta.html) and at the national meetings held regularly.

We shall now present some data to indicate the starting point for the project, most of which refers to the three target groups identified above.

Within formal adult education in Spain,[6] most students correspond to *Basic Education for Adults (EBA;* 69%), a population group with a majority of women with little or no formal school education.

The immigrant population is concentrated in *Spanish for Immigrants* courses, accounting for 3% of the total.

Between these two groups we find young people who left the school system before completing their compulsory studies. Those in this group are either studying for the ESO qualification or to gain access to specific vocational training via the relevant entrance tests.

In overall terms, the involvement of women in the EBA

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6. Adult education in Spain as referred to in the NETA project does not include occupational and ongoing vocational training.

sector is 65.33%, compared with 34.67% for men. The trend that is apparent in the different types of education that make up EBA -initial teaching, school graduate and compulsory secondary education- is, however, quite diverse, as we shall see below. Nevertheless, it should be stated that the number of women participants has increased over the last decade. When the corresponding data are compared, we find that a total of 112,751 (55.21%) for the 1987-1988 academic year grew to 244,699 (over 65%) in 1998-1999. This evolution can also be seen among adult-education students in general, with a significant increase in the total number for both men and women over the last decade, according to the MECD's *Education Statistics in Spain*, 1998-1999.

As Graph 1 shows, most women (75.51%) are concentrated at the first educational level, i.e. initial EBA instruction. This percentage decreases sharply for the other two levels shown, with the percentage of men increasing. It is important to note that these levels corresponded to the former School Graduate qualification which certified that students had successfully completed the compulsory level of education, which has now been replaced by the ESO qualification. The importance of this qualification, and the increasing demand for it can be explained by the fact that it is a compulsory requirement for access to other post-compulsory levels of education, including specific vocational training.

The breakdown of men and women in EBA shown here is similar for the three regions participating in the project, according to the data that they have supplied.

Graph 1. Students enrolled in Basic Education for adults by gender and Level in the 1998-1999 academic year (1)

0	20	40	60	80

Initial Basic Education
75.51
24.48

Third Cycle/School Graduate (2)
49.5
50.5

Secondary Education for Adults (2)
54.01
45.99

▨ Women ■ Men
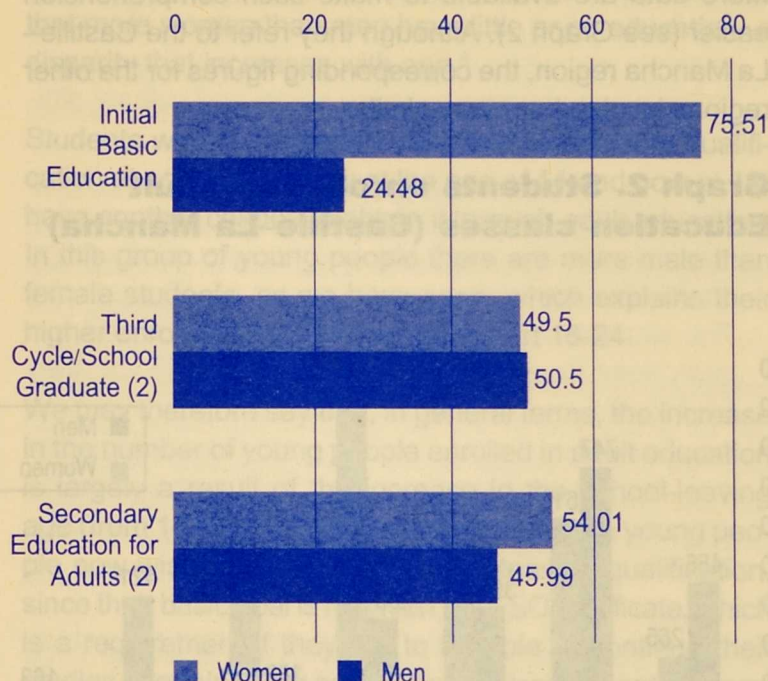
Source: Prepared by CIDE based on Spanish Education Statistics, 1998-1999.

(1) These data correspond to the 1998-1999 academic year because this is the most recent year for which the data available have been broken down by gender.

(2) These two types of education include "distance" students.

Several factors are responsible for determining the different numbers of men and women in EBA, some of which are better known than others -awareness of age-related and socio-economic factors is higher than that of gender-related ones. However, understanding the link between

them is necessary if we are to understand the situations that occur in real life.

More data are available to make such comprehension easier (see Graph 2). Although they refer to the Castille–La Mancha region, the corresponding figures for the other regions involved are very similar.

Graph 2. Students enrolled in Adult Education classes (Castille–La Mancha)
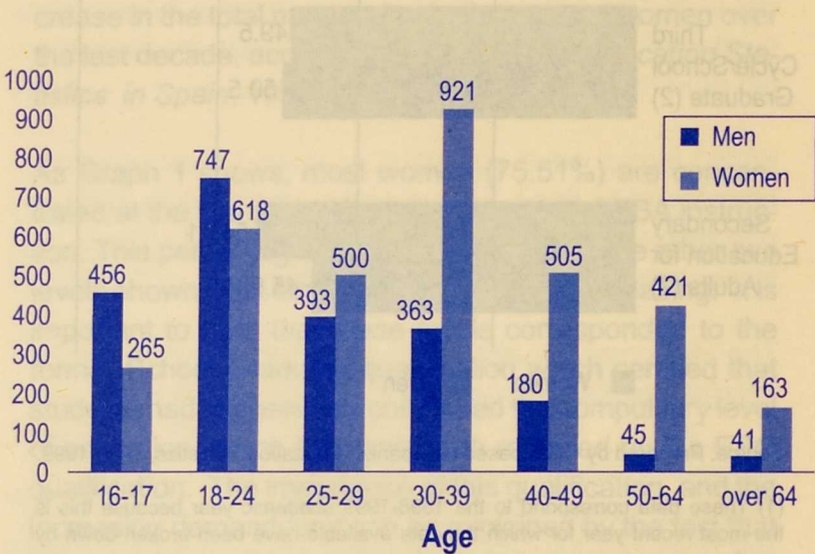
Source: Directorate General of Education and Vocational Training Centres, Department of Education and Culture, Castille–La Mancha Regional Government.

As Graph 2 shows, there are more young (aged 16-24) male students than female students, although the number of women increases with age. This is linked to two factors, which can also be quantified.

One of these factors is the question of school failure, which is higher among boys than girls (with 54.7% of female students completing ESO and 45.3% of male students).[7] The other is the level of studies reached. Here we find that more women than men have little or no education -a disparity that increases with age.[8]

Students who fail to obtain the basic compulsory qualification at school (formerly at the age of 14 and now at 16) have another chance to obtain it through adult education. In this group of young people there are more male than female students, as we have seen, which explains their higher enrolment rate in the age cohort 16-24.

We may therefore say that, in general terms, the increase in the number of young people enrolled in adult education is largely a result of the increase in the school-leaving age (from 14 to 16). This has meant that more young people now wish to obtain their school-leaving qualification, since their basic goal is to obtain the ESO certificate, which is a requirement if they are to be able to continue their studies. Certain other education and training options are, however, available, such as Social Guarantee Programmes (PGS; see below).

The higher number of women in older age groups shown in Graph 2 is a reflection of the fact that many women were unable to acquire an education and training at the

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7. Data supplied by CIDE for the 1997–1998 academic year.

8. For further details see *La mujer en cifras, 2001*, Instituto de la Mujer, Madrid, 2002.

usual age, either for structural reasons or because of their socio-economic situation, as a number of studies have demonstrated:

Adult-education classes are largely made up of women students who were unable to complete their formal education when younger because social and cultural difficulties hindered their studies.

Many of the women who attend these classes were forced to leave school and had no opportunity to go back until much later, when they were 45–65 years old. The situation is different for men, where we find two peak ages for enrolment: 18–19 and 25–30, i.e. they tend to resume their studies relatively shortly after having abandoned them. From this one may deduce that men find fewer obstacles in their path than women do when it comes to returning to the official education system whenever they wish.[9]

These data are to a certain extent supported by a study carried out by the Madrid Regional Government,[10] which shows that differences still exist between men and

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9. Montserrat Grañeras et al.: *Las mujeres en el sistema educativo*, CIDE (MECD) - Instituto de la Mujer (MTAS), Madrid, 2001.

10. The Madrid Regional Government has carried out a study to update the data on the population's educational levels and needs for basic training, focusing on those groups that have been defined as having priority: young people, women with few qualifications and immigrants. (*Análisis de la situación de la educación de personas adultas en la Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid*, Consejería de Educación, Dirección General de Promoción Educativa, Madrid 2000.)

women in terms of the levels of qualification of those aged 64 and over. The changing trend in the population according to age is also significant here: people with no qualifications whatsoever or with only primary education tend to be over 60, with considerably fewer in the 20–24 age group. The population with secondary education is therefore greater in the group aged 20–40.

This new means of accessing the education system is further strengthened by the fact that the courses available are adapted to the needs and interests of these population groups.[11]

Another significant division may be found in "distance" courses when the data are compared with those for "attendance" courses, since fewer women enrol for "distance" courses, although it must be said that the figures for both sexes in this category are low, as Graph 3 shows.

Most students (70%) enrolled for "attendance" courses are women (17,692), while men (7,451) account for only 30%. It is striking that this trend is dramatically reversed for "distance" courses, where 67% of students are men (665) and women (325) account for only 33%.

Such an unequal distribution is usually attributed to differences in the employment situation of the two groups. In

11. The study programmes fixed for Basic Education by the MECD stress that the specific curricula for adults should not be limited to the acquisition of knowledge and concepts, but rather should help them to develop all their skills. Specific programmes have been developed in this area by the educational institutions

Graph 3. Distribution by gender of students in Secondary Education for adults. 1998-1999 academic year (1)

Men 30%

Women 70%

N=25.513

Attendance

Women 33%

Men 67%

N=990

Distance
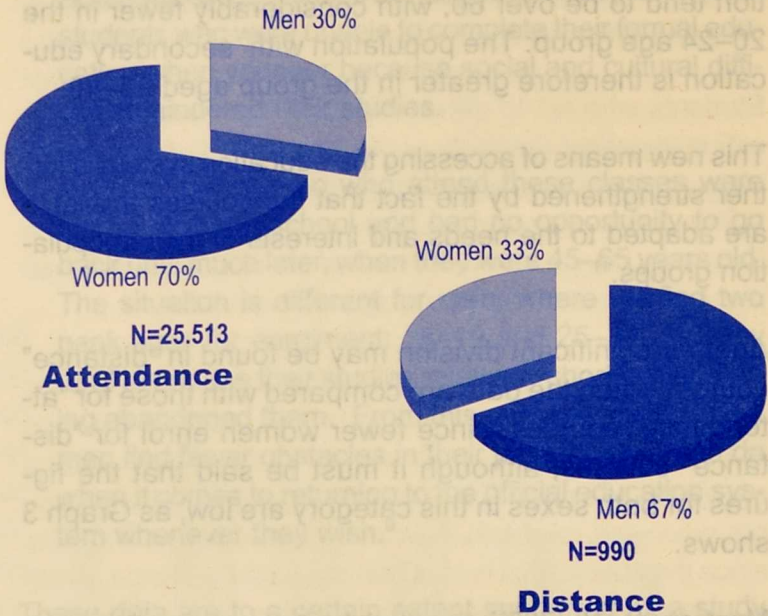
Source: Prepared by CIDE based on Spanish Education Statistics, 1998-1999

(1) Data for 1998-1999 are cited, since data broken down by gender for 2000-2001 are as yet unavailable.

more specific terms, this is assumed to imply that women's unemployment -which is considerably higher than men's- allows women more free time to attend adult-education classes, while men, more of whom have jobs, have less free time and so turn to "distance" courses.

However, this explanation proves to be unsatisfactory if we take into account wider research on differences in how

men and women use their time. These studies have shown that the time element has acted as a limiting factor on women's free access to education and paid jobs: traditionally, women have had to take care of the home and family and by entering the labour market they have had to take on a dual responsibility.[12]

Nowadays explanations are also sought by paying attention to other factors, as evidenced by the actual women who attend adult education classes. Factors that women rate as being positive for their attendance at these courses include the opportunity to meet and mix with people, being able to share experiences that express similarities and differences, and directly enjoying cultural values with a human rather than informatics interface.[13]

The growth in Spain's immigrant population is clearly reflected in the adult-education statistics, as we can see from the general figures and more specifically from the data supplied by the Comisiones Obreras trade union (for the education authorities as well as for FEUP and FOREM) involved in the NETA project.

Learning Spanish as a foreign language is one facet of adult education oriented towards addressing the needs of the immigrant population as a priority in public schools. Partnership agreements and subsidies are also in place

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12. See, among other studies, Cristina Borderías *et al.* (Comp): *Las mujeres y el trabajo*, FUHEM-Icaria, Barcelona, 1994.

13. For examples of women's interests see the ALBA project, Leonardo da Vinci Programme, MECD, MTAS, Madrid, 2001.

for non-profit organisations to develop educational and training programmes and activities for immigrants.

Data supplied by the Madrid Regional Government clearly demonstrate this situation and its evolution.

Graph 4. Evolution of the foreign resident population in the City of Madrid

184.182

141,525

87,839

54,211

32,120   36,913

1986

1991

1996

1999

May 1
2000

October 31
2002
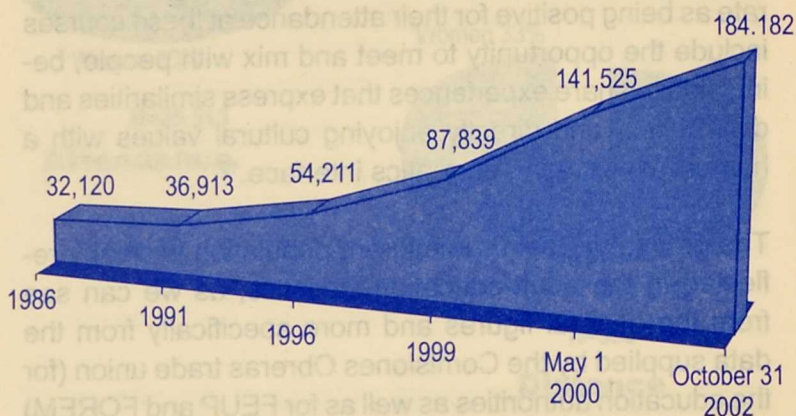
Source: Directorate General of Educational Development, Department of Education, Madrid Regional Government.

Graph 4 clearly shows the growth trend in the immigrant population in recent years in Madrid. Data for the year 2000 show a steady increase in this trend: in four and a half years the number of foreigners living in the city increased by 240%.

Insofar as the educational levels of the immigrant population are concerned, the study points to their need for lit-

eracy, basic vocational training and access to the labour market as key factors to be taken into account in the planning of education and training.

Other factors that the study recommends as needing to be taken into account in such planning include:

✓ The considerable mobility of the immigrant population;

✓ The family regrouping process that typifies this population;

✓ Different training needs, depending on the countries of origin (immigrants from non-Spanish-speaking countries, for example, urgently need to learn Spanish.);

✓ The fact that the foreign population is actually larger than the statistics show, not so much because of the number of unauthorised immigrants (i.e. "without papers") but as a result of dual nationality (foreign nationals who also hold Spanish citizenship -a common circumstance with Latin American immigrants- are only recorded in census data as being Spanish citizens).

Geographical origin also determines certain other characteristics, which are outlined below, grouped into four major study groups:

✓ immigrants of Latin American origin with a low educational level, poorly motivated to acquire an education and training;

✓ immigrants of African origin (from North Africa and sub-

Saharan Africa) with a low educational level and little or no knowledge of Spanish, who have considerable mobility within Spain;

✓ immigrants from Central- and Eastern-European countries with a relatively high educational level but little or no knowledge of Spanish; and

✓ immigrants of Asian origin (mostly Chinese) with a basic level of education, whose major need is to learn Spanish.

To this we must add that the differing needs of men and women immigrants also depend on their cultures of origin, and this is reflected in terms of education and training.

Generally speaking, more male than female immigrants participate in education and training programmes. Of those studying "Spanish as a foreign language", 43.3% are women while 56.63% are men,[14] although the presence of women is growing both in terms of the literacy rate and in the demand for other educational and training levels (mainly initial vocational training).

If we take as our point of reference in this case data from the Murcia region, we see that, on the one hand, the most numerous immigrant group comes from Africa, while, on the other, involvement in education and training is high in

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14. Montserrat Grañeras *et al.*: *Las mujeres en el sistema educativo, op.cit.*, p.78

the 18–49 age group, although this population is largely male. The latter trend is reversed for those of Latin American origin, where most of the immigrants in the 18–24 age group are female. The reasons for these differences should perhaps be sought in factors related to traditional cultures.

We thus find that the data supplied by the three regions involved in the NETA project on attendance at adult education classes show a qualitative and quantitative change in the demand from the immigrant population. They no longer only need to learn Spanish; they also need to raise their educational levels and they need professional training.

These circumstances have led to education and training being oriented towards employability and social integration. With this in view, individualised schedules are devised for learners to encourage a type of integration that includes geographical and socio-cultural variation in terms of the area of origin and the destination area. This working approach is the one taken by certain non-government organisations who work with these population groups, subsidised by the public authorities, as well as the education and training authorities themselves. In summary, we may say that the complexity of these situations means that they do not lend themselves to single solutions. Answers must rather be sought jointly with the women and men in each population group, by paying attention to their specific situations. In this regard partnerships made up of different groups of male and female immigrants are proving to be of considerable assistance, due to the possibilities they offer for co-operation when it comes to planning

education and training for immigrant men and women - education and training that attempts to take into account the clash between individual and collective socio-cultural interests. Thus, there is a tendency for the development of education and training activity to be linked to other intercultural activities involving men and women of Spanish and foreign nationalities, with a view to increasing the awareness and appreciation of different cultures through personal contact among the learners.

Specific Practices

We now summarise three particularly positive experiments that are the result of working practices with the three target groups.

Serving the immigrant population

An example of educational action with the immigrant population is the Amistad[15] Immigrant Aid Association, working at the Illescas (Toledo) Adult Education Centre.[16]

The Amistad Association was set up in Recas, a town 23 kilometres from Toledo, as a reception facility for the large immigrant population that has settled there in response to

15. Translator's note: "Friendship".

16 . A school that is dependent on the Directorate General for Schools and Vocational Training of the Department of Education and Culture of the Castille– La Mancha Regional Government (an area where a significant part of the population lives in rural areas).

the growth in the local agricultural and food industries. The Association currently has almost 300 members of many different nationalities (from Mali, Morocco, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Colombia and Ecuador) and carries out educational and cultural activities with humanitarian as well as social integration and educational aims.

In the 2001-2002 academic year a total of 45 people had enrolled, most of whom were men, with an average age of 27. From the beginning it was clear that the mobility and lack of stability of the group was a factor that would have to be borne in mind when designing and planning the education and training to be provided. As the year progressed some people left while others arrived, depending on the work situation (the demand for labour for harvesting work and the food industry) and personal circumstances at any given time. The group eventually stabilised with 16 people staying until the end.

The diverse origins of the students posed the challenge of overcoming a number of problems, some of which were evident from the beginning while others became apparent as the project went on. According to their assessment, this diversity has "not been an obstacle, but rather quite the opposite: it has been a factor for cultural enrichment". Indeed, it has given rise to a group that is at once compact and diverse, with such characteristics as low self-esteem and insecurity-particularly among those whose first language is not Spanish- and precarious economic conditions in common. This has led to them having common interests, in some cases focused on the need to learn the language and always seeking social support and acceptance.

The basic educational objectives determined by this initial situation was to achieve a means of oral and written expression in Spanish for the non-Spanish speakers and, in all cases, to promote social access and improve spoken language, ICT skills and development in the environment in which they live.

These academic activities have been strengthened by others to cover more general factors with a view to enhancing access: multicultural co-existence sessions and cultural and study visits to create awareness and stimulate the use of local resources such as the public library. In this way it was hoped to achieve not only the objectives that directly relate to the immigrant population, but also those that relate to the majority population viz., the need to foster real acceptance and integration of immigrants in the social and cultural life of the town by encouraging the majority population to relate directly with a new population with highly diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and current situations.

The curricular content was carefully selected following this approach, by seeking common interests in basic topics, such as identity, personal and social relations, housing, transport, food, shopping and health.

According to the assessment of the Castille–La Mancha Regional Government, this intervention model with this specific group has acted as an incentive for actions with other groups in the region. Both the process and the results, according to their conclusions, "should point the way and act as a working model for the planning of new actions targeted at the priority groups identified by the NETA project (young people with a failed school education at

risk of exclusion, women with no basic or professional qualifications who wish to access the labour market, and immigrant groups, who, in addition to learning Spanish, require initial vocational training to enable them to find work), to whose needs a constantly improving response must be found by the relevant authorities and education institutions working in partnership."

Educational and training guidance for disadvantaged groups is the focus of MIRALE ("Integrated Reinsertion and Assistance for Excluded People Module"), promoted by FOREM. This module is targeted at those working with people who for different reasons are socially excluded or are at risk of becoming socially excluded. The module focuses on providing information and guidance services according to the specific needs of these target groups.

The goal is to combat social exclusion by improving integrated vocational guidance and training programmes and services and by promoting equal access to training and certain social services for members of socially excluded groups. The "MIRALE" training module involves a specific methodology that combines a self-learning area with a common Internet-based area. This space facilitates the contents of the training module being compared with the real-life circumstances of the target workers so as to enable them to receive the specific training that will equip them to respond to the needs of people at risk of social exclusion from an integrated perspective.[17]

17. See www.forem.ccoo.es/mirale for further details.

Social Guarantee Programmes for young people

Specific Social Guarantee Programmes (PGS) are part of the provision made available by the education authorities for students over 16 (the minimum school-leaving age) who have not achieved the objectives of Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO).

These programmes, which are designed and promoted by the MECD, are currently in place in all of the regions of Spain. They constitute a means of attending to diversity and compensating for inequalities with a view to providing basic and vocational training that will enable beneficiaries to become active members of society or continue their studies, particularly in intermediate-level specific vocational training which they can access by passing an entrance test.

Social Guarantee Programmes lie in an intermediate position between the educational system and the world of employment. Since they include training aspects taken from both ESO and vocational training, they require a number of different authorities -education, employment and social services- to work together at a regional and local level, particularly local authorities. These programmes are therefore inter-institutional in character and cannot be considered to be solely educational. Nor do they lead towards final qualifications, since no certificates are awarded and the programmes fall outside all the levels, stages, cycles or degrees into which the education system is divided.

The objectives of Social Guarantee Programmes are basically to develop and consolidate the personal maturity of male and female young people, extending their training and preparing them for the world of work. The programmes address this task from a number of different approaches: specific vocational training, careers guidance and training, basic education, supplementary activities and tutoring.

There is currently agreement in all the regions in Spain to define as the beneficiaries of Social Guarantee Programmes young people over 16 (or who will turn 16 in the calendar year when they access the programme) who have not reached the objectives of ESO and have no vocational training qualifications.

The Social Guarantee Programmes include the following modes:

✓ Vocational initiation: organised in schools.

✓ Training/Employment: mainly organised in partnership with local authorities and business associations.

✓ Professional workshops: organised at adult-education centres, specific units depending on each region and in partnership with non-profit organisations.

Social Guarantee Programmes are also available for teenagers with special educational needs, organised at secondary schools, public and private approved special education centres and at private schools where approved ESO courses are run.

Insofar as the participation in Social Guarantee Pro-grammes is concerned, there are more male than female students: 20,219 males (70%) and 8,800 females (30%), according to CIDE data for the 1998-1999 academic year. "This gender distribution is consistent with the figures for Compulsory Secondary Education, a qualification that is passed by more female students than male students and, according to the data, after which more young women opt for secondary and further education. These reasons, among others, explain why there are many more young men than young women enrolled in Social Guarantee Pro-grammes."

The gender distribution by major subject follows the tradi-tional patterns for vocational training. Female students prefer "Personal Image",[18] "Socio-cultural and Community Services" and "Business and Marketing", while the male students tend more towards "Mechanical Manufacture, Maintenance and Production Services" and "Electricity and Electronics", perhaps not only in line with the job pros-pects that the labour market traditionally assigns to each sex but also in response to personal preferences.

Curiously, however, the few women who do enrol for tra-ditional male subjects have a much higher pass rate than their male colleagues. In "Self-propelled Vehicle Mainte-nance", for example, only 4.68% of the students are women but the final pass rate is 97.24%, compared with only 2.76% for the 95.32% of the students who are male,

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18. Translator's note: A subject area that includes hairdressing, beauty therapy and theatrical make-up.

while 95.23% of the female students (only 5.38% of the total) pass the "Electricity and Electronics" courses, compared with a pass rate of 4.77% for the male students (94.62% of the total).

Conversely, male students do better than their female counterparts in areas traditionally considered as being subjects "for girls". Only 8.83% of "Personal Image" students are male, but their pass rate is 94.86%; while of the 91,17% of students who are women, only 5.14% complete the course successfully. A similar phenomenon occurs in "Socio-cultural and Community Services" where the 14.43% of the students who are male have a pass rate of 85.22%, whereas the figures for the female students are almost exactly the reverse: 85.57% of those enrolled and a pass rate of only 14.78%.[19]

Until more exhaustive studies are available, these figures suggest that female and male stereotypes are breaking down—a trend that is also becoming evident in careers guidance.

Education provision for women with no academic qualifications

With its *Ongoing Education for Adult Women* programme the MECD intends to develop a specific basic education curriculum for women, beginning with literacy and continuing until the recently implemented ESO qualification is obtained.

19. Montserrat Grañeras *et al.*: *Las mujeres en el sistema educativo, op.cit.*, pp.72-74.

"However, the literacy objective is not limited to the acqui-
sition of a certain amount of formal knowledge or facilitat-
ing access to a job, it is also intended to help women to
better understand the society in which they live, so that
they gain control of their own futures. It is therefore es-
sential for them to have the opportunity to overcome the
sexist prejudices that still remain in society, which women
have in turn interiorised throughout their lives."[20]

Cuadernos de Educación de Adultas: De otra manera[21,22]
are the result of inter-ministerial work between the MECD
and the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs (MTAS),
although the responsibility for the research carried out lies
with the MTAS-dependent Women's Institute. The idea
behind these workbooks is to provide appropriate teach-
ing materials which, in answer to women's needs and ex-
periences, will foster significant learning.

The workbooks have been devised based on the "convic-
tion that there are no single answers; it is possible to get
increasingly closer to finding solutions to the specific prob-
lems of this group with an effort of analysis and imagina-
tion [...]. To do this it is necessary to start from their imme-
diate situations, their everyday lives, their experience, the
knowledge and skills that they contribute to society, their
ideas and their values; it also calls for an active methodol-

20. *Plan de Educación Permanente de Adultas*, MEC-MAS, Madrid, 1995.

21. *Cuadernos de Educación de Adultas. De otra manera.* Instituto de la Mujer
(MTAS) & MECD, Madrid, 1992-1996.

22. Translator's note: *"Adult Education Workbooks: Another Way".*

ogy in which they participate as the key actors in this process".[23]

The basic levels of these workbooks are structured into teaching units that cover different aspects of women's lives. They also include guides for teachers. At the levels leading towards the ESO qualification, the structure follows the MECD's proposal for contents to be grouped into topic areas in an integrated way. Sequencing recommendations are therefore included for the topic areas of Communications, Society, Mathematics and Nature, keeping in mind the relevant pedagogical, sociological, psychological and employment-related factors.

Since this is an open education and training model that is driven by suggestions and proposals for further adaptation to specific situations, it is used with highly diverse groups of women. It is used widely, for example, in Latin America, and currently in Spain with women immigrants, whose demand for education and training is enlarging the existing target group of women from the majority population.

Certain aspects related to interculturalism in education and training programmes for women belonging to ethnic minorities and women immigrants are contributions that have been made to the NETA project by FEUP, who have worked on social and cultural development processes from a gender perspective. The FEUP work programme has focused on analysing the differential characteristics in the learning

23. *Cuadernos de Educación de Adultas. De otra manera.* Instituto de la Mujer (MTAS) & MECD, Madrid, **1**, p. 4.

processes and styles of different women's groups, taking into account their needs and potential. The basis for this work has been the experience and real-life situations of the women taking part, who account for 70% of those participating in the popular universities. These women immigrants mostly come from Central America, Morocco, Guinea and other sub-Saharan countries, Asia and Eastern Europe.

The FEUP approach seeks to enable learners to address:

✓ processes of identity and social awareness (researching the characteristics and specific situations of the target group, developing individual and social values, revealing sexist prejudices, and developing awareness-building actions)

✓ training (acquiring basic educational and training techniques, acknowledging the skills that women have acquired throughout their life experiences and professionalising them for the labour market)

✓ social projection (discovering channels for involvement in their social environment, such as association movements and other ways of seeking solutions for their own problems).

The ultimate goal is to work within the framework of Spain's increasing multiculturality by valuing the cultural dynamism associated with this phenomenon, generating new spaces for exchange between people from different cultures and, through avoiding the unnecessary reproduction of traditionally accepted prejudices, to foster greater social integration in Spain.

Adult education, considered from these programmes' perspective of social integration and equal opportunities, is an ideal instrument for including different realities and thus preventing conflicts and encouraging involvement in the search for solutions for present and potential problems. Common objectives are proposed, involving the preparation of specific actions with a view to achieving greater socio-cultural integration. The inclusion of intercultural learning and equal opportunities for women and men also involves building awareness among the majority population by generating spaces for cultural exchange to facilitate mutual contact and awareness.

In practical terms, the transversality of these aspects has already been built into Spanish-language courses and the habits and customs of the different regions where the immigrants have settled—thereby adding origin to the gender perspective. In this way, the network of popular universities aims to address one of the greatest challenges faced by the multicultural Spain of today, positioning adult education as a cornerstone in social integration by helping the intercultural learning and further progress towards equal opportunities.

Conclusions

As we have seen, a key aim of the NETA project has been to contribute towards the search for answers to the educational and training needs of three population groups: (*i*) over-16s who leave the education system with no qualifications, particularly young people at risk of social exclu-

sion; (*ii*) women with insufficient qualifications to gain paid employment; and (*iii*) immigrants requiring initial education and vocational training in order to access the labour market.

This quest is in line with the European proposal for lifelong learning as the key to personal, social and economic development and the demands for the reform of adult education necessary to build a Europe of knowledge—with "knowledge" used here in the widest sense to cover all spheres of learning over the entire length and breadth of people's lives, whether it is formal, non-formal or informal.

The objective of the NETA project, in the light of the need previously identified and with the accumulated experience of specific practices as its starting point, has been to study routes to connect formal, non-formal and informal learning directly related to employment experience and put them into practice. The approach taken was, therefore, to look into new ways for partnership and co-operation in the light of the new situation, both at a national level, where the process of decentralisation of the country's education and training system is now complete, and at a European level, where the aim is to achieve a synergetic relationship between different experiences in education and training.

We have approached our search for answers through partnership at both a national and an international level, with the benefit of contributions from formal and non-formal sectors and with the support of European initiatives, in this case the Socrates–Grundtvig programme.

Setting up the partnership called for coordination and co-operation between the various authorities involved (the

MECD, the Education Departments of the Castille–La Mancha, Madrid and Murcia Regional Governments) and non-government organisations (FEUP and FOREM). On the one hand, this has allowed exchange strategies to be developed and at the same way, emphasising the importance of the process followed in the development of the NETA project and not merely that of the final goals. On the other hand it has enabled knowledge to be obtained on the richness of the experiences brought to the project by all the agencies and their potential interest for the institutions and organisations from the partner countries to be assessed. To this we must also add the contributions made from the legislative measures adopted in relation to the target groups.

Thus, evaluating the NETA project by thinking not only in terms of end products but rather about the development process in its entirety has, on the whole, been an enriching experience, although it has not always been easy.

Setting up the partnership in the beginning posed few problems and reaching agreements on initial principles proved to be relatively straightforward. The difficulties appeared during the course of the development of the project, and overcoming them called for a joint effort to maintain the partnership that had been set up formally. Sustaining the partnership has called for continuous negotiation and it has emphasised the importance of institutional relationships, which always boil down to personal ones, since specific people act on behalf of the institutions involved, bringing with them their diverse origins and cultural and institutional backgrounds.

The greatest difficulties faced by the NETA project have mostly occurred at a transnational level. The withdrawal of two of the partner countries (Portugal and Romania) once the project was already underway and the joining of a new partner (Poland) who subsequently also withdrew not only delayed the development of the project itself, but at times threatened to bring it to a premature end. However, the remaining partners' insistence on maintaining the project come what may and their patience when it came to accommodating the needs and demands of the new partner has allowed the project to prosper.

Great interest in participating in NETA was originally shown by both Portugal and Romania. Both Ministries of Education were involved but for various reasons-not least the different paces at which different authorities work (particularly in the case of Romania)- they were unable to continue.

The inclusion of Poland was also a long process that dragged out considerably, owing largely to the period of negotiation coinciding with a general election, leading to a change of administration that further delayed the necessary agreements.

Nevertheless, despite all the efforts made, Poland has had to withdraw from the project. Their arrival when the project was already at an advanced stage, probably coupled with their lack of experience in this type of project, further exacerbated by differences in economic rhythms and the pace at which government work were the main reasons behind their last-minute withdrawal from NETA.

These are some examples of the setbacks that have arisen during the course of this project—setbacks which, although they could not really have been expected to occur, should to a certain extent have been foreseen as being at least possible contingencies, since such surprises and their consequences could be key factors in bringing partnerships and projects of this type to a successful conclusion.

Within NETA we have learned to wait, putting aside the goals that we originally set, because of the importance of the partnership and the path to be followed in order for the goals to be achieved. Nevertheless, this wait was accompanied by several moments of insecurity and uncertainty and a great many negotiations (we had to renegotiate everything from the budgetary adjustments to the final deadlines with the European Commission).

Some tension among the transnational partners arose as a result of the uncertainties caused by such long periods of waiting—blank spaces that do nothing but create unease until they are eventually filled in.

This is why constant negotiation has been so important, both among the countries that have remained in the project (Spain, Denmark and Ireland) and with the countries that were leaving or arriving. Those of us who have stayed on board have had to get used to new situations as they arose, first with the departure of Portugal and Romania, then with the new needs and proposals involved in Poland's joining and subsequent withdrawal, when we had already completed part of the joint work, which obviously had to be done again from scratch. The whole process has called for changes to be made to the objectives and strategies

as an obvious consequence of the comings and goings and the reforming of the working group that was necessary. At one point, when it finally seemed that the transnational partnership was a going concern and the work was at last underway, Poland's proposal to withdraw was tabled at the steering meeting held in that country. It was unfortunately impossible to overcome the budgetary difficulties posed by Poland, possibly because of the lack of time, with the project already in its final stages.

At a national level the long periods of waiting also had their negative effects, but to a lesser extent than we experienced transnationally, almost certainly because the agreements reached at this level were easier to maintain, since the agents shared a common background. However, the problems did cause the work rate to show down, which had certain negative effects on co-ordination.

The project's road has -as we have outlined here- been paved with difficulties, calling for new byroads to be designed and forcing the fairly straight route that was originally mapped to be reluctantly abandoned. However, all the setbacks have enabled us to include new learnings as a result of the new situations arose that had to be resolved learnings that would not have arisen if we had been in a hurry to obtain immediate results. If we had not taken into account the whole development process of NETA, with all the complexity that is involved in setting up and maintaining a partnership between different countries, regions, institutions and NGOs, and if we had stubbornly stuck to the idea of meeting the deadlines originally fixed to achieve the goals set, it is likely that the project would simply have died.

In short, we appear to have been able to deal with the kind of unexpected events that may beset any dynamic process once it is functioning, where rigidly adhering to initial approaches would probably have resulted in the non-completion and ultimate failure of the NETA project.

Special mention deserves to be made here of the Socrates–Grundtvig technical team's excellent response to the proposals that we put forward for the successive modifications to be made to the project.

We should also add that at a national level a general agreement was reached on the goals of the project: on the one hand the need for co-ordination with a view to ensuring the effectiveness of adult education in the regions, and, on the other, strategies involving knowledge and the exchange of specific practices.

The number and variety of public and private institutions and organisations involved in education and training make co-ordination extremely complex, while highlighting the importance of avoiding the "scatter effect" to which such variety may lead. There was, therefore, a need to work together closely to optimise the use of human and financial resources and so increase the effectiveness of the efforts made to achieve the goals set.

This co-ordination is carried out somewhat differently in the three regions participating in the NETA project, although in the key aspects they share a common approach. Specifically, an increasing amount of legislative development is occurring at a formal institutional level, with the goal of arriving at a new national Adult Education and Train-

ing Act. Within this specific framework, the MECD has recently been the driving force behind a new Qualifications and Vocational Training Act[24] and Education Quality Act,[25] which also covers adult education.

At a regional level, new adult-education legislation is currently being debated in the Castille–La Mancha Regional Parliament. The Madrid Regional Government's proposal for a new regional adult-education plan considers institutional coordination as a key factor in both the formal and non-formal sectors, covering education and training systems, employment plans, social institutions and volunteer organisations. These are all inter-related spheres, the coordination of which calls for attention to be paid to the education and training needs of the NETA target groups. The idea is, therefore, to implement integrated programmes to encourage approaches that will improve the degree of partnership between official departments and the Madrid region's immigration, equal-opportunities, youth and anti-social-exclusion plans, some of which are already functioning while others are at the project-development stage. Co-operation with local authorities is also included.

Insofar as practices are concerned, we have already outlined some specific examples above, although the full situation is obviously considerably more complex, not only in formal education and training spaces but also in non-formal ones.

24. Act No. 5/2002 (19 June; published in *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, **147**, 20 June 2002).

25. See Section III: "Ongoing Learning: Education for Adults." (*Boletín Oficial del Estado*, **307**, 24 December 2002.)

Many practices have been developed by FOREM and FEUP, and their presence in the NETA project has enabled information and experience to be exchanged that is also of considerable interest for institutional resources.

Awareness of the project has benefited considerably from the coverage provided by the Internet-based newspaper *Comunidad Escolar*, whose efforts to spread news of the project have been continuous from the launch of NETA until its completion.

Other decisive factors in the building of awareness have included the structures of the MECD and the Education Departments of the three regional governments that have been partners in the project. For example, the Education Fair promoted by the MECD, with the involvement of the regional governments, made a significant contribution to spreading the word about NETA, since public and private education and training institutions from all over Spain take part in this event and it is a venue for information and exchange at which NETA has found a space.

NETA has also been present at various meetings, seminars and conferences held by the three regional governments and the organisations FEUP and FOREM, and a presence on the Web has been constantly maintained.

Thanks to all these resources the project has been able to reach its direct beneficiaries -the local, regional and national institutions responsible for the design and management of formal and non-formal adult education and training-and, in the last instance, its ultimate beneficiaries: the people in the project's target groups.

The **NETA Project** in Denmark

Uwe Lorenzen

Adult **education** and training in **Denmark - context***

The educational attainment of the labour force has increased dramatically in Denmark in recent decades. The development of adult education and training should be seen on the background that the population of 25 to 64 years old represents 3 million individuals or 55 % of the total population. For 33 % of the workforce, primary education is the highest educational level attained. In Denmark it has always been seen as a public task to finance continuing and advanced education and training, as well as liberal adult education.

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*. This chapter is based on information published by the Danish Ministry of Education.

Publicly financed adult learning can be roughly divided into the three main categories:

✓ Adult liberal education

✓ General adult education

✓ Vocationally oriented adult education and training from VET level to the highest academic level.

The **provision** of **Adult learning**

Denmark has a long-standing tradition of lifelong learning for adults, ranging from liberal adult education activities to qualifying general as well as vocationally oriented adult education -both basic education, further education and continuing training. In the area of Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) as well as Vocational Education and Training (VET) there is a long-standing tradition of involving the social partners. They have been attributed significant influence in a number of areas defined by law.

In vocational education and training (VET) including adult programmes, the decision-making model rests on three basic principles:

✓ A tripartite cooperation between government, employers and employees.

✓ A strong organisation of the social partners when it comes to education and training matters.

✓ Collective agreements on the labour market.

The social partners decide on the aims, content, duration and final status of the individual programmes, which then is subject to recognition in the Ministry of Education Within the framework of this distribution of tasks and authority, which is laid down by law, the development and innovation of programmes take place in a tripartite consensus.

The co-operation with the social partners shall ensure that the education and training effort appears as a unity to individual, colleges and enterprises as well as administrative authorities and to ensure coherence between education and employment possibilities, accommodating both education and training policy, qualification requirements of the labour market and individual skills and needs, ensuring quality and use of the programmes. Coordination and development take place in a number of overall tripartite committees as well as in a great number of trade-oriented, self-governing vocational committees with representatives of the social partners.

Likewise, the social partners also play a central role in the CVT system when it comes to management, priority setting, development, organisation and quality assurance of the programmes. Through the central council and CVT committees and on decentralised level in local school boards and education committees, the basis is provided for accommodating the need for qualifications and competencies of the labour market, the enterprises and the individuals.

Too, in the area of liberal adult education, there is also a long tradition of involving the organisations (NGOs) in active dialogue and interaction.

Liberal Adult Education

Liberal Adult Education covers the three different systems: folk high schools, evening schools and day folk high schools.

Folk high schools
Liberal adult education started as a folk high school movement in the mid 19th century based on the ideas developed by N.F.S. Grundtvig's ideas of 'popular enlightenment'. The folk high schools are based on oral tradition, Danish mother tongue and participation in day-to-day practical activities in addition to education and training. The purpose of Folk High Schools is to provide general youth and adult education on the basis of the Danish tradition of 'folkeoplysning' (literally, 'popular enlightenment'), the focal point of which is the interpretation and meaning of life. Teaching must be of a general educational nature so that individual subjects or subject groups never dominate general aspects, and courses must not lead to examinations. Folk high schools are independent schools (self-governing institutions). Folk high schools have been financially supported by the State since 1851.

Evening schools
Evening schools started already in the post 1900 years, meeting the needs of the urban population, who were excluded from attending the folk high schools. The fundamental principles of 'Folkeoplysning' are: free choice of topics, universal access, free initiative and free choice of teachers.

The municipality is free to set the overall financial allocation. However, it must include support for adult education,

activities for children and young people and facilities for sports, youth associations and clubs. After a 2002 amendment to this Act, allocation from the municipality must not exceed one third of the evening schools' total expenditure for teachers' and management pay (a 50 pct reduction). The municipality may now differentiate their allocation according to subjects; it may decide on special allocations to reduce user payment for special groups.

Day folk high schools

As repercussions of the economic crisis necessitating assistance to society's marginalised persons, day folk high schools were introduced in the 1970s, increasing dramatically in number in the 1980s and 1990s. The target group was primarily people with low levels of education – typically women – having a weak connection with the labour market. The day folk high schools were established on the basis of different local initiatives with varying contents. In recent years, qualifying courses have become part of the aim of the day folk high schools, aiming to strengthen the participants' personal development and improving their possibilities in the education system and on the labour market.

General Adult Education

General adult education at lower secondary level

The general adult education at lower secondary level emerged in the late 1950s in order to meet a growing demand for adult education and training. From the end of the 1960s, independent single subject courses for adults were introduced, preparing for examination at the basic school level. In 1978 they were referred to the regional

authorities, where they are now offered at Adult Education Centres (VUC).

Legislation passed in 1989 (amended in 2000) instituted a new programme, which differs from the previous programme by being parallel to, but not identical with, the initial basic education system: syllabus and examinations are adapted to the experiences and interests of adults, without any change in the qualification level: examinations give the same right of access to upper secondary education as examinations at basic school level for youngsters. All adults of 18 years and more have a right of access to General Adult Education, with a corresponding obligation for the regional authorities to ensure provision of such education for the adult population in accordance with the law.

General adult education at upper secondary level
Single subject courses leading to Higher Preparatory Examination are also offered at the regional Adult Education Centres (VUC), as well as Upper Secondary Schools. These courses are identical to the courses in initial upper secondary education for young people. All qualified young and older adults have a right of access to general adult education at upper secondary level, with a corresponding obligation for the regional authorities to ensure provision of such education in accordance with the law.

Danish as second language to foreigners
Danish as second language to foreigners emerged around 1970 as teaching of so-called gust workers, foreign workers and the first refugees, under the then act on leisure time education (evening schools). The act on teaching of

immigrants from 1986 was the first legal indication that teaching of Danish to foreigners was now considered a permanent task incumbent on the community. As a responsibility of the regional authorities, the language schools developed into real adult education institutions characterised by their affiliation to the Adult Education Associations and the Adult Liberal Education.

As part of the government's increased effort to integrate children, young people and adults, *i.e.* transferring responsibility for the entire integration effort to the local authorities, a new Act on the teaching of Danish as a second language to foreigners was passed, taking effect from 1 January 1999. Around 50 language centres were established, being the responsibility of the municipalities. Two thirds of the language centres today are private, attached to the adult education associations. One third of the new language centres are municipal.

Special teaching for the handicapped
Since 1980, the act on special education for adults with handicaps (physical or mental) has been the legal foundation of compensating special teaching for adults who, after the end of their compulsory schooling, have a need for relieving or limiting the effects of the handicap. The aim is to enhance the handicapped person's possibility of taking an active part in society -including participating actively in a profession, in education, and in society. Tuition is free and administrated by the regional authorities, which offer teaching through their own institutions, government or municipal institutions, adult education associations or private initiators.

Preparatory Adult Education
Adult Danes' literacy and numeracy skills are at a fairly
high level compared with other countries. However, the
generally good score, when broken down, reveals the fact
that rather many Danes have literacy and numeracy skills
that are inadequate according to the standards set in the
OECD survey, which was published in the spring of 2000.
About one million adult Danes in the labour market or with
labour market affiliation have reading skills at a level, that
is considered insufficient compared with the literacy skills
required in a knowledge-based society. 300,000 of those
have so severe reading problems that they can hardly read
and understand e.g. a newspaper article or follow a recipe
in the kitchen.

This is why the new offer of Preparatory Adult Education
is an important part of the Adult Education Reform. The
aim is to offer to all adults of at least 18 years of age a
possibility to improve and supplement their literacy and
numeracy skills so that they their literacy and numeracy
skills so that they will be better equipped to get along on
the labour market and as citizens in a democratic society.
This will also greatly enhance their opportunities for un-
dergoing further education or training within the frame-
work of the adult education system.

Provision of this programme is the responsibility of the
regional authorities. -The teaching of this programme is
organised so that it will be in interplay with the daily life of
the participants. This means that many of the activities
will take place at the daily workplace rather than in educa-
tional establishments.

Vocationally oriented adult education and training (all levels)

Continuing Vocational Training

The labour market training programmes (Continuing Vocational Training-CVT) have been developed in three phases from the end of the 1950s -the first phase comprising systematic vocational training of employees recruited from agriculture, especially men, and many women who entered the labour market for the first time; the second phase responding to mass unemployment in the mid 1970s and the 1980s; and the third phase during the 1990s, responding to the enterprises' new needs for the provision of education and training to support the growth of the enterprises as well as to improve the working lives of employees.

CVT plays a central role in the national policy for lifelong learning when it comes to maintaining, improving and developing the qualifications of the workforce in both the short and long term. The overall aims of the CVT programmes are seen in a labour market political perspective to contribute to creating a flexible labour market and to giving the individual opportunities to acquire qualifications and competencies to match labour market requirements and demand.

Developing from an industrial society to a knowledge society means demands for new skills in the labour market, and consequently a shift in focus for CVT. CVT is designed first of all for adults in employment, but unemployed adults may also be referred to CVT. CVT

courses are, first of all, continuing training possibilities for unskilled workers, but there are also relevant courses for skilled workers.

In November 2001, responsibility for CVT was transferred from the Ministry of Labour to the Ministry of Education, and efforts are now being made to secure an even more integrated provision of CVT and VET.

All in all, during the 1990s we have seen a rapid development of provisions of vocationally oriented education and training for adults at all levels.

During the last 10-20 years Denmark has experienced a dramatic growth in supplementary training, in-house training, and private training supply developed e.g. by consulting firms. The pedagogical methods tend to vary considerably, from narrow instrumentalist training procedures, to more open and experimenting training forms based on dialogue.

In recent years, labour market and training policies have enjoyed close relations. A considerable amount of financial support to development projects has been distributed to integrate public continuing vocational training supply with in-house training.

The Adult Education Reform

The Adult Education Reform which took effect from 1 January 2001 aims at turning all adult learning provisions, which

had developed more or less independently, into a single, coherent and transparent adult education and training system.

Important objectives of the reform are:

✓ To offer good and relevant adult education and continuing and further education and training programmes to all adults at all levels, from the low skilled to university graduates.

✓ To ensure that provision of further and continuing education and training constitutes a transparent and coherent system of competences, with well-known and comparable competence levels: Vocationally oriented adult education and general adult education consistently 'mirror' the levels of the initial education system.

✓ To ensure good possibilities for 'bridging' education programmes and educational levels, thus avoiding blind alleys.

✓ To offer new possibilities of more systematic recognition of CVT courses into adult VET programmes including the new Basic Adult Education framework, securing recognition of formal competences for low skilled adults.

✓ To add new and more flexible possibilities of recognising non-formal (and informal) learning, especially workplace learning, both as adult VET programmes including the new Basic Adult Education framework and in the organisation of further education at advanced (higher) levels.

✓ To offer new provision of such Basic Skills as literacy and numeracy skills especially for the low skilled.

Apart from the Preparatory Adult Education, which was one element of the Adult Education Reform mentioned above, the so-called Adult Education System should be mentioned as another important element of the Adult Education Reform. While adult education and training programmes must be organised in such a way that they may be followed by adults who keep their work on the side, this does not mean that unemployed persons cannot follow the courses if they have an action plan set up for them by the Public Employment Service, or the local authorities, as the case may be, who pay for their education and training.

The Adult Education System can roughly speaking be divided into two types of levels: Basic adult education and advanced levels of education.

Basic Adult Education
At the basic adult education level, education/training programmes give a competence, which is identical with VET (identical level, goal, examinations etc.). They offer new and more flexible opportunities for adults with low levels of education of having formal learning (notably CVT courses) as well as non-formal learning (notably work experience) recognised as part of a formal education and training programme -thereby considerably reducing the length of the residual VET programme, which is then drawn up in an individual study and training plan. Thus, Basic adult education is not a new educational programme, but a new organisation of existing vocationally oriented edu-

cation programme at upper secondary level (VET or other vocationally oriented youth education).

Advanced levels of further education

In contrast, further education programmes at the three advanced levels are special education programmes for adults. As at the basic adult education level, relevant work experience is part of the entrance requirements but it is not recognised as part of the education programme. However, the organisation of the contents and teaching methods of the continued education programmes is also to a high degree based on the life and work experience of the adults; this is an important rationale for organising the education programmes in relatively compact programmes (60 ECTS) at levels which are comparable with the levels in the ordinary higher education programmes.

The three advanced levels of further education are comparable with the three levels of the "ordinary" or initial education system. The aim of further education at advanced levels is to further develop (i.e. to a greater extent than in the ordinary education programmes) adults' job competences (progression in professional competence rather than progression in study competence, as it were). Further education programmes at the advanced levels may be studies in depth or in breadth – i.e. vocational specialisation either within or outside the participant's original vocational field.

Participation

From 1993 to 1996 participation in adult learning (student full time equivalent) rose by approx. 36 per cent.

According to a European Commission survey of continuing vocational training conducted in 2000/01 of all the member states, Norway and nine candidate countries, the proportion of Danish enterprises that provided CVT in 1999 'topped the list' with 96 per cent. In Denmark the differences between small and medium-sized enterprises and between medium-sized and large enterprises amounted to only 3 and 5 percentage points respectively.

The regional **dimension - Lifelong learning** and **adult education**

Two examples from Viborg County

Although the level of education in Viborg County has risen in recent years, the county still has an educational "deficit" in comparison with its neighbouring counties and with Denmark as a whole. The proportion of people possessing no more than a basic education is higher than at national level, while the proportion of people possessing a further educational or training qualification is markedly lower than the national average. There are also differences in level of education within the various municipalities of Viborg County: the further north, the lower the level of formal education.

A large number of those who are employed, however, do manage to improve their qualifications via supplementary training and other courses, which does not show up in the

official education statistics. Surveys indicate that up to 85% of companies in Jutland make use of supplementary training or courses to improve the qualifications of their staff. Skills thus can be acquired by other means than through formal education alone; skills enhancement is also very much a feature of working life, via supplementary training, apprenticeships and the accumulation of experience, as well as of ordinary civil life.

Challenges

Current trends have brought about a fall in the demand for unskilled labour, while the demand for skilled workers and employees with a further education has risen, due, amongst other reasons, to the fact that the more manually-oriented and labour-expensive parts of the production processes have been transferred to countries with relatively low wage levels. In their place, knowledge-intensive tasks have been concentrated in the "old" industrialised countries, including Denmark, and these demand highly qualified and well-educated staff.

If companies are to be able to develop knowledge and skills environments that will increase their ability to collect and utilise knowledge in concrete production contexts, they must have access to the necessary knowledge labour. This means amongst other things that the educational system in Viborg County must focus on the specific needs of local companies.

As Viborg County can offer only a few courses of further education, none of them long-cycle, it is difficult within

certain professions to attract and retain well-educated personnel.

In the future, this may prove even more difficult, as a consequence of the declining youth population, which makes it even more important to be able to offer attractive, further job and career training opportunities.

The adult and vocational education reform that has been carried out contains a number of initiatives designed to improve educational opportunities for adults. Alterations in course and institutional structures have been implemented both in the vocational schools area and in further education. As an example, new courses at the business academies (short-cycle courses of further education) have been established, combining a number of previous courses, as well as new centres for further education that operate across county boundaries. All of this places new demands on local and regional co-operation and communication.

In addition, it is becoming ever more important to provide co-ordinated student guidance and objective advice for companies and staff concerning skills enhancement and courses of supplementary training, in order to ensure the rational use of the systems of education and training, and to secure the best possible benefits for their users.

At the same time, it is also becoming ever more vital, in a period of continuing internationalisation, increasing competition, and growing demands for flexibility on the part of companies and staff, to focus on skills enhancement for the less well-educated section of the workforce, in par-

ticular. New organisational forms, which demand a greater degree of independence from employees, also risk excluding those employees who do not possess the necessary educational and personal qualifications and attitudes that will be in increasing demand.

One of the most significant labour market policy challenges will thus be to integrate, to the greatest possible extent, those groups that are currently excluded from the labour market, in order to increase the general supply of labour.

Efforts

A regional skills audit

Viborg County Council wishes to contribute to ongoing skills enhancement in the county's private and state companies by promoting the qualifying and credit-giving courses offered by both its own and other educational institutions.

A special and entirely new tool for the development of knowledge and skills has been introduced with the compilation of Viborg County's first regional skills audit. A skills audit is a tool used to measure the level of skill present in the community, to identify skills deficiencies, and to calculate the efficiency of focused and active efforts at skills enhancement. The skills audit can contribute to creating continuity between, on the one hand, the long-term goals and visions for skills enhancement in Viborg County, and on the other hand, the specific goals for skills enhancement within concrete areas.

In extension of its work with the skills audit, Viborg County has established a regional skills committee to develop and co-ordinate efforts in the area.

Guidance courses for specially vulnerable groups

In order to fulfil its labour market policy goals, Viborg County Council is also working in a focused manner to ensure that:

✓ The labour force is guaranteed offers of education and training, so that workers always have the opportunity to acquire the qualifications demanded by the labour market.

✓ Groups who are currently excluded from the labour market, and who may not be capable of fully living up to the demands of the workplace with respect to qualifications and efficiency, as far as possible must be integrated into the labour market with the help of activation offers, training courses and on-the-job training, offers of employer subsidies, or employment under special conditions.

✓ Groups under threat of exclusion from the labour market, due to, for example, chronic illness, must be retained with the help of enhanced co-operation between the public authorities and the private and state workplaces, as well as employer subsidies and employment under special conditions.

Important target groups for the efforts of Viborg County Council include specially vulnerable groups who are under threat of permanent exclusion from the labour market, such as:

✓ Persons with limited educational qualifications.

✓ The long-term unemployed and persons with reduced working capacity.

✓ Persons who have other problems besides their unemployment, such as social, physical or psychological disabilities.

✓ Persons with a non-Danish ethnic background.

✓ The chronically ill.

For many of the people in these groups, there is a need for cross-cutting holistic efforts adapted to the individual's abilities and needs. It consequently will be necessary to form an initiative combining elements from the areas of employment, education and the social services, and implemented via cross-cutting co-operation between various public authorities and professions.

Many members of these target groups are incapable of participating in society's usual activation programmes, or lack the motivation to do so.

In addition to the actual employment-oriented efforts, it consequently will be an important task for Viborg County Council to establish specially-adapted motivation and guidance courses for such vulnerable groups.

As the public authority responsible for a comprehensive regional system of adult education, Viborg County Council also offers courses of introductory training, special teaching and literacy courses, as well as general courses leading to qualifications, and academically-oriented courses. The educational institutions of Viborg County collaborate with the other adult education institutions and the Public Employment Service to develop new interdisciplinary courses aimed at specially vulnerable groups.

The two following chapters describe the regional skills audit and courses of guidance aimed at specially vulnerable sections of the population. We hope that our description of these projects will serve as inspiration for our readers.

The **regional skills** audit for **Viborg County - Denmark's** first regional skills audit

The Western world is in the process of transforming itself from an industrial economy to a knowledge economy. This doesn't mean that industrial production is on the way out, but rather that knowledge and learning are becoming essential prerequisites for the competitiveness of both manufacturing and service industries, and, consequently, for economic welfare as a whole. This profound upheaval is grounded in the comprehensive globalisation of the economy, which means that the most important competitive parameters or economic values in the coming years will be knowledge and skill, plus the ability to learn.

Viborg County is taking part in this restructuring process. The regional approach is important, as all production is tied to a specific location and to the advantages that a location provides for individual companies. Despite the increasing extent of globalisation, regional conditions for production, in the final analysis, will be the decisive factor that determines where the production will take place. The level of regional skill is one of the most important factors governing an individual company's competitiveness, and consequently, the total public welfare of Viborg County.

It is thus highly relevant to focus on the development of tools capable of measuring the level of regional skill and monitoring the progress of regional skills enhancement - especially because such tools do not yet exist. The hope is that the current skills audit can act as a source of inspiration in the formulation of visions and goals for skills enhancement in Viborg County, and that it can at a later time be used to determine whether these agreed upon goals have been reached.

The skills audit is based on knowledge and data collected partly via two workshops on the future for companies and educational institutions, partly via a work seminar, and partly via a comprehensive questionnaire issued to selected companies, educational institutions and associations.

What is a regional skills audit?

The skills audit method

As this is the first time that such a regional skills audit has been compiled in Denmark, it is appropriate to provide a

brief presentation of the underlying method. The basic prerequisites upon which a skills audit is based can be divided into four areas:

✓ The skills audit is produced in order to provide an instrument for policy control, with the aim of making it possible to compare visions and goals with the actual skills enhancement achieved.

✓ Skill is defined in a broad sense as both professional and personal skills, as well as general and specialised qualifications. Skills enhancement thus occurs within these three main arenas: the educational system, workplace training, and in everyday life.

✓ Skills are measured within these three main arenas by calculating the level of investments in skills, production of skills, quality of skills and skills distribution.

✓ The skills audit takes a quantitative approach and is based on a wide range of indicators, all of which are assigned the same weight. An index number is associated with each indicator.

A definition of skill and skills enhancement

A broad definition of skill is applied in this context, inasmuch as skill is defined as the sum of professional and personal qualifications, on the one hand, and the sum of general and specialised qualifications, on the other.

Individuals thus possess many different types of qualifications. Qualifications are usually thought of only in relation to narrow personal and professional qualifications, since it is these that are measured at the conclusion of a

course of education or training, i.e. those on the right-hand side of figure 2.1. In more and more positions, however, broad qualifications are also important in relation to a person's ability to perform the work.

The combined skills needed to cope with various jobs, or to manage other roles in life, such as parenthood or political activity, are developed through learning, which takes place in the educational system, at work and in everyday life. Skills enhancement is thus the end result of a lifelong journey through the three main arenas for skills enhancement: childhood, youth and adult life.

This broad view of skill and skills enhancement necessitates the application of a holistic approach to the measurement of skills. The total level of skill in Viborg County thus becomes the result of skills enhancement within widely differing areas. It is relevant to examine skills enhancement at three different levels:

✓ Skills enhancement in Viborg County as a whole.

✓ Skills enhancement within each of the three main arenas.

✓ Skills enhancement within the component parts (sub-arenas) of the various main arenas, e.g. within adult education and supplementary training.

This understanding of skill and skills enhancement is decisive for the structure of the skills audit, in which the goal has been to link skills enhancement across the entire county with skills enhancement in specific areas.

The skills audit-an instrument for policy control

The overall aim of the skills audit is to provide Viborg County Council with an instrument for policy control, making it possible to monitor the progress of skills enhancement, and thereby also to influence it. The ambition is that the skills audit can create continuity between, on the one hand, the long-term visions and goals for skills enhancement in Viborg County, and, on the other hand, the specific goals for skills enhancement within particular main and sub-arenas, including adult education.

The formulation of these visions and goals are typically broad, such as an expression of the desire for good quality of life, the possibility of development for individuals and companies, and the desire to undergo training and lifelong learning (skills enhancement). Such long-term visions and goals can typically be achieved in several different ways. In order to turn the visions for skills enhancement into practice, one could for example indicate in which of the three main arenas one would be prepared to make an effort to promote the skills enhancement process.

The goals that should be drawn up in connection with any concrete effort towards skills enhancement are:

✓ Goals for investments. These can be expressed in terms of amounts of money.

✓ Goals for production. These could include a specification of which and how many people should follow a specific course of education or training.

✓ Goals for quality. This could take the form of a goal for the level or scope of skills that young people should have acquired by the time they leave school.

✓ Goals for distribution. Here the focus is on whether se-
lected groups should be accommodated to some par-
ticular degree, or whether the process of skills enhance-
ment should apply to all.

Using the -quantitative as well as qualitative- obtained
results, we can form a basis on which to evaluate whether
the educational process has contributed towards achiev-
ing the initial goals that were drawn up for schools, the
educational system, and ultimately for the combined level
of skills enhancement in Viborg County. The various lev-
els can thus be linked together in this way.

The essence of this perspective is that continuity is cre-
ated between long-term visions and goals and specific
goals for investment, production, quality and distribution
in concrete focus areas, with the aim of improving the
qualifications of the individual and ultimately his or her
total skills.

This perspective on skills enhancement is implicitly based
on the assumption that there is a direct correlation be-
tween investments, production, quality and distribution.
Surveys have shown that such a correlation undoubtedly
exists. But it is important to bear in mind that many other
factors also play a role in relation to, for example, whether
increased investments in primary schools will produce
better skills and a better basis for the individual's subse-
quent studies. The socio-economic background of the
parents, for example, will have a bearing on the results
achieved. It is thus necessary to note that while the rela-
tionship between efforts and results may not always be
immediately apparent, it is usually present.

A holistic view of skills enhancement is absolutely of vital significance to the total level of skills developed within a particular area. It is, as previously mentioned, precisely this holistic perspective that forms the basis of the skills audit.

The structure of the skills audit
The skills audit is built up around the three main arenas, which find further expression in a number of sub-arenas. The areas in which there is a potential for skills enhancement are also indicated for each sub-arena.

Within the three main arenas, and within each sub-arena, skills are calculated from four different perspectives:

✓ Investment in skills.

✓ Production of skills.

✓ Quality of skills.

✓ Distribution of skills.

This indicates that there is a correlation between investments in skills and the subsequent production, quality and distribution of skills. This correlation will typically be present, but other factors may also play a role, as stated above.

In structuring the skills audit, an effort was made to ensure that the main result would be simple and comprehensible. It also had to be possible to compare the results obtained from year to year. A quantitative method of calculation was accordingly chosen, to allow the relevant skills

to be expressed in numerical terms. It was also decided to allow the main result of the skills audit to be expressed in a single figure, which makes it easy to read.

The skills calculations are divided between the three main arenas, and within each of which, skills are measured in relation to investment, production, quality and distribution.

The main result of the skills audit will also be expressed for the individual sub-arenas, using the same principle. This means, for example, that under the main arena relating to the educational system, there are four sub-arenas including basic schooling, upper secondary education, vocational and third-level education, and adult education and supplementary training. Within each sub-arena, skills are calculated in relation to investment, production, quality and distribution.

The methods of calculation used in the skills audit
Within each sub-arena, a number of indicators have been established relating to the factors that are to be specifically measured. In relation to the production of skills under the heading of the sub-arena "upper secondary and vocational education", such an indicator for example might be the number of persons who graduate from the vocationally-oriented upper secondary schools. The indicators used are outlined in the separate documentation report accompanying the skills audit, and in the following chapter. Some more general methodological considerations are presented here.

Each of the individual indicators relates to many different factors, which can be calculated in terms of money, per-

sons or figures, sometimes in thousands and at other times in millions. In order to simplify this process, all values are converted to an index number between zero and one hundred. An index of zero indicates a very low level of skills, while an index of one hundred indicates a very high level. An index of fifty means that the skills in Viborg County in the area in question correspond to the levels in Denmark as a whole. All indices in principle are produced by comparing the situation in Viborg County with the situation in Denmark as a whole. One might find for example that municipal expenditure on primary schools is lower per capita in Viborg County than in Denmark overall, which would indicate that this indicator should be assigned a value of less than 50.

In the case of investment and production, the indices in principle will reflect a quantitative difference between Denmark as a whole and Viborg County.

The same applies, in principle, to the calculation of skills quality; however, the majority of the indicators for quality are exclusively based on data collected from Viborg County via a questionnaire survey issued to company managers, managers of educational institutions and managers of associations. All respondents were asked to give their evaluation of the professional and personal qualifications of their managers, staff (teachers and staff with a third level education or with and without professional training), students and association members on a normative scale in which the mean was set to the value 50.

With respect to the distribution of skills, the index must be interpreted slightly differently. In this case, the question in

focus is the extent to which a given distribution in Viborg County is more or less uneven in comparison with the national distribution. It might be the case, for example, that the distribution of men and women in adult education in Viborg County is more evenly balanced than in the country as a whole, in which case the index number assigned will be greater than 50.

The greatest advantage of using index numbers in connection with indicators is that it allows direct comparisons to be made between very different factors. The use of index numbers is also familiar, which makes the results of the skills audit easier to read. These advantages compensate for the loss of information that is the inevitable concomitant of the conversion of the raw statistics to index numbers.

Weighting of the skills audit indicators
Each indicator is assigned equal significance in the skills audit. This is of course a simplification, as some indicators will naturally possess a greater significance than will others. However, it would be a practically impossible task to undertake a precise weighting of all of the indicators in relation to each other. There would be a great danger of imprecise weighting, and it would make the skills audit very complex.

As a starting point, the skills audit contains more than one hundred indicators, each of which has been assigned an index number. The final result of the skills audit is expressed as a single index figure, calculated as the sum of the indices for all the indicators.

The main result of the skills audit is hence quite reliable, because it is based on many indicators. However, it should be noted that the skills audit is based on two methodological prerequisites that will have a bearing on the main result:

✓ The skills audit indicators. The indicators encompassed by the skills audit have been decided upon by discussion in the skills audit steering committee, and on the basis of whether a sufficient data foundation could be obtained for a given indicator. The use of other indicators could alter the main result of the skills audit.

✓ Weighting of the individual indicators. The main result of the skills audit is produced by a summation of a wide range of indicators of widely differing origins and significance, all assigned the same weight. The main result of the skills audit is thus a highly generalised expression of the level of skill. It is important to relate the main result to its sub-arenas to obtain the most realistic picture of the skills situation.

The indicators of the skills audit are its basic building blocks, and the index numbers for these are calculated using the most recent accessible statistics. These usually lie in the period 1998-2000, but in a few cases, it has been necessary to utilise data from 1996 or 1997. The stated index numbers for the individual indicators are thus generally of a high quality. The separate documentation report contains comments on the data foundation for the individual indicators, including a discussion of any weaknesses or deficiencies in the data foundation.

How the level of skills is calculated

✓ Indicator-based:

The skills audit contains indicators for the measurement of investments, production, quality and distribution. All indicators are assigned equal weight.

✓ Indexing:

An index number has been calculated for each indicator, typically by comparing the situation in Viborg County with the situation in Denmark as a whole. The quality indices constitute an exception, in that these for the most part were compiled via self-evaluation, on the basis of a questionnaire conducted in Viborg County. An index number of 50 indicates that there is no difference in the case of a given indicator between Viborg County and the national average, while an index number greater than 50 signifies a higher level in Viborg County than in Denmark as a whole.

Skills in Viborg County - main result

The skills audit indicates that the level of skill in Viborg County lies at an overall index level of 50, corresponding to the Danish national average. This, however, should not be taken to mean that all skills in Viborg County are at a satisfactory level, nor that the skills present in Viborg County are similar to those of the entire country. The skills audit indicates that Viborg County has a skills profile that differs to that of Denmark as a whole. Parts of the educa-

tional system and some of the skills acquired through everyday life help to raise the overall skills level. On the other hand, the low level of research and the small number of service industries in the county tend to pull the overall level of skills down. The population of Viborg County also tends to have a lower level of education than the national average.

It would be relevant to strengthen the process of skills enhancement in Viborg County, but the question is how to prioritise the necessary efforts. The skills audit is a tool that can be used to measure the actual level of skill, reveal competitive disadvantages, and, in particular, measure the efficiency of focused and active efforts aimed at skills enhancement.

The skills audit in itself cannot contribute to skills enhancement. A focused and active skills enhancement programme must also build upon analyses of future expertise requirements, and on a political prioritisation of the resources and efforts necessary to promote the process of skills enhancement in Viborg County.

The main results of the skills audit can be divided into two parts, with the principal emphasis on the second part. The first part deals with the skills pool and provides an overall description of the business community and labour market in Viborg County, while the second part covers the actual skill measurements, and gives a detailed description of the level of skill in the county.

The skills pool - businesses and the labour market

In contrast to many other parts of the country, Viborg County has been able to retain a relatively high number of workplaces within both agriculture and industry. Today, however, most of its workplaces lie within the service industries, although these are relatively few in number compared to the rest of Denmark. These characteristics can largely explain Viborg County's relatively high employment rate, despite its relatively low average level of education. Recently, however, a number of changes have begun to take place in the educational qualifications required by companies in the region. These changes are grounded in structural alterations that have been introduced in the wake of technological development, altered forms of production, etc. Investments are typically made in the most knowledge-intensive part of the production, while at the same time, widespread increases in efficiency are being introduced in the simpler working procedures via the introduction of new technology and new methods of work organisation. These simpler parts of the production process, and those associated with high labour costs, are increasingly being transferred to countries with lower wage levels than Denmark. The result is that increasing demands are being made on the skills of employees – even in industries that have traditionally employed unskilled labour. In Viborg County, the trend is clear: companies are cutting down on the number of unskilled jobs, and creating white-collar positions in their place, which are typically filled by staff with a third-level education.

This development means that the coming years will see increased pressure on the labour market. There will be a greater demand for people with third-level qualifications, and a reduced demand for persons without education or training. In Viborg County, the proportion of the population without educational qualifications lies above the national level, as does the number of persons with a commercial education. This matches the relatively high employment rate within industry. On the other hand, there are relatively few people in Viborg County who possess a third-level education, which could potentially result in a deterioration of the competitiveness of the companies in the county. Growth in gross value per capita already lies below the national average.

The county's companies, educational institutions, public authorities and other players on the labour market will be faced in the coming years with a major challenge in the area of skills enhancement.

Skills are the sum of qualifications

Discussions of qualifications, for example, with staff and trainees usually focus on narrow professional and personal qualifications. It is upon these qualifications that one is evaluated at the conclusion of a course of education or training, or when applying for a new job. In more and more positions, however, broad qualifications are becoming important. Consequently, in the skills audit, skills are defined as the sum of professional and personal qualifications on the one hand, and the sum of broad and narrow qualifications on the other.

The level of skill in Viborg County

From an overall point of view, the level of skill in Viborg County is on a par with the remainder of Denmark, as the combined index number for the level of skill is 50. This, however, should not be understood to mean that all skills in Viborg County are at a satisfactory level, nor that the skills present in Viborg County are similar to those of the entire country. The ways in which the level of skill in Viborg County differs from the level of skill in Denmark as a whole are described below, through an examination of the arenas in which the process of skills enhancement take place. Skills enhancement takes place within the following three main arenas: the educational system, workplace training, and learning in everyday life. The level of skill in Viborg County is highest within the educational system and in everyday life, where the index lies above 50 in both cases. On the other hand, the level of skill present in workplace training is less than 50. This tends to pull down the total, combined level of skill in the county.

The total level of skill is also calculated in relation to investments in skills, production of skills, the quality of skills and the distribution of skills. In this case, it is quality that achieves the highest score, despite the fact that investments are almost on a par with the national norm, and that production in the county is only slightly higher than in the country as a whole. There is, in other words, a good correlation between investments in skills and subsequent skills production and quality. However, it should be noted that the distribution of skills in Viborg County differs from that in the remainder of the country, inasmuch as the sec-

tion of the population taking part in the process of skills enhancement in Viborg County is not quite the same as in Denmark as a whole. The gender distribution of persons in third-level education or labour market training, for instance, differs from the national norm.

Within the educational system, the level of skill lies above the mean in the sub-arenas of basic schooling, upper secondary and vocational education, as well as adult education and supplementary training. Only the statistics for third-level education, in other words, pull the index down. This is due to the fact that the supply of third-level education in the county is relatively low. The index number would be even lower were it not for the fact that the level of skill in the county's third-level institutions is relatively high.

The second main arena is workplace training, which encompasses the supplementary training of managers and staff, research, and the utilisation of knowledge. The level of skill across this entire main arena is under the mean, with an index of 46. None of the sub-arenas lies above the national average. The index number of 46 is pulled upwards by the supplementary training of managers and staff and by the utilisation of knowledge, while the research sub-arena pulls it down a great deal.

The third main arena encompasses learning in everyday life, in which individual skills enhancement can take place through, for example, the use of libraries and museums. Skills enhancement can also take place via participation in associations or leisure activities, i.e. via the collective network of local associations. The level of skill in this main

arena is above the mean, and thus makes a positive contribution to the total level of skill in Viborg County. It is the collective network that pulls the level up over the mean.

Adult education and supplementary training in Viborg County

Adult education and supplementary training can make a major contribution to the improvement of skills for those who are in employment or who are unemployed for a shorter or longer period. A broad range of courses within this category is available in Viborg County, including vocational training, adult education institutions and folk high schools.

With an index number of 54, the total evaluation of skills lies above the national average; the sub-arenas consequently make a positive contribution to the total level of skill in the entire county and to the level of skill in the first main arena.

This relatively high index number is due to the fact that skills investments, production and quality here are higher than the national average. The distribution, on the other hand, is different, with a total index of 47. The total evaluation of skills within the area of adult education and supplementary training is consequently high, but the skills are distributed differently in Viborg County than they are in Denmark overall.

Investments in adult education and supplementary training are primarily carried out by the state, and secondarily by Viborg County Council. The VUC adult education centres thus account for the most council expenditure in the area of education, while the state funds much of the other expenses in the area. Expenditure on labour market training programmes lies markedly above the national average, while expenditure on adult education centres is also slightly higher than in Denmark as a whole. Expenditure on folk high schools, however, is slightly lower.

Skills production, in accordance with investments, is higher than the national average, due in particular to the labour market training programmes. The proportion of course participants who complete their courses is also slightly higher than in Denmark as a whole.

The total evaluation of the skills quality of teachers and students produces an index value of 59. The high index number is especially due to the skills of the teachers, as the skills of the students are generally given a low assessment. The teachers are rated highly on professional qualifications, diligence, and the ability to empathise. On the other hand, their levels of holistic understanding, adaptability and cheerfulness are given a relatively low rating. Students are rated highly on creativity, adaptability, cheerfulness and a down-to-earth nature, whereas their qualifications, holistic understanding and ability to empathise are rated lowly.

The distribution of skills, with an index number of 47, differs from the national average, a factor that can be ascribed to the distribution of women and men in the labour

market training programmes. Most of the people attending these courses in Viborg County are men, while in Denmark as a whole, the majority of persons attending labour market training programmes tend to be women. The gender distribution in Viborg County consequently deviates from the national pattern, producing a low index number of 31.

Learning at the workplace - staff supplementary training

One of the fundamental theses in discussions of the knowledge society is that a company's staff is its most important resource. It is largely the employees who develop and manufacture the company's products and who provide services to the company's customers. They have become qualified to perform these tasks via their training or work experience, but it is important that they continuously develop their skills. This applies both to professional and to personal qualifications, and can be achieved by way of, for example, supplementary training.

With an index number of 49, the total evaluation of skills in relation to staff supplementary training is slightly below the mean. The sub-arenas, consequently, contribute only slightly to the level of skill in the entire second main arena, and contribute negatively to the total level of skill in the county as a whole.

The index of 49 for the entire sub-arena is due to the fact that skill investments and production in this area are lower than the national average, and because the distribution of skills differs from that of the country overall. On the other

hand, the companies evaluate the quality of their staff's skills relatively highly, which pulls the index up.

The total index for investment and production is less than fifty, indicating employees in Viborg County participate less in supplementary training than is the norm in Denmark as a whole.

All in all, the quality of staff skills is evaluated as lying above the mean, with an index number of 59. The skills that receive the highest rating are diligence, quality-consciousness and a down-to-earth nature, whereas skills such as creativity and holistic understanding are rated lowly. Unskilled employees generally receive a lower rating, particularly with regard to such skills as professional qualifications and creativity.

The distribution of the staff between skilled, unskilled and salaried employees indicates that the situation in Viborg County differs slightly from the national norm. Unskilled staff in Viborg County participate in supplementary training to approximately the same extent as unskilled staff elsewhere in Denmark, but the situation is slightly different for skilled and white-collar staff. Skilled employees in large companies in Viborg County have a relatively low level of participation in supplementary training, while salaried staff in Viborg County also participate less, in general, in supplementary training than their counterparts in the remainder of Denmark. This is particularly pronounced in small and medium-sized companies.

Learning in everyday life - the individual
The skills of individuals are formed by their educational backgrounds and working lives, as well as by their social

relationships, families and participation in associations. Many of these skills are described elsewhere in the skills audit. There are, however, other means of skills development that possess a markedly individual character, such as the use of libraries, museums and evening classes, or newspaper reading, in which the process of skills enhancement is primarily driven by individual interest.

The total level of skill here is evaluated at 49, and thus contributes towards a slight reduction in the total level of skill recorded in the third main arena, learning in everyday life. It also lies at a slightly lower level than the overall result for the total skills present in the county. This is mainly due to the fact that investments lie at a low level, with an index of 37, and because the level of skills production lies slightly below 50. The level of quality, on the other hand, is high, and the distribution of skills is better than the national average, with an index of 58.

Skills investment in this sub-arena has a low index, due amongst other things to the fact that total sales of national newspapers are low in Viborg County. The prerequisites for individual skills enhancement by this route are consequently lower than in Denmark as a whole. Municipal expenditure on libraries, museums and adult education associations, etc., are also lower than the national norm.

Skills production in this area, however, lies at a relatively high level. This is due to the fact that the size of book holdings in the county libraries is quite high, and the population consequently has access to a large body of knowledge via the libraries. On the other hand, the number of museum visits is low in Viborg County. This must be seen

in light of the fact that the larger state museums are primarily sited in the large towns; if allowance is made for this factor, the total index number here could probably be considerably higher.

The total evaluation of skills quality in this area has an index of 54 and thus lies at a relatively high level, which is especially due to the fact that the total level of skill of the teachers and students at evening classes is rated highly. This applies in particular to such skills as diligence and co-cooperativeness, as well as cheerfulness and down-to-earthness. Professional qualifications, holistic understanding and adaptability are on the other hand given a low evaluation. The other quality indicators in this area are book loans per borrower and the turn-out at the most recent elections and referenda, which are given indices of 45 and 50, respectively.

The distribution of skills, which encompasses only the age distribution of library members, produces an index figure of 58, due to the fact that the proportion of books loaned to children is relatively high. Children, thereby, get a good start in this area. On the other hand, consideration might be given to the question of whether the number of book loans to adults ought to be higher than at present.

Learning in everyday life - the collective network
Skills enhancement occurs on an ongoing basis in association with the collective network, by which is meant leisure time activities in political organisations, sports clubs and cultural associations. Part of this skills enhancement occurs in connection with internal and external (management) courses in the associations, but also through the

associations' activities, or via work as a manager, trainer or member of the management committee. This kind of skills enhancement very often takes place in people's own homes, and is consequently locally-based.

The level of skill within this sub-arena, with an index of 52, is higher than the third main arena overall, and contributes at the same time to the total level of skill measured in the entire county. This is primarily because skills investments and production in this area lie above the national average. The level of quality, on the other hand, is relatively low and pulls the total level of skills down.

Investments in the collective network lie above the combined average for the sub-arena as a whole, with an index figure of 53. Financial support for association activities is largely a municipal responsibility, and the municipalities' expenditure on such activities lies above the national average.

The level of skills production is correspondingly higher than the national average, with an index of 60. Overall, Viborg County is equipped with more associations and has more association members than the remainder of the country. The prerequisites for skills enhancement in this area are thus good.

The total evaluation of the quality of the skills of the managers and members of the collective network lies under 50, pulling the total index in this sub-arena downward. This is particularly due to the fact that the members are assessed as having a very low level of skill. The managers of the county's associations do not feel, hence, that the

members of their associations take a sufficient share of the joint responsibility or seek to have an influence on the activities of the associations. Managers, on the other hand, are allotted a high level of skill as a consequence of their cheerfulness, down-to-earth nature and diligence.

The distribution of managers and members by gender and age is not markedly different from the overall national pattern. There is however a tendency for a higher proportion of children and young people to take part in association activities in Viborg County. This is a positive sign. On the other hand, consideration might be given to the question of whether even more adults should take part in association activities.

An effort could be made here to increase the level of skill

The skills audit provides an opportunity to identify areas in which an increased rate of skills enhancement might be called for. These areas are selected by examining the areas in the audit where the indices deviate positively or negatively from the mean of 50. In Viborg County, this process leads to the identification of the following needs:

The need to invest more in existing strengths

Young people in Viborg County seek vocationally-oriented education
The young in Viborg County have access to a broad range

of upper secondary and vocational education. They often seek vocationally-oriented courses, and the young people's own choice of education thus harmonises well with the business structure of the county. A foundation thus exists upon which to build positive and strengthened relations between vocational education and the business community. It is an advantage for the business community for skills investments to be made by providing a broad and enhanced range of vocational studies at upper secondary level. Or should the focus be directed more towards the universities and colleges?

The drop-out rate from educational courses in the county is low

The young persist and complete the courses that they begin. How can we ensure that a high proportion of young people will continue to complete their education?

The labour market training programmes contribute a great deal to adult education and supplementary training

A varied range of courses of adult education and supplementary training is available in Viborg County. These, particularly the labour market training programmes, are in relatively high demand. This provides skills enhancement to those with only basic school education, minimising the risk that they may be left behind by developments and excluded from the labour market. It may consequently be a good idea to continue to invest a high level of effort in this area. The question is whether the labour market training programmes could, or should, be even better.

There are many associations in Viborg County and they have many members

A comprehensive range of associations is available in Viborg County. Association activities help to develop the kind of personal qualifications in their managers and members that are expected to be in demand in the knowledge society. Would it be relevant to further strengthen and assist association activities, so as to benefit the process of skills enhancement?

Boosting the weakest skills

The level of investment in basic schooling in Viborg County is low

Investments in basic schooling are lower in Viborg County than in Denmark as a whole; nonetheless, considerable value for money is obtained. However, the question is whether the low level of investment in the long term will lead to a deterioration in basic schooling, and thereby threaten the knowledge foundation for skills enhancement in the county.

There is a shortage of third-level education possibilities in Viborg County

The young in Viborg County must move away from home if they wish to attend further education. Is this a threat to the county's skills pool and to the ability of companies to recruit highly-educated staff? Which courses would it be realistic or useful to establish in Viborg County?

The short and medium-cycle courses are in unequal demand from men and women

The county's short-cycle courses of further education tend

to be sought by men, while the medium-cycle courses are sought by women. Short and medium-cycle courses do not appear to be equally attractive to both men and woman. Is this a threat to young people receiving an education, or to them making the most appropriate choice of education?

Mostly men in the labour market training programmes in Viborg County

Men are more likely than women to have their skills upgraded via the labour market training programmes at the business schools and the labour market training centres. Does this tend to reinforce a gender-divided labour market in Viborg County?

Company managers in Viborg County participate less in supplementary training than managers in the remainder of Denmark

The managers of the county's companies make less use of supplementary training than do their colleagues in other Danish companies. Will this inhibit the ability of these companies to adapt and develop, and hence weaken their competitiveness?

Members of associations in the county take little part in the work of their associations

Association activities can make a considerable contribution to the development of the 'softer' qualifications. A weakening of public commitment to the associations is also a sign of a weakening interest in the development of the local community. Could this undermine the democratic structures of the local community in the long run?

To focus on future skills requirements

It is difficult to foretell the future. It is, however, certain that current skills at workplaces and educational institutions will need to be adapted on an ongoing basis to the requirements of the future, preferably in such a way that Viborg County is placed in the vanguard of developments.

Company managers, school managers and association leaders in Viborg County have given their assessment regarding which qualifications will be needed in the coming years:

Reinforce the 'soft' qualifications, such as adaptability and creativity
These two soft qualifications are not closely associated with professional qualifications, but instead involve the ability to adapt to new working functions and apply existing knowledge in a new way. These are, in other words, qualifications that are highly characteristic of the knowledge society.
Increasing need for good general and specific professional qualifications
The expectation is that there will be an increasing need for professional qualifications, which are already valued quite highly. Although soft qualifications are expected to acquire a greater significance in the knowledge society, this will not be at the expense of professional qualifications, which will continue to be very important.

Cheerfulness, a down-to-earth disposition and diligence at work are valued highly today. That current level should be maintained

Finally, in the opinion of the business managers, the competency of their unskilled workers lies at a relatively low level. In relation to the expectations of levels of skill, it will be particularly important to boost the competency of unskilled workers.

Towards the next skills audit

The current skills audit can hopefully form the basis for a political debate, which will culminate in the formulation of visions and goals for the process of skills enhancement in Viborg County. These visions and goals will form the starting-point for new initiatives to promote skills enhancement in Viborg County, or the consolidation of existing initiatives. The next skills audit for Viborg County will evaluate the results of efforts made in the coming time to promote skills enhancement. The visions and goals for skills enhancement, the actual process of skills enhancement, and the skills audit are inextricably linked.

The current skills audit has identified a number of areas in which skills enhancement may be relevant. The skills audit in itself does not provide a basis upon which to prioritise initiatives to consolidate the process of skills enhancement in Viborg County. In order to undertake a prioritisation of these areas, the audit must be supplemented with other tools. Focused and active skills enhancement must be supplemented with:

✓ analyses of commercial and social developmental trends in order to deduce implications for future expertise requirements.

✔ evaluations of the efficiency of various instruments and tools.

Guidance courses in Viborg County

This section presents a number of the most important lessons and conclusions deriving from a systematic collection of experiences involving the guidance courses of Viborg County Council. These experiences have been collected in order to provide a description of the methods developed during the decade that these courses have been in existence, so as to pass these methods on to partners in the NETA project, and other interested parties. The emphasis has been placed on the practice of recent years.

The story behind Viborg County's guidance courses

The first guidance courses were held in 1990. The courses were born out of an agreement between the municipalities of Viborg County and the county council to institute a so-called job and training guarantee for persons in receipt of social benefits.

If we turn the clock back to the years 1989-90, the number of unemployed people receiving benefits -and consequently, the size of municipal expenditure on benefits- was rising rapidly. During each month of 1989, the number of

persons receiving benefits lay 30-40% above the levels from the previous year, and by the summer of 1990, there were almost twice as many people receiving benefits in Viborg County as there had been in 1989. At the same time, more and more people were receiving benefits for ever longer periods, and the prospect of them obtaining an education or a job seemed ever more distant. Marginalisation, social exclusion and the attendant problems of loneliness, isolation, behavioural problems and substance abuse were becoming increasingly urgent questions in employment and social policy. Consequently, there was considerable external pressure to extend and increase the efficiency of initiatives aimed at combating unemployment among the most vulnerable groups in the population.

The government and the Danish Parliament sought to adjust the legislation to suit the altered conditions, and new tools were introduced into labour market policy. Among the most marked of these innovations was the introduction in 1989 of legislation governing vocational training and education for the unemployed. The Public Employment Service could now offer courses of education and training to persons with unemployment insurance, but without educational qualifications, before the first job offer, and after the first job offer, to all persons with unemployment insurance receiving unemployment benefits, irrespective of educational background. At the same time, persons with unemployment insurance were given the right to participate in training and to receive a training allowance for up to two years. The reason why the so-called UTB scheme and the training allowance scheme for the unemployed are emphasised here, is to point out that these
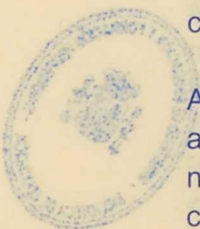
schemes marked a new departure in the activation measures typically offered to those receiving unemployment benefits and unemployment assistance, respectively.

Local authorities were involved in employment initiatives based on independent legislation since 1979, the year in which the Extraordinary Employment of Young People Act entered into force.

On 3 April 1990, the County Council Financial Committee approved a proposal to administer a combined education and employment programme, which included a job and training guarantee for members of vulnerable groups in receipt of unemployment assistance. At a meeting on 10 April 1990, the proposed programme, including the job and training guarantee, the financial model and the administration proposal, was endorsed by every municipality in the county. The Labour Market Council also subsequently joined the programme.

The programme identified three groups of people and accompanying types of measures that were to be applied:

A vulnerable group of persons in receipt of unemployment assistance, the extent of whose social problems would necessitate the use of special motivation and guidance courses before job offers or offers of courses of education and training could be made.

A group of mainly young unemployed people, who in addition to information and guidance would require special introductory courses to training or employment.

A group who lacked the necessary education or work training to be able to gain a foothold on the labour market.

Guidance courses have now been in existence for 10 years as a permanent service to the municipalities, and have consequently gained a kind of institutional status. The target group and the underlying value system are still the same, but the educational methods used in the guidance work have undergone continuous development and consolidation in that period.

Factual information

Number of participants

A total of 1,119 people have taken part in the guidance courses during the ten years of their existence. This figure, however, also includes people who have participated in several courses, so the total number of people who have taken the courses is around 1,000. Eighty percent of the participants have been women. A few courses have shown wide fluctuations in gender distribution, as some programmes aimed exclusively at men were held in Viborg in 1994 and 1998.

The age distribution has also varied from course to course. At some courses the majority of participants were in their twenties, while those participating in guidance courses for women with wear-and-tear injuries were mostly in their forties. The age distribution of participants has not altered over the years, with 44% under 25 years of age, and 56% over 25.

The guidance courses have been subject to continual change, and now have different durations, slightly different participant groups, and varying content. Despite the many differences between the courses, however, they share a common overall structure that serves to support the process of clarification and change that the individual undergoes, with a view to participating in adult education and/or subsequently entering the labour market.

The overall structure of the courses is thus determined in advance, but the construction of individual courses will naturally vary, depending on, for example, whether they are of 16 or 33 weeks' duration. In addition, the composition of the participant groups can have a bearing on how the various themes are related to each other, and which are given most emphasis.

Different solutions can also be selected in the individual guidance courses with respect to participant uptake and egress. Participants in the shorter courses typically take part in a full programme, but naturally leave the course if they receive an offer of employment or are admitted to a course of education or training. The longer courses involve either continuous uptake and egress, or the opportunity to join or leave a course half-way through the programme. Ongoing uptake and egress presupposes more individualised and differentiated instruction.

The actual organisation of the instruction ranges from lessons of 2-3 hours duration to whole days involving, for example, open-air activities, creative subjects or excursions. All the participant groups are small, with perhaps

10-16 people taking part, or in some situations even fewer. As a starting point, all course participants follow the same programme, the content and structure of which will typically be based on concrete considerations regarding how the individual course elements can support the participants in their process of change. The benefit derived by individuals, however, will always vary, due to such factors as differing backgrounds.

Guidance is the central element in the programmes. Beyond this, a number of other activities are included, creating the basis for an all-round effort in which the strong and weak sides of the participants, their possibilities and limitations, are identified and explored. The purpose of these activities, besides providing support for a process of change, is to improve the general and personal qualifications of the participants. The course activities may be classified under the principal headings of creative subjects, exercise and open-air activities, general subjects, guidance, and practical training. The creative subjects include such activities as pottery, jewellery making, leatherwork, painting and drawing. The instruction introduces various handicraft skills that form the basis for more creative processes. Creative activities comprise 15-20% of the total activities.

Exercise and open-air activities, similarly, are included in all programmes, but with varying emphasis. Exercise is a key element in the guidance course for women with wear-and-tear related injuries, as it can help to remedy the effects of the physical wear caused by monotonous and repetitive work. The open-air activities that are emphasised are those that promote teamwork and the social milieu of the team, while a

number of other activities encourage people to exceed some of their own personal limitations. Exercise and open-air activities comprise between 10-20% of the activities.

General subjects comprise 20-40% of the activities, and include communication, psychology, IT, first aid, nutrition and, in the case of the literacy course, special lessons in Danish. Practical training is a component of all the programmes, and normally occupies 3-4 weeks out of six months. If the programme is longer than 35 weeks, two periods of practical training are included. The practical training programmes are tailored to the needs of the individual, with the aim of exploring some work ambitions or establishing contact with a particular workplace, as well as, in a more general sense, familiarising the participant with the norms and requirements of the labour market.

Other, more informal activities also take place at the courses, such as talks/lectures, excursions and trips involving overnight stays. The main purpose of these is to strengthen the social bonds between the participants and to provide them with some positive experiences.

Effects of the courses

The guidance courses are primarily aimed at the group of unemployed persons who have other problems besides their unemployment. In most cases, therefore, this will be an extended process, in which the guidance course is the first step on the road to work or a course of education or training. The proportion of participants who go directly into ordinary employment after the conclusion of the course is consequently quite small. Most will continue to follow courses of education or training, in a wide spectrum from

labour market-oriented training to ordinary adult education or courses leading to qualifications.

Statistics have been compiled since 1995 for former participants at the Viborg County Council's guidance courses, in accordance with the guidelines for projects supported by the EU Social Fund. The following categories have been used: 'education' (including both training courses and ordinary education), 'unsubsidised work' (work without wage subsidies), 'subsidised work' (all kinds of employment, with complete or partial public financing) and 'other'. The latter category encompasses maternity leave, sick leave, pensions, unemployment, etc.

In the years 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999, the proportions of participants who went on to other courses of education or training after having participated in a guidance programme were 31%, 29%, 30%, 36% and 24%, respectively. The proportions of participants who went into subsidised work after attending a guidance programme were 18%, 30%, 18%, 17% and 36%. On the other hand, the proportions of former course participants who entered unsubsidised employment have been relatively small in every year, namely 8%, 13%, 10%, 16% and 9%, respectively.

Guidance as a tool in a process of change - personal guidance and vocational and educational guidance

In terms of content, the guidance offered is divided into personal guidance and vocational and educational guid-

ance. The vocational and educational guidance is primarily aimed at areas related to entry into the labour market, or to long or short-term education and training. Personal guidance, on the other hand, is more closely related to the individual's life situation. This might include, for example, the provision of support and guidance in a divorce situation. Personal guidance will often be related to areas that need to be attended to before the question of future employment can be addressed.

Vocational and educational guidance often resembles teaching, the purpose of which, amongst other things, is to provide the participants with knowledge of and familiarity with the areas of work, training and education. The instruction includes excursions to educational institutions and companies, and visits by external speakers who talk about various relevant topics, such as the unemployment insurance system, the Active Social Policy Act, training courses, etc. Beyond this, personal and specific guidance is also offered in response to requests for information on such matters as the entry requirements for the Adult Education Centres (VUCs) or information about specific courses of training.

There are fluid boundaries between personal guidance and vocational and educational guidance, as the individual's life situation will necessarily have a bearing on his or her ability to complete a course of training or cope with a job. It can be difficult, for example, to complete a course of education that involves a lot of home study if the person concerned is a single parent with three small children, one of whom has behavioural problems, even if the participant's greatest wish is to take the course, and he or

she is suitably qualified to attend it. The strength of the guidance courses in their current form is precisely that the project managers spend a lot of time with the course participants, and can thus form an all-round view of them, which can be utilised in the guidance situation.

Inasmuch as guidance course participants belong for the most part to the category 'transitional cases', personal guidance occupies a relatively large part of the picture. Many of the participants have serious problems that require concretisation, clarification and psychological work before any vocational or educational guidance can be contemplated.

Instruction

Viborg County Council's guidance courses are built up around a broad range of different activities. The reason for this is that the target group is made up of 'transitional cases' who are not immediately ready to take on work or training. The purpose of the varied activities is to allow the individual course participants to test their abilities in many different contexts, and thereby gain a greater knowledge of their own development possibilities and limitations. The guidance includes the use of experiences and observations garnered from the teaching process, as these can help to concretise the participants' strong and weak sides.

A broad range of activities

The activities can be divided into five categories: creative activities, exercise and open-air activities, general sub-

jects, guidance and practical training. Within each indi-
vidual category, it is of lesser importance whether the ac-
tual activity is leatherwork or jewellery making, swimming
or cycling. There have been many different types of such
activities, which can be altered at any time. The most im-
portant thing is how and for what purpose the activities
are used, and whether they are adapted to the needs of
the participants.

The form of instruction
When organising the instruction, it is necessary to take
account of the fact that course participants are likely to
belong to a group that is unacquainted with education and
training, and for whom few have completed a course of
education.

Some have had such bad experiences during their school
days that they are not motivated to commence a course
of study or training, or to improve their qualifications at
the ordinary educational institutions. Consequently, there
is a need for alternatives to the traditional form of school
teaching. The instruction and guidance methods thus take
their inspiration from the Danish folk high schools, with
morning assemblies, talks and presentations, group work,
project-oriented teaching and extra-mural activities.

The element of joy and security
The teaching is organised with the aim of creating a se-
cure and trusting atmosphere within the individual groups.
This takes time, particularly with people who have experi-
enced many disappointments in their lives. The secure
atmosphere is essential to allow people to open up and

examine their own situations. The individuals concerned must be able to have confidence in the other group members, the project managers and the teachers. Good spirits and self-confidence are of vital importance if a person is to be capable of undergoing a psychologically demanding process of change. The teaching situation must consequently be a source of good experiences, and must support both the individual and the collective process.

The individual participants will experience the activities in different ways. This is an argument for providing a broad spectrum of activities, as the individual is thereby given a better chance of experiencing success and acquiring good experiences. Accordingly, the programme includes co-operative tasks and activities that do not just focus on the learning aspect, but also place the participants in unfamiliar situations that can be an occasion for fun and a good laugh. One example of this is 'Know Your Neighbourhood', which takes place on an excursion into the locality, and involves a series of activities and tasks to be performed by two teams. The tasks are structured in the form of a competition, but the main purpose is social. The most important thing is how and why the activities are employed, and whether they are adapted to the needs of the participants. Exercise and open-air activities are examples of how the composition of the groups taking part in the guidance courses can have a bearing on the actual activities offered.

In the creative activities, the participants often experience joy, surprise and personal satisfaction in discovering how easy it is for them to create high-quality products, with the

right assistance. In parallel with manufacturing products, there is time for informal socialising, in which the participants can get to know each other through ordinary conversation and exchanges of experience.

The element of experiencing success and exceeding limitations

A prerequisite for change is that you are prepared to challenge yourself. The activities encourage the participants to test and possibly exceed their own limitations in various areas. The background for this is the belief that a series of small successes can increase a person's courage and motivation to tackle new challenges.

The kind of challenges that will give someone the experience of being challenged will vary from person to person. For some people it is a major challenge to rappel down off a high bridge, while others feel it takes a far greater effort of self-control to dare to be seen in a swimsuit, and yet others find the greatest conceivable challenge is to have anything to do with computers. It is important, on the one hand, to encourage individuals to go as far as possible and to overcome their fears -i.e. exceed their limitations- but, on the other hand, to give participants the opportunity to say no.

At guidance courses for young mothers, one of the exercise activities is 'mother and child swimming', which is designed to improve the relationship between mother and child. In the course for women with wear-and-tear injuries, focused work is performed towards remedying physical injuries.

The element of discovery and experimentation

One important aim of the guidance courses is to identify the strong and weak sides of the participants, and here the project manager can play a significant role. The project managers' observations and considerations provide the participants with feedback, as well as support during the individuals' process of change and formation of plans of action. The activities also provide an opportunity for participants to use the project managers, the teachers and the other participants as sparring partners to help them examine their own life situations.

In-depth guidance presupposes a holistic effort, drawing on different aspects of the individual's life situation. It is, for example, important to know something of the participant's attitude to starting a course of education or training, as well as whether the participant has the support of his or her family, and whether there is a basis in the current situation to commence such a course.

The participant groups called 'worn-down' and 'uncertain health' need to discover the extent of their physical abilities. This can be done via exercise, just as sedentary activities can give an indication of the extent to which the individual can manage a sedentary job.

Some of the creative subjects, such as jewellery making, demand patience and good physical co-ordination. This can give an idea of whether the person concerned would be able to work in product assembly, electronics or similar positions requiring these skills. The work with creative activities also reveals something of the participants' abil-

ity to concentrate, as well as their patience and their qual-ity-consciousness.

The courses in the general subjects, besides giving a gen-eral improvement in qualifications, provide an opportunity to identify possibilities and limitations within the academic area. A number of participants have problems with read-ing and writing, and here it is useful to gain an impression of the scope of their problems. In such cases, actual test-ing with standardised material may be considered, which can lead to the conclusion that supplementary lessons in reading and writing may be a prerequisite for further progress in a vocationally or educationally-oriented plan of action.

For most people, problems in reading and writing can turn out to be the seed of many other problem areas, and it is consequently a very important problem area to identify, describe and at least attempt to remedy.

The experimental aspect is associated with the periods of practical training. An attempt is always made to provide participants with their first choice of practical training, as the principal aim of these periods is to explore the partici-pants' employment or education-oriented ambitions. Theo-retical knowledge of a profession's contents can never replace personal experience; reality can serve either to provide a more realistic impression of the work, or to dis-miss a prejudice about a particular trade.

Improving qualifications
Besides providing actual guidance, the goal of the guid-ance courses is also to achieve an improvement in the

individual's general and personal qualifications. This is grounded in recognition of the fact that the participants' generally poor educational background may prove a hindrance when seeking employment.

Qualifications are divided into three overall categories: vocational qualifications, general qualifications and personal qualifications. Vocational qualifications are associated with specific working skills, e.g. welding, and are often termed the 'hard qualifications'. General qualifications refer to the ordinary skills acquired at school, such as reading, writing and arithmetic. Nowadays, familiarity with English, IT and psychology are also regarded as general qualifications. Personal qualifications involve more personal qualities such as co-cooperativeness, flexibility, stability and a sense of responsibility. These are often termed the 'soft qualifications'.

The guidance courses are not concerned with vocational qualifications. The emphasis is primarily on personal qualifications, and partly on general qualifications. Improvement in qualifications take place through instruction in general subjects such as psychology, first aid, IT and Danish. The instruction in general subjects is at a preparatory level in relation to adult education generally.

IT is associated with all guidance courses, either as an actual subject or as a tool. The purpose of this is to demystify the area and introduce the participants to some IT tools, such as text processing and spreadsheets. The instruction is often purchased in the form of complete modules from various educational institutions. IT is also to an increasing extent becoming an integrated tool in the other subjects.

The instruction in this context consists of a general intro-
duction to IT and support in computer use.

In some guidance courses, certain programmes have been
specially designed for unemployed persons with a recog-
nised handicap in reading and writing, who have been of-
fered intensive special instruction in Danish. At the mo-
ment, there is a standing offer of special instruction in
Danish. Besides this, Danish is also an integrated tool that
is taught in connection with writing diaries, composing
plans of action, writing applications, etc.

Communication and/or psychology are taught in all
courses. The instruction encompasses various relevant
themes, generally based on the participants' current situ-
ations. Typical themes might be assertion training, team-
work, reactions to sorrow and crises, restless children, etc.
The degree to which instruction draws on personal mat-
ters or takes place at a more generalised level will vary.

Common to all guidance courses is the aim of providing
the individual with an insight into typical reaction patterns.
The idea is that by becoming conscious of these patterns,
people may gain the inspiration and courage to examine
their own patterns of action and thereby reflect on how
they interact with other people.

Personal qualifications are developed, not just via the ac-
tual instruction in a particular subject area, but through
the influence derived from the way in which the instruc-
tion is organised. The social aspect and the ability to co-
operate are given a high priority when selecting activities
and forms of organisation. Exercise and open-air activi-

ties, for example, involve tasks that presuppose a high degree of teamwork. The tasks to be performed are presented in such a manner that the group must jointly gain a clear view of the task, act in accordance with the given framework, and think creatively and flexibly. Task performance requires teamwork.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the activities are not goals in themselves, but rather means that allow the participants to identify and explore their possibilities and limitations, and thereby acquire a basis on which to take decisions.

Co-operation

There will typically be several external contacts associated with the individual participants, such as municipal caseworkers, unemployment insurance funds, educational institutions, practical training sites, etc. To ensure all-round efforts directed towards the individual, it is important that the co-operation between these parties is co-ordinated.

The **NETA** Project in **Ireland**

Adult **Learning Policies** under the Department of **Education** and **Science** – Towards the Co-ordinated Provision of Adult Learning Opportunities in **Ireland 2000-2002**

Helen Keogh

Context

The Grundtvig transnational pilot project, **NETA**, spanned the period September 2000 – December 2002 in Ireland. Thus, the project was in place towards the end of the greatest period of accelerated change - economic, social, cultural – ever experienced in the history of the country.

The period 1996-2001 saw unprecedented economic growth with the general Government balance going from a deficit of 0.3% of GDP in 1996 to a surplus of 4.6% in 2000. In 2001 this had fallen to 1.1% (Kiely 2002). Unemployment fell from 15.7% in 1993 to 3.7% by 2001. The

drop in long-term unemployment was even more dramatic, falling from 8.9% in 1993 to 1.2% in 2001 – a drop of 104,000 or 83%. (Government of Ireland 2002). Net annual immigration went from 8,000 in 1996 to 26,300 by 2001 (Kiely 2002).

Over the past six years there has been a new sense of national self-confidence at many levels in the country - economic, political, cultural, social and sporting - but the new prosperity has brought its own challenges. While consistent poverty has declined overall, the disparity between higher income earners and the socially excluded may have widened and concentration on poverty may be intensifying in certain areas (Government of Ireland, no date). As a result of this trend social partnership in the years leading up to 2002 began to concentrate more on structural and public provision policies such as health, education, housing, transport and childcare than on macroeconomic matters (Johnston 2002).

The period of accelerated economic growth has also seen the reversal of the one-hundred and fifty year-old mass emigration trend, with the result that as a country we are coming to terms with a much wider ethnic mix in Ireland and we are being obliged to reassess relationships within our society. Surveys carried out in 2001 suggest that a considerable section of the population is, to say the least, ambivalent about diversity, or, in educational terms, is not equipped to respond positively to it (Amnesty International 2001 cited in IATSE 2001). Cultural diversity is not new in Ireland, but our response to that cultural diversity through the development of the ideological perspective and practice of interculturalism is just beginning. There is a number

of minority ethnic groups among the population of 3.918
million, all of whom are small in number. The Traveller
community constitutes the longest standing minority eth-
nic group with up to 25,000 members. There are also grow-
ing Islamic and Chinese communities and a long-estab-
lished Jewish community. Refugees and asylum seekers
have come to Ireland from a wide variety of countries in
the period 1997-2002 and industry has been increas-
ingly recruiting from abroad to overcome labour shortages
in the recent period of economic prosperity (Pavee Point
2002; IATSE 2001). This growing diversity challenges adult
education policy makers and providers to put in place
policies and provision that will support the development
of an intercultural society.

The NETA Project in Ireland

When the NETA project began in Ireland in September
2000 *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*
(Department of Education and Science 2000) had just
been published by the Department of Education and Sci-
ence. For the project this was particularly timely given
that the key question and concern of the NETA project in
the partnership countries was "What are we doing in adult
education?" The publication of the White Paper in Au-
gust 2000 enabled the NETA partner in Ireland, the De-
partment of Education and Science, to give a clear and
comprehensive answer to this central question of NETA
in September 2000, something it would not have been
able to do quite so well a few years earlier, or at any rate
earlier than November 1998 with the publication of the

Green Paper on Adult Education; Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning (Department of Education and Science 1998) which drew together, for the first time, the existing policies, provision and concerns of adult education in Ireland.

The White Paper reflected on the role of adult education in society and built on the very wide consultation process which had followed the publication of the Green Paper in November 1998. It set out the Government's policies and priorities for the future development of adult education in Ireland for the period of the National Development Plan 2000-2006 (Government of Ireland 1999), within which the period of the NETA project - September 2000 to December 2002 - fell.

It should be understood that *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education* (Department of Education and Science 2000) did not aim to provide a policy blueprint for the training sector given that this work was and is being advanced through the National Employment Action Plans (Government of Ireland 1998, 1999, and 2000a) and the work of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning established by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Government of Ireland 2002). Rather, the White Paper sought to ensure that there was a fit and complementarity between education and training provision, so as to ensure that learners could move progressively and incrementally within an over-arching co-ordinated and learner-centred framework.

In describing the situation regarding adult education in Ireland in August 2000 and in putting forward proposals

for the development of adult education, the White Paper was, in fact, describing the context within which the NETA project in Ireland would operate over the next twenty-eight months until December 2002. The White Paper was also providing the substance of the NETA project in Ireland in that the task the project set itself in Ireland was to partici- pate in, monitor and report – on an on-going basis and in a final overview - to the NETA project partners on the extent to which the implementation of the proposals in the White Paper (along with some additional measures) was contributing to:

✓ increasing the *internal* co-ordination and coherence *within* individual adult education programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science;

✓ increasing the *transversal* co-ordination and coher- ence *across* adult education programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science and *between* these programmes and adult learning programmes funded by other government departments;

✓ developing the coherence of provision for target groups of specific interest to the NETA project and partners, viz., early-school leavers, women without basic edu- cation certification or vocational qualifications and im- migrants;

✓ developing a systemic approach to adult education within the overall education system.

Increased co-ordination and coherence in adult educa- tion at national and local levels *within* and *between* adult

education programmes were of interest to the NETA project in Ireland not as an end in themselves but rather as a means of ensuring better access, participation and outcomes for the most marginalised in our society at whom the White Paper targets the investment in adult learning available through the Department of Education and Science.

In addition, the belief of the NETA project promoter and co-ordinator in Ireland was that developments in relation to co-ordination *within* and *between* adult learning programmes in Ireland would contribute to the understandings, policies and provisions of their NETA partners as they sought to develop adult education in their own local, regional and national areas.

Proposals in the White Paper for the Development of Adult Education

Definitions and Priority Areas

The White Paper defines adult education as *"systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training."* As such, adult education includes aspects of further and third-level education, continuing education and training, community education, and other systematic deliberate learning by adults, formal, non-formal and informal.

The White Paper identifies six priority areas in setting out a role for adult education in Ireland, viz., *citizenship, consciousness raising, cohesion, competitiveness, cultural development and community building.*

The paper recommends that the development of adult education in Ireland should be underpinned by three core principles promoting:

✓ **a systemic approach** which recognises that the interfaces between the different levels of education provision and the quality of the early school experience have a critical influence on learners' motivation and ability to access and progress in adult education and training;

✓ **equality** of access, participation and outcome for participants in adult education, with pro-active strategies to counteract barriers arising from differences of socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity and disability. A key priority for the White Paper in promoting an inclusive society is to target investment towards those most at risk;

✓ **interculturalism** – the need to frame educational policy and practice in the context of serving a diverse population as opposed to a uniform one, and the development of curricula, materials, pre-service and in-service training, modes of assessment and delivery methods which accept such diversity as the norm. This refers not only to combating racism and encouraging participation of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in education, but also to recognition that many minority groups such as Travellers, people with disabilities and older adults may have distinct needs and cultural

patterns which must be respected and reflected in an educational context.

This inclusive view of the role of adult education was a clear response to the criticism that the conception of adult education set out in the Green Paper which preceded the White Paper had located adult education in a human resource development paradigm only and had not maintained a balance between the economic role of adult education on the one hand and its personal, social, cultural and political roles on the other.

As a backdrop to its proposals, the White Paper underscored the persistent age-based differential in educational attainment among Irish adults, with some 1.1 million people or 45% of the then population aged 15-64 having completed a *maximum* of lower secondary education in 1999. A further 1.22 million or 53% had completed at least upper secondary, with 17% having completed higher education to non-degree or degree levels. The White Paper reminded adult educators that a particular characteristic of the Irish population aged 15-64 was that 25% of the people in that age group scored at the lowest level (Level 1) of literacy attainment on a scale of 1-5 in the OECD *International Adult Literacy Survey* (Government of Ireland 1997) carried out in Ireland in 1995, with a further 32% scoring at Level 2.

Overall, the White Paper was very well received by the adult education stakeholders. As has been said, it followed the 1998 *Green Paper on Adult Education: Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning* (Department of Education and Science 1998) which had been followed

by an extensive consultation process to obtain the views of a diverse range of interests on its contents and on the principles and strategies which should underpin the future development of adult education in Ireland.

In the consultation process the Department of Education and Science had been urged to proceed with the proposed local and national adult education structures which it was anticipated would lead to a more co-ordinated, coherent and integrated provision of adult education in Ireland. But the level of attention given to this issue in the consultation process had been less than expected, and where disagreement emerged it focused on the hosting arrangement for the proposed local structures. The debate crystallised around pro-VEC (Vocational Education Committee) or anti-VEC positions. There are thirty-three Vocational Education Committees (VECs) throughout Ireland which operate as local education authorities for certain sections of the education system and which deliver the majority of the adult education provision funded by the Department of Education and Science.

Funding Priorities in the White Paper

In setting out funding priorities for adult education in the White Paper the Government noted that there was a number of competing needs to be addressed. These included the need to:

✓ significantly increase the scale and flexibility of existing provision;

✓ provide an increased role and funding for community education;

✓ make large-scale increases in adult literacy investment;

✓ invest systematically in the development of core supporting services such as guidance and childcare;

✓ expand capital provision for adult education;

✓ implement an ICT programme for adults;

✓ develop specific equality initiatives to improve the participation of marginalised groups;

✓ put in place national and local structures to develop, support, monitor and quality assure adult education throughout the country.

In summary, given the scale of change needed, the Government's continuing priority was to expand the flexibility and supply of core programmes and services for adults, and to concentrate supports on those most at risk.

Developing Adult Learning in Key Learning Sites
The White Paper developed proposals in relation to the adult learner in a number of key adult learning sites namely:-

    a)   Further Education

    b)   Community

    c)   Workplace

    d)   Higher Education

a) Proposed Developments in the Further Education Sector

In the Further Education sector, the recommendations in the White Paper provided for the development of a comprehensive framework for second-chance education for those with less than upper secondary education via:-

✓ increased investment in adult literacy. £73.6m (•93.45m) had already being indicated for adult literacy under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 (Government of Ireland 1999) with co-funding from the European Social Fund under the EU Community Support Framework (2000-2006) to increase investment in this area, with a view to providing services by 2006 for some 110,000 adults;

✓ a Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) which would provide for the introduction of part-time options under all full-time programmes;

✓ specific capital provision for the Further Education sector would be provided to increase on a phased basis to at least £10m (•12.69m) per annum;

✓ a review of PLC (Post-Leaving Certificate Courses) management, organisational, administrative and technical support arrangements to assess the appropriateness of existing structures to changing needs.

b) Proposed Developments in the Community Education Sector

In relation to Community Education, the White Paper proposed:

✓ the appointment of a national team of Community Education Facilitators to be based in the Local Adult Learning Boards to support the development, maintenance, co-ordination and mainstreaming of community education groups;

✓ exploring through this team of animators the appropriateness of the approaches pioneered within the community-based women's groups to other sectors viz.,

▶ disadvantaged, hard-to-reach men

▶ Travellers and ethnic minorities

▶ people with disability

▶ community arts groups

▶ older learners

▶ developing more streamlined, longer-term and diverse funding channels to community education groups.

c) Proposed Developments in Workplace Learning

In August 2000 skill shortages both in terms of new entrants to the workforce as well as the skills of those already in the workforce were proving a major barrier to the sustainable development of the Irish economy.

The central thrust of the proposals in the White Paper regarding workplace learning was the emergence of the workplace as a learning site committed to the ongoing development of all its members. To support such a development, it was proposed to encourage the development of partnerships of education/training and industry interests advancing such issues as:-

✓ expanded industry and work placements in higher education institutions;

✓ agreements between education and industry on modularisation of course provision;

✓ recognition of work-based learning for accreditation purposes;

✓ delivery of courses in the workplace.

Flexible education and training options were to be progressed, allied with a focus on addressing the barriers to participation of those in the workplace in ongoing education and training, particularly those with the lowest skills. When the White Paper was published these issues were being addressed through the work of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning which had been convened by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in collaboration with the Department of Education and Science.

It was proposed that the expansion of adult literacy services would include a focus on the development of workplace literacy initiatives. It was proposed that a unit would be established within the proposed National Adult

Learning Council (NALC) to provide technical support and advice on initiatives and policies to promote education and training for those in the workplace.

d) Proposed Developments in Adult Learning in Higher Education

The participation levels of mature students in Higher Education in Ireland is amongst the lowest in the OECD countries. *The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness 2000* (Government of Ireland 2000b) set a target for mature student representation in higher education, viz., 15% by 2005.

To enable the realisation of this target the White Paper proposed to introduce a targeted higher education mature student fund which would increase on a phased basis to at least £10m (•12.69m) per annum to enable third-level institutions to make innovative strategic shifts towards adult-friendly policies.

Proposals for the Development of the Support Services for Adult Education

In the White Paper the Government recognised that there were fundamental foundation blocks which had to be put in place in building a comprehensive system of adult education within an overall framework of lifelong learning. In particular these would include expanded provisions for:-

✓ training of trainers;

✓a Forum of Adult Education Practitioners to share good
practice and input to policy developments;

✓new approaches to assessment, accreditation and cer-
tification to be developed through the work of the Na-
tional Qualifications Authority of Ireland, HETAC (Higher
Education and Training Awards Council) and FETAC
(Further Education and Training Awards Council);

✓ the development of an Adult Educational Guidance
Service on a phased basis;

✓ research – through NALC;

✓ childcare – additional funds to be provided under the
National Development Plan 2000-2006 to consolidate
developments in childcare provision for key full-time
adult education programmes funded by the Department
of Education and Science (VTOS, YOUTHREACH and
Traveller programmes – see later for description of
these programmes) and to expand provision on a
phased basis.

Proposals for the Development of Structures for Adult Education

The White Paper proposed two layers in an over-arching
structure for Adult Education – A National Adult Learning
Council and, at local level, Local Adult Learning Boards.

a) National Adult Learning Council
The National Adult Learning Council (NALC) would be

established by the Minister for Education and Science as an Executive Agency of the Department of Education and Science to promote the co-ordinated development of adult education and training provision within an agreed national strategy and policy framework.

NALC would have a governing body of representation from the social partners, education and training providers, learners, community and voluntary pillar interests and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. The Council was to have four broad units, focussing on Adult Education and the Formal Education Sector, Workplace Learning, Community Education, and Research.

b) Local Adult Learning Boards
It was proposed that thirty-three Local Adult Learning Boards would be established throughout the country, one in each Vocational Education Committee (VEC) area to promote a co-ordinated area-based approach to the delivery of adult education services.

Membership of the local Boards would include representation from social partners, education and training providers, learners, community and voluntary pillar interests, Traveller and disability organisations, area partnerships, library services, health boards and adult literacy interests. The Boards would be required to formally convene local community fora through which the views of a wide range of interests could be channelled.

Adoption of *Lifelong Learning* as the Governing Principle of Educational Policy in Ireland

As has been said, the publication of the White Paper on adult education marked the adoption of lifelong learning as the governing principle of educational policy in Ireland. It followed the publication of the *White Paper on Early Childhood Education: Ready to Learn* (Department of Education and Science 1999) in 1999 and it made an important contribution to informing and enabling the Government to put in place, for the first time, systematic and comprehensive provision for lifelong learning. Together the two White Papers indicated the official recognition by the Government of Ireland that its educational commitment now extended to include not only those in school, college or training, but also that part of the population which had yet to go to school and that part which had left the initial education system.

In September 2000, as the NETA project began, adult education was the last area of mass education which remained to be developed in Ireland. It was evident to all adult education stakeholders that it would require significantly increased investment if adult learning opportunities were to reach a stage of parity with those in other countries where adult education systems were more developed. The White Paper committed the Irish Government to a multi-faceted sectoral development programme in adult education. As the NETA project began, it was proposed in the White Paper that the programme of change and development set out would be implemented

on a phased basis in the light of the resources made available in the context of the National Development Plan 2000-2006 and the annual Estimates for Public Services provision.

Towards Co-ordination of Adult Education Provision during the lifetime of the NETA Project

When the White Paper on adult education was published in August 2000, one month before the NETA project began, it would be fair to say that the level of *internal* co-ordination *within* adult education programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science and of *transversal* or *horizontal* co-ordination *across* these adult education programmes was low.

Model 1. below illustrates the co-ordination, when the NETA project began in September 2000, *across* adult education provision funded by the Department of Education and Science in two of the key adult learning sites identified in the White Paper viz., further education and the community. VTOS, literacy provision, YOUTHREACH, STTCs and PLCs are located in the former and community education is located in the latter. The actual positioning of these programmes in Model 1. arises from existing links between them and/or from links that were developed during the period of the NETA project, 2000-2002 and which are illustrated in Model 2. in Section 4.2 of this chapter.
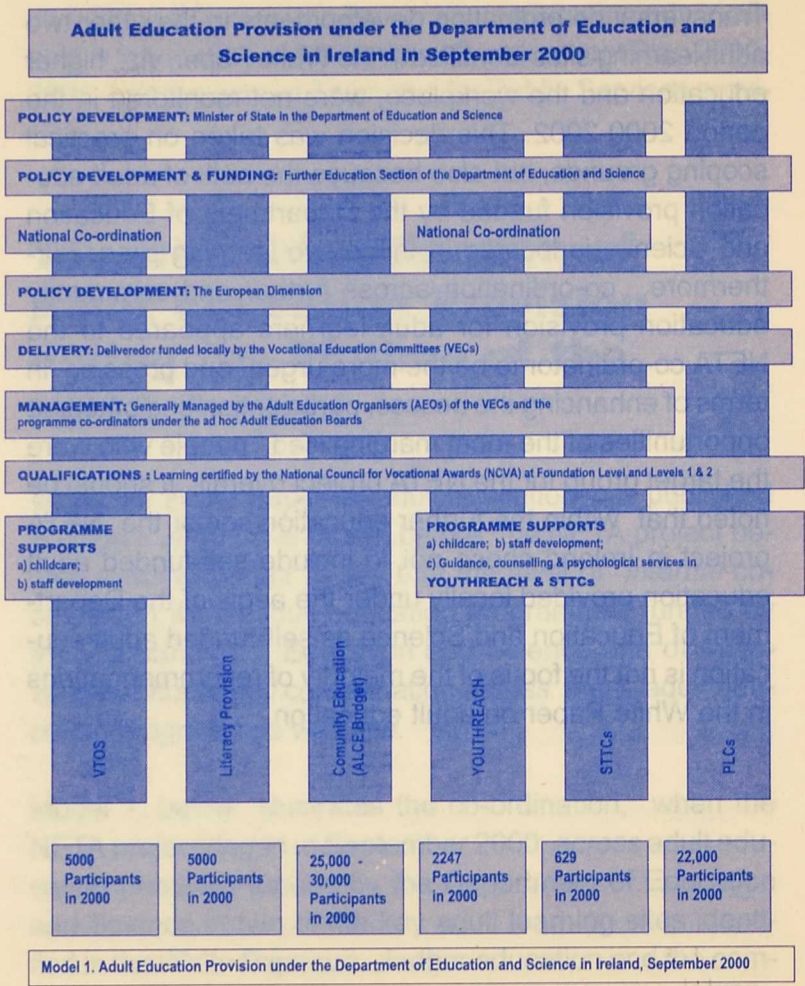
Transversal co-ordination developments in the other two adult learning sites identified in the White Paper, viz., higher education and the workplace, were not monitored in the period 2000-2002. This decision was taken on practical scoping grounds, but also because the bulk of adult education provision funded by the Department of Education and Science is located in these two learning sites. Furthermore, co-ordination across further and community education provision for adult learners appeared to the NETA co-ordinator to be the more urgent and pressing in terms of enhancing the access, participation and outcome opportunities of the most marginalised, people who were the target group for the NETA project overall. It should be noted that within the further education sector the NETA project in Ireland chose not to include self-funded adult education provided locally under the aegis of the Department of Education and Science as self-funded adult education is not the focus of the majority of recommendations in the White Paper on adult education.

Adult Education Provision under the Department of Education and Science in Ireland in September 2000

POLICY DEVELOPMENT: Minister of State in the Department of Education and Science

POLICY DEVELOPMENT & FUNDING: Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Science

National Co-ordination

National Co-ordination

POLICY DEVELOPMENT: The European Dimension

DELIVERY: Deliveredor funded locally by the Vocational Education Committees (VECs)

MANAGEMENT: Generally Managed by the Adult Education Organisers (AEOs) of the VECs and the programme co-ordinators under the ad hoc Adult Education Boards

QUALIFICATIONS : Learning certified by the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) at Foundation Level and Levels 1 & 2

PROGRAMME SUPPORTS
a) childcare;
b) staff development

PROGRAMME SUPPORTS
a) childcare; b) staff development;
c) Guidance, counselling & psychological services in **YOUTHREACH & STTCs**

VTOS	Literacy Provision	Comunity Education (ALCE Budget)	YOUTHREACH	STTCs	PLCs
5000 Participants in 2000	5000 Participants in 2000	25,000 - 30,000 Participants in 2000	2247 Participants in 2000	629 Participants in 2000	22,000 Participants in 2000

Model 1. Adult Education Provision under the Department of Education and Science in Ireland, September 2000

As can be seen from Model 1., programmes for unemployed adults wishing to return to learning (VTOS), adults with literacy challenges (Literacy Provision), adults wishing to learn in their communities (Community Education under the ALCE (Adult Literacy and Community Education) budget), adult members of the Travelling community (STTCs - Senior Traveller Training Centres), early school leavers (YOUTHREACH) and adults returning to learning on post-Leaving Certificate courses (PLCs) were funded through the Department of Education and Science when the NETA project began.

Policy development for adult education in 2000 centred on the Office of the Minister of State for Adult Education, an Office which had been created as recently as 1997, and on the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Science. Three of the programmes - VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme), STTCs (Senior Traveller Training Centres) and YOUTHREACH - had National Co-ordinators employed by the Department of Education and Science who had a role in relation to policy advice and programme development, support and quality assurance. In 2000 the three National Co-ordinators were working closely together at national level but, for a range of historical, structural, funding and management issues, national and local, the programmes which they co-ordinated did not generally reflect this at local level. In effect, in many places the provision operated through "ring-fenced" programmes which had limited contact with one another.

In addition to all the adult learning issues in Ireland and the influence of the key adult education stakeholders, the

"European dimension" had a strong influence on policy development as the majority of the adult learning programmes funded by the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Science had been funded by the European Social Fund up to 1999.

Notwithstanding the key role of the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Science in the development of adult education, the absence of national structures which would provide a co-ordinating and formalising framework for the adult education sector was noteworthy when the White Paper was published in 2000. At local level the *ad hoc* Adult Education Boards of the VECs provided a limited structure for adult education in each VEC area. The programmes referred to in Model 1. above were delivered locally by the VECs, generally under the management of the local Adult Education Organiser (AEO).

But the programmes tended to function as stand-alone provision with very little contact *across* the programmes between programme participants, direct management, staff, staff development activities, curricula, support services (childcare, transport, guidance, catering, curriculum enhancement) and/or progression opportunities. Qualifications/certification through the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) provided a common link between the programmes, but this link was inadequately exploited in terms of management, curricula, staffing, assessment or progression. A further common link between VTOS, the STTCs, YOUTHREACH and the PLC programmes was the availability of programme supports in the form of childcare funding for learners and staff development. In

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addition, the STTCs and YOUTHREACH had both been providing a counselling, guidance and psychological service to participants since 1998.

Added to the absence of co-ordination *across* the adult learning programmes provided by the VECs and funded by the Department of Education and Science, the co-ordination and coherence were minimal *between* these adult learning programmes and those funded by other government departments, for example, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development or the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation. Progression from adult learning programmes funded by one government department to those funded by another was difficult due to an absence of cross-sectoral progression pathways, accreditation of programmes or certification of learning.

Clearly, when the NETA project began towards the end of 2000 there was an urgent need for enhanced co-ordination of the adult education programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science through the implementation of the White Paper proposals. Co-ordination *within* programmes was called for as much as co-ordination *across and between* programmes and co-ordination *between* adult learning programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science and other Government departments. Each programme had its own internal co-ordination needs while the overall service to adults located in further education and the community had an urgent need for:

✓ the development of national and local structures;

✓ the enhancement of national and local co-ordination;

✓ the development of clear progression routes to a wide range of learning locations;

✓ the development of programme provision, particularly part-time provision;

✓ the enhancement of support services, including guidance and childcare;

✓ the embedding of the concept of lifelong learning.

Internal Co-ordination of Adult Education Programmes through the implementation of White Paper proposals and other measures in the period of the NETA Project 2000-2002

During the period of the NETA project developments proposed in the White Paper, along with other distinct measures, made a significant contribution to the *internal* development and co-ordination of adult learning programmes funded by Department of Education and Science. The following paragraphs outline the internal development of the adult education programmes included in Diagram1.

a) VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme)
VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme) provides learning opportunities of up to two years' duration

for unemployed people over 21 years of age who are at least six months unemployed. There are over 5000 VTOS places available each year. Provision which is decided upon locally to respond to participant and local needs is education-led, vocationally-oriented and progression-focused. Courses offered concentrate on the development of participants' employment-related skills, including technological and business skills, as well as key personal and social transferable skills. National certification of participants' learning has been provided from the beginning of the programme in 1989 by the Department of Education and Science at lower and upper secondary levels (Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate), by the National Council for Vocational Awards (Foundation, Level 1 and Level 2) from 1993 to 2001 and by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) since 2002 (Foundation, Level 1 and Level 2).

Coherence has been growing across the VTOS programme since it was first established in 1989. A National Co-ordinator had been appointed in 1992. Local management and staffing structures have been developed and a quality assurance initiative was introduced by the National Co-ordinator in the mid-90s supported by a programme of staff development. In 2000, as the NETA project got underway, a *Handbook on Guidance in VTOS* was being prepared and it was published in October 2001 by the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE 2001) in collaboration with the National Co-ordinator VTOS. Its aim was to draw together guidance practice in VTOS across the country and provide guidelines for the further development of the internal guidance activities in VTOS nationally.

In September 2002 a handbook entitled *FAQs in VTOS* was developed by the National Co-ordinator to streamline the provision of information to local VTOS centres in relation to the evolving criteria for eligibility, funding and childcare support in VTOS nationally. Towards the end of 2002 the National Co-ordinator began to develop plans for a strategic management initiative in VTOS to address the development of the programme in the rapidly changing context in which it is operating.

All of the above developments have helped to contribute to a sense of coherence and solidarity across the VTOS programme in the one hundred and ten (110) centres nation-wide.

b) Literacy Provision
Development and co-ordination across literacy provision has been growing steadily since the publication of the White Paper and, indeed, from 1997 when the results for Ireland of the OECD International Adult Literacy Survey were published (Department of Education and Science 1997). The two events served to prompt immediate developments in literacy provision which are illustrated by the following statistics:

✓ a more than ten-fold increase in the adult literacy budget from £0.85m (•1.079m) in 1997 to •16.4m in 2002;

✓ an increase in literacy students from 5000 in 1997 to 22,733 in December 2001, with 70% of learners in group tuition in 731 venues;

✓ 450 students availing of childcare services and 1201

students availing of guidance services, up from a starting point of these services not being available to students when the White Paper was published in 2000.

A continuum of provision from one-to-one voluntary tuition to group tuition to progression to certified learning options was developed in the period of the NETA project 2000-2002. Within this provision in 2001 there were family literacy; literacy for Travellers; literacy for special needs; themed literacy; workplace literacy; literacy for non-nationals; literacy as part of social employment programmes.

In the same period the following developments have also taken place:

✓ the creation of a multi-agency Workplace Literacy Strategy Group;

✓ the development of a nationally certified staff development programme;

✓ the development of a literacy assessment framework by NALA (the non-governmental, Department of Education and Science-funded National Adult Literacy Agency);

✓ the development by NALA of a Quality Framework for adult literacy in collaboration with other European partners;

✓ the establishment of an Inter-Departmental Group on Literacy for the Unemployed;

157

✓ the provision of Literacy Information days for employers, trade unions, social employment supervisors and trainers.

When the **NETA** project began the Department of Education and Science was funding *Read Write Now*, a TV literacy awareness and tuition programme developed by NALA to encourage a mass audience to access help and support. Series 1 (2000) attracted an average weekly audience of 155,000. Series 2 (2001) attracted an average weekly audience of 235,000 and Series 3 (October – December 2002) is being equally successful in attracting viewers and responses. In addition, a follow-on radio series with more basic and intensive levels of tuition was developed and it was supported – like the TV series – by a freephone helpline and learner packs.

In line with practice for other adult education programmes, the Department of Education and Science had also appointed a National Co-ordinator of literacy provision who is based in NALA, the National Adult Literacy Agency. Thus what is an internal co-ordinating measure within literacy provision, also operates as a transversal co-ordinating measure across adult education programmes as it brings literacy provision into line with other adult education programmes and helps create contact, collaboration and synergy between adult literacy provision and other adult education programmes.

c) Community Education (ALCE Budget)
The Department of Education and Science through its ALCE (Adult Literacy and Community Education) budget funds VECs to give limited support to community educa-

tion programmes in their local areas. In 2002 some •4m were spent on community education and 30,000 learners were catered for.

Community education, particularly in the form of community-based women's groups, has been one of the most dynamic and distinctive elements of the Adult Education sector in Ireland in recent years. Its self-directed, learner-centred character and its capacity to reach marginalised women in disadvantaged communities were described as "particularly noteworthy" by the White Paper on adult education. In addition to and sometimes including, the community education providers funded by the VECs, there are in the region of 1,000 daytime education women's groups throughout the country. The Department of Education and Science, along with the Department of Social and Family Affairs, funds AONTAS to support community education networks of these daytime groups. While data on the numbers participating in these groups are sketchy, AONTAS, the non-governmental Department of Education and Science-supported National Association for Adult Education, calculates that there are up to 25,000 women participating in groups affiliated to them.

The White Paper acknowledged that the growth of community education has been constrained by a number of factors, including:

✓ low levels of financial or other resource supports;

✓ relative detachment from other elements of the education system;

159

✓ inadequate research support.

In 2002 Community Education provision was the subject of two major developments with inherent co-ordination and coherence thrusts. In September the appointment of local Community Education Facilitators by VECs was announced by the Department of Education and Science and by December 2002 a number of the Community Education Facilitators had taken up their positions. They will be responsible for providing support to new and existing community education groups in the form of technical, administrative and educational inputs to community-based women's groups, men's groups, Traveller and other ethnic minority groups, groups of people with disabilities, community arts groups and groups of older learners.

In October, in a second major development, ten per-cent (10%) of the Back to Education Initiative (described below as a cross-programme co-ordinating measure) places were opened up to Community Education providers with the intention of locating them firmly within a major adult education funding initiative and providing them with extra resources.

d) YOUTHREACH
YOUTHREACH is the national response to the difficulties faced by unqualified and unemployed early school leavers. The overall YOUTHREACH programme is administered jointly by the Department of Education and Science and FÁS, the national training authority funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. There are two phases in YOUTHREACH - Foundation and Progression. Foundation provides two years of integrated educa-

tion, training and work experience for young people aged over fifteen years of age who have left school early without qualifications or vocational training. The Progression phase is intended to advance the participants into the area of vocational preparation and training with a view to establishing a base for specific skills acquisition.

In 2002 there were 2247 participants in the VEC YOUTHREACH centres funded by the Department of Education and Science. Developments in YOUTHREACH during the NETA project period include:

✓ the YOUTHREACH consultative process outlined in the document *YOUTHREACH 2000: A Consultative Process* (Stokes 2000);

✓ the launching of the YOUTHREACH Quality Framework Initiative arising from the consultative report. The consultative phase of the initiative was described in a report circulated in April 2002 and piloting of the framework will begin in January 2003 in a number of YOUTHREACH centres;

✓ the expansion of the YOUTHREACH Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Services. A National Coordinator for the services was appointed in late 2002. Overall, there were 3205 participants (including participants from STTCs – see below) availing of these services in 2002;

✓ the launch of the Health Promoting YOUTHREACH initiative under which eighteen (18) YOUTHREACH centres are developing health promoting policies towards

the achievement of a health quality award. Nominated individuals in each centre are trained as centre health promoters.

e) STTCs (Senior Traveller Training Centres)
STTCs (Senior Traveller Training Centres) (STTCs) provide the YOUTHREACH Foundation phase for young and adult members of the Traveller community. Particular efforts are made to encourage Traveller parents to take up the programme because of the impact their participation can have on their children's schooling. In 2000 there were 29 STTCs operating under VECs throughout the country and catering for some 692 Travellers, mostly females. This number increased to 842 in 2002. The programme provides two years of integrated education, training and work experience for Travellers who have left school early without qualifications or vocational training or who did not attend school at all. Co-ordinating and coherence building developments in STTCs under the guidance of the National Co-ordinator for STTCs during the NETA project period include:

✓ the publication in November 2001 of the Consultative Report on Senior Traveller Training Centres (Griffin and Harper 2001) based on a nation-wide consultation process with all the STTCs and designed to contribute to their future development and to add value to the overall YOUTHREACH consultative process in which the STTCs were also involved;

✓ planning for the production of national guidelines for standardising the management of STTCs in 2003;

✓ planning for staff upskilling in the development of a public relations strategy for all centres;

✓ involvement as centres delivering the YOUTHREACH Foundation Phase in the YOUTHREACH Quality Framework Initiative described under YOUTHREACH above;

✓ participation in the YOUTHREACH Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Services described under YOUTHREACH above.

f) PLC (Post-Leaving Certificate Courses)

In 2000 the Post-Leaving Certificate courses (PLCs) throughout the country were offering over 1,000 full-time courses in some 224 centres. A wide range of disciplines is covered including business, electronics, engineering, computing, catering, sport/leisure, theatre/stage, performance art, art/craft/design, multi-media, marketing, tourism, childcare, community care, horticulture. In 2000-2001 over 24,000 students were catered for. The majority of these were in further education and training as part of their initial education and training but some 33% or approximately 8000 were adults aged over twenty-one years of age who were *returning* to learning. As the so-called demographic "deficit" indicated by the current and future falling numbers of eighteen-year old students in secondary, further and higher education begins to impact on PLCs, adults who do not hold upper secondary qualifications are beginning to benefit from the availability of places on PLC courses. The number of participants in PLCs in 2002 was 26,658.

The White Paper identified the need for a national review of the PLC courses in the context of demands from staff for the formal recognition and funding of the further education sector and in the context of the development of the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the changing demographic profile of the country. A steering group of key stakeholders was established in 2001 and a consultancy team undertook a wide-ranging review of administration, management and ancillary supports in PLCs. A draft of the review report was made available in mid-2002.

Co-ordinating Adult Education in Ireland through the implementation of the White Paper proposals and through other developments in the period of the NETA Project 2000-2002

In addition to the growing co-ordination and coherence *within* adult education programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science, the implementation of the White Paper recommendations and other relevant measures in the period of the NETA project, September 2000 to December 2002, has meant a steady advance towards co-ordination *across* these programmes. These White Paper and other measures have led to the following developments:

a) Policy Development

Advances contributing to policy development in adult education include:

✓ The National Adult Learning Council

✓ Consultation Process on the EU Commission **Memorandum on Lifelong Learning**

✓ Consultation Process on promoting anti-racism and interculturalism in education, including adult education

✓ *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning*

✓ The "European Dimension"

b) Structures

Developments in relation to national structures for adult education include:

✓ The National Adult Learning Council

✓ The Educational Disadvantage Committee

✓ The expansion of National Co-ordination

✓ The Further Education Development Unit

c) Qualifications

Advances contributing to the development of a qualifications framework and the provision of national certification for adult learning include:

✓ The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and two Award Councils, FETAC (the Further Education and Training Awards Council) and HETAC (the Higher Education and Training Awards Council)

d) Development of Provision
Advances contributing to the development of adult education provision include:

✓ Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)
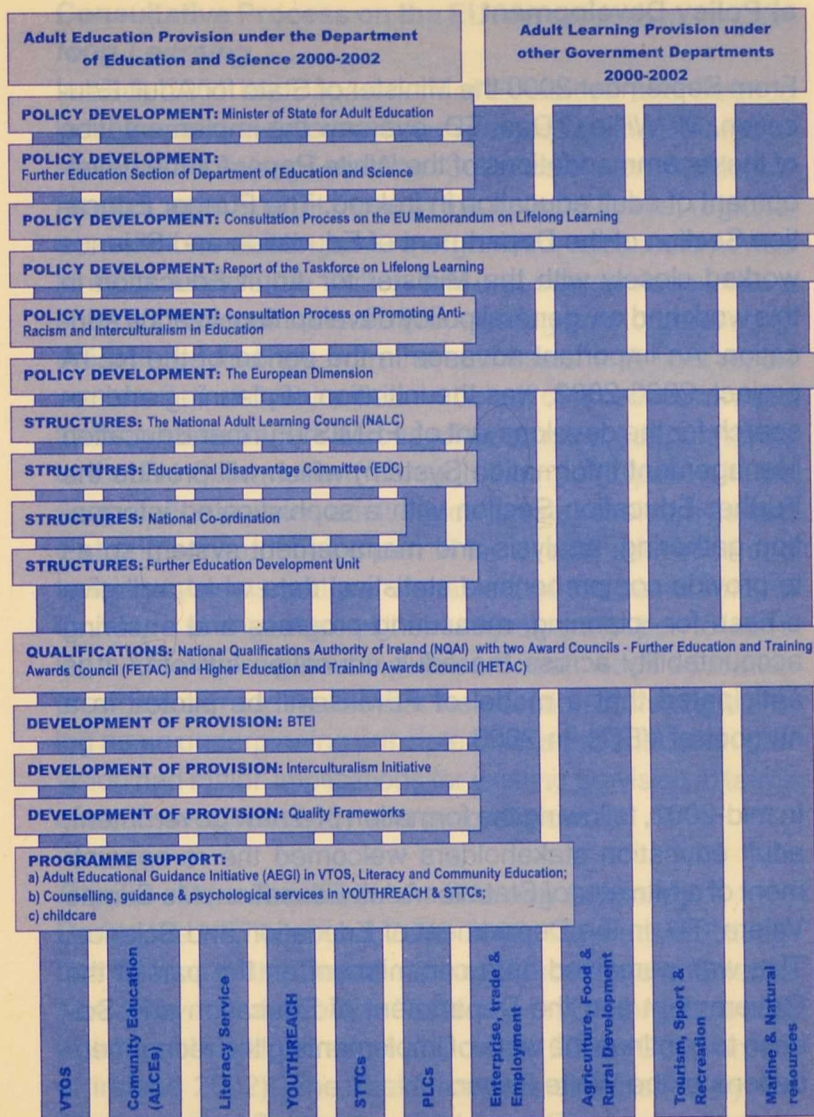
✓ Interculturalism Initiative

✓ Quality Frameworks

e) Programme Support
Developments in relation to programme support for adult education include:

✓ Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI)

✓ YOUTHREACH & STTCs Counselling, guidance & psychological services

✓ Expansion of childcare provision

Model 2. which builds on Model 1. illustrates the scope of the initiatives listed above which are operating as developmental and co-ordinating measures *across* the adult learning programmes located in further education and in the community under the Department of Education and Science and *between* these programmes and adult learning programmes funded by other government departments.

Adult Education Provision under the Department of Education and Science 2000-2002	Adult Learning Provision under other Government Departments 2000-2002

POLICY DEVELOPMENT: Minister of State for Adult Education

POLICY DEVELOPMENT: Further Education Section of Department of Education and Science

POLICY DEVELOPMENT: Consultation Process on the EU Memorandum on Lifelong Learning

POLICY DEVELOPMENT: Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning

POLICY DEVELOPMENT: Consultation Process on Promoting Anti-Racism and Interculturalism in Education

POLICY DEVELOPMENT: The European Dimension

STRUCTURES: The National Adult Learning Council (NALC)

STRUCTURES: Educational Disadvantage Committee (EDC)

STRUCTURES: National Co-ordination

STRUCTURES: Further Education Development Unit

QUALIFICATIONS: National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) with two Award Councils - Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC)

DEVELOPMENT OF PROVISION: BTEI

DEVELOPMENT OF PROVISION: Interculturalism Initiative

DEVELOPMENT OF PROVISION: Quality Frameworks

PROGRAMME SUPPORT:
a) Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI) in VTOS, Literacy and Community Education;
b) Counselling, guidance & psychological services in YOUTHREACH & STTCs;
c) childcare

Column labels: VTOS | Community Education (ALCEs) | Literacy Service | YOUTHREACH | STTCs | PLCs | Enterprise, trade & Employment | Agriculture, Food & Rural Development | Tourism, Sport & Recreation | Marine & Natural resources

Model 2. The Co-ordination of Adult Learning Provision under the Department of Education and Science and other Government Departments 2000-2002

167

a) Policy Development

From September 2000 the Minister of State for Adult Education, Mr Willie O'Dea, TD, oversaw the implementation of the recommendations of the White Paper for the development of adult education in Ireland. The Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Science worked closely with the Minister for Adult Education in this work and on general policy development in adult education. An important advance in the period of the NETA project, 2000-2002, was the initiation of planning and research for the development of FEMIS (Further Education Management Information System) which will provide the Further Education Section with a sophisticated information gathering, analysis and management system so as to provide comprehensive statistical data which will give a base for planning, measuring progress and ensuring accountability across the adult education system. It is anticipated that a model of FEMIS will be piloted in a number of VECs in 2003.

In mid-2002, following the formation of a new government, adult education stakeholders welcomed the re-appointment of a Minister of State for Adult Education, Ms Síle de Valera, TD, in the Department of Education and Science. This was perceived as a commitment on the part of the Government and the Department of Education and Science to continue the work of implementing the recommendations of the White Paper.

The following paragraphs outline the initiatives in the period 2000-2002 which have contributed to policy development and which have been indicated in Model 2. above.

Consultative Process on the EU *Memorandum on Life-long Learning*

In early 2001 the Department of Education and Science led the nation-wide consultation process on the EU *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*. Submissions on the Memorandum were sought through the national press; regional consultative meetings were organised; a consultant was hired to analyse the written and oral submissions; and a one-day national consultative meeting was organised to present the findings from the submissions. A final report was drafted and forwarded on behalf of all education and training stakeholders across all government departments to the EU Commission. Through their participation in the consultation process adult education stakeholders gained a strong sense of being part of the overall education and training systems and were enabled, at the same time, to develop a strong sense of their unique contribution to learning and to lifelong learning, in particular. Adult education providers came to realise that the adoption of lifelong learning as an underpinning principle of all adult education provision had major implications for existing provision in terms of access, accessibility and progression.

Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning

During the NETA project, 2000-2002, the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Science was a key member of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning which published its report in October 2002 (Government of Ireland 2002). The Taskforce was established by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in collaboration with the Department of Education and Science. In all, eight government departments were represented on the Taskforce. The Taskforce decided to concentrate

its attention on the adult learning aspect of lifelong learn-
ing and it set out to develop a strategic framework for
lifelong learning by mapping existing lifelong learning pro-
vision, identifying gaps in that provision and proposing
solutions to fill those gaps. The resultant strategic frame-
work established by the Taskforce has the following five
essential elements:

✓ Developing and implementing the National Framework
of Qualifications;

✓ Ensuring basic skills for all;

✓ Providing comprehensive and coherent guidance and
information;

✓ Addressing delivery, access and funding issues;

✓ Better learning opportunities in the workplace and for
workers.

As will be recognised, all of these issues were dealt with
in detail in the Department of Education and Science White
Paper on adult education in 2000. What gives the report
of the Taskforce major significance for the adult education
sector of the Department of Education and Science is its
inter-departmental origins and the inter-departmental and
cross-sectoral nature of its findings, discussions and rec-
ommendations. These characteristics give additional force
to the recommendations and, in doing so, reinforce the
validity and vitality of the proposals in the White Paper for
the development of adult education.

The report devotes a chapter to dealing in detail with each element of the strategic framework for lifelong learning and concludes each chapter with recommendations for the development of the element of the framework under discussion. Significantly, the report recognises that 'systemic change within the delivery and funding system' is perhaps 'the biggest change to be faced in the move from "education and training" to Lifelong Learning'.

Consultative Process on Promoting Anti-Racism and Interculturalism in Education

From September to December 2002 the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Science was involved in organising and participating in the consultative process on the promotion of anti-racism and interculturalism at all levels of the education system in Ireland, within the context of existing curricula. The task embraced pre-schooling, first and second level, further and higher education and youth and community education. The intention was to develop a report from the education sector which would inform the National Action Plan against Racism being drawn up by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The initiative in the education sector was overseen by an inter-agency Education Working Group established by the Department of Education and Science. The Working Group was a sub-committee of the Inter-Departmental Steering Committee for the National Anti-Racism Public Awareness Programme set up by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Submissions were sought from all education stakeholders through the public press; regional consultative meetings were organised; consultants were hired to manage and

analyse the findings; a national one-day conference was organised to present the findings of the submissions and the resultant recommendations. Once again, through participation in this consultation process, adult educators' sense of being part of the overall education system was enhanced. They gained a strong impression of the unique contribution of adult education to promoting anti-racism and interculturalism in Ireland and they understood that the promotion of anti-racism and interculturalism was a cross-cutting issue for all adult education programmes.

The European Dimension

The "European dimension" acts as a co-ordinating force across adult learning policy and provision under the Department of Education and Science and other government departments.

The European dimension strongly influences policy developments in adult education and training in Ireland. The fact that lifelong learning forms a key part of the EU employment strategy and associated Employment Guidelines, the launch of the drive to create a "Europe of Innovation and Knowledge" at the 2000 Lisbon European Council, the publication in 2001 of the EU Commission's *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, the countrywide consultation process that followed, the Commission's follow-up report, *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* and, finally, the *Future Concrete Objectives of Education Systems,* have all influenced policy developments in adult education in Ireland in the period of the NETA project, 2000-2002.

The European dimension has also contributed significantly

to the development of adult education and training provision in Ireland. Many of the adult education programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science were, up to 2000, supported by the European Social Fund.

In addition, many practitioners participate as co-ordinators and/or partners in the Community Action Programmes, Leonardo da Vinci, Socrates and Youth, where they gain in experience and expertise through working with adult educators from all over Europe in co-operation projects, study visits, exchanges and educational networks. Thousands of adult learners have been the beneficiaries of these programmes through study visits, exchanges, virtual classrooms and enhanced learning environments and resources.

b) Structures

The National Adult Learning Council (NALC)

Based on the proposal in the White Paper, the National Adult Learning Council was established by the Minister of State for Adult Education in the Department of Education and Science in March 2002 to carry out the functions indicated in the White Paper, viz.,

✓ promote the co-ordinated development of adult education and training provision within an agreed national strategy and policy framework;

✓ liaise with the variety of stakeholders in the field;

✓ advise on quality standards and

✓ engage in evaluation and research in the field of adult education.

Membership of NALC includes representation from a broad range of interests including social partners, education and training providers, learners, community and voluntary pillar interests and the NQAI (National Qualifications Authority of Ireland).

NALC has met regularly throughout 2002 and a consultancy team was commissioned to draw up a report on its staffing needs within the broad parameters of the proposals in the White Paper. The report was received towards the end of 2002 and it is expected that staffing will be put in place in 2003. Adult education stakeholders strongly welcomed the establishment of NALC and they are anticipating enhanced co-ordination and coherence in adult education provision under its direction in the years ahead.

The Educational Disadvantage Committee
The Educational Disadvantage Committee was established by the Minister for Education and Science in March 2002. Its purpose is to advise the Minister on policies and strategies to be adopted to identify and correct educational disadvantage. Members of the Committee are drawn from voluntary and other bodies which have particular insights and experience in the area of tackling disadvantage. The Committee will advise the Minister on a number of areas including:

✓ the creation, co-ordination and implementation of new and existing initiatives;

✓ the identification and commissioning of research and evaluation;

✓ in-career development for teachers and other personnel serving the needs of those experiencing educational disadvantage;

✓ the development of interdepartmental and inter-agency links with a view to ensuring greater cohesion among initiatives catering for educational disadvantage.

The Committee which is based on an expert rather than a representational model will have a three-year term of office. To facilitate participation by a wide range of education partners as well as bodies and agencies active in tackling social exclusion, the Minister decided to set up a larger Forum to address educational disadvantage. This Forum which met for the first time in November 2002 will meet twice a year and will have a vital role in advising on broader issues relating to educational disadvantage and exclusion from the benefits of education (Department of Education and Science 2002a)

Adult education is directly represented on the Educational Disadvantage Committee by the Directors of NALA (National Adult Literacy Agency) and AONTAS (the National Adult Education Association). The Committee serves to promote the concept of the systemic approach to adult education as recommended by the White Paper in that it views adult education as part of the overall education system and its members are aware that a person's experience in initial education has profound implications for her/his attitude to and readiness to engage in, adult learning.

The Committee also draws together Department of Education and Science-funded adult education programmes addressing educational disadvantage, seeing them as a whole and making recommendations in relation to the creation, co-ordination and implementation of new and existing initiatives. Its practical effects on the ground in relation to adult education have yet to be experienced, but the bringing together of adult education stakeholders as part of the Forum to address the issue of educational disadvantage was considered a good start in November 2002.

National Co-ordination

In the period 2000-2002 the National Co-ordination of adult education programmes was extended through the appointment by the Department of Education and Science of a National Co-ordinator of Adult Literacy in 2000 and a National Co-ordinator of Community Education in 2002. The former is hosted by NALA, the National Adult Literacy Agency and the latter by AONTAS, the National Adult Education Association.

The National Co-ordinator of Adult Literacy has responsibility for working closely with adult literacy organisers (ALOs) who manage local literacy provision in the VEC areas and supporting them in their efforts to expand services in line with the recommendations of the White Paper and to implement the NALA quality framework and the NALA learner assessment framework.

The National Co-ordinator of Community Education will work closely with the Community Education Facilitators who were appointed by the VECs in late 2002 to support the development of community education in all VEC areas.

The Further Education Development Unit (FEDU)

FEDU was established by the Department of Education and Science in September 2001 with the aim of co-ordinating and supporting the introduction of the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) into adult education provision throughout the country. The unit has the services of two co-ordinators of further education development who work closely with the National Co-ordinators of VTOS, YOUTHREACH, STTCs, community education and adult literacy. They also work closely with the managers of adult education provision on the ground in local VEC areas.

c)Qualifications

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI)

The *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* published in October 2002 as the NETA project drew to a close summed up the significance of recent developments with regard to qualifications in Ireland thus: "The National Qualifications Framework is of overarching significance. It has the potential to act as a powerful tool which maps the learning landscape in terms of awards and, through the work of the Authority (NQAI) and the two new Awarding and Certifying Councils, brings coherence and transparency to learning provision and outcomes" (Government of Ireland 2002).

Historically, difficulties regarding recognition of learning, credit accumulation and transfer and progression between learning programmes have beset adult learners in Ireland. However, these difficulties began to be addressed in a significant way with the establishment in 2001 of the new

qualifications infrastructure comprising the National Quali-
fications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and two awarding
Councils – the Further Education and Training Awards
Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training
Awards Council (HETAC) – operating under the statutory
remit of the National Qualifications (Education and Train-
ing) Act, 1999. The three bodies have a membership drawn
from a wide range of stakeholders, including nominees of
universities, learners and the social partners.

The Authority's main task is to establish and maintain a
national framework of qualifications. Awards to be included
in this framework are those of public bodies in the Ireland,
namely the two new Councils, FETAC and HETAC, the
Dublin Institute of Technology, the universities and the
Junior and Leaving Certificates of the Department of Edu-
cation and Science. The framework may also include
awards from private bodies in the State, such as profes-
sional bodies, and from international bodies making
awards to learners in the State. Speaking about the frame-
work, the NQAI chief executive has declared:
It is the Authority's goal that the framework will become
the single, nationally and internationally accepted entity
through which all learning achievements may be meas-
ured and related to each other in a coherent way and
which defines the relationship between all education and
training awards. (NQAI 2002b)

The Authority will establish the overall standards of fur-
ther and higher education and training awards, other than
in the universities. The Authority also has a key role to
play in facilitating lifelong learning through the promotion
of access, transfer and progression for all learners at all

levels of further and higher education and training. Further, the Authority will liaise internationally to facilitate the recognition of Irish awards abroad and of international awards in Ireland.

The Authority published a comprehensive discussion document in November 2001 (NQAI 2001) and invited responses in the form of submissions from all adult learning stakeholders.. This consultation phase was followed by a document entitled *Towards a National Framework of Qualifications – Establishment of Policies and Criteria* (NQAI 2002a) which set out the policies and criteria for the development of a national framework of qualifications.

In October 2002 the Authority published a document entitled *Towards a National Framework of Qualifications – Policies, Criteria and Level Indicators* (NQAI 2002c) and indicated that an outline national framework of qualifications including level indicators and award-type descriptors would be published in January 2003. In addition, a document outlining policies and procedures to promote access, transfer and progression will also be published in January 2003.

These developments have been eagerly awaited by adult learners and adult education stakeholders in general. The significance of the framework of qualifications (ranging from lower secondary school qualifications to doctorate level) for the development of transparency, co-ordination, coherence and cohesion across the entire adult learning spectrum under a wide range of government departments cannot be overstated. In addition, the unified FETAC and HETAC accreditation system covering non-university fur-

ther and higher education and training since 2001 is already beginning to have an impact on participation and progression practices among adult learners.

d) Development of Provision

The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)
The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) was introduced by the Department of Education and Science in May 2002 with the aim of providing part-time learning opportunities across the adult education programmes already providing full-time learning opportunities), viz., VTOS, STTCs (Senior Traveller Training Centres) YOUTHREACH and PLCs (Post-Leaving Certificate Courses) and an expansion of provision in those already providing part-time learning opportunities, viz., literacy schemes and community education. The aim of BTEI is to provide return to learning opportunities for young people (over 15 years of age) and adults, a re-entry route for those in the workplace who wish to upgrade their skills in line with emerging needs and, with its emphasis on part-time provision, the chance to combine a return to education and training with family, work and other responsibilities.

BTEI is considered a major contribution to building the capacity of the adult education sector to meet the changing needs of individuals, communities and society. The top priorities of BTEI are to address:

✓ the low literacy levels of the Irish adult population;

✓ the large number of Irish adults (1.1 million aged 15-64) who have not completed upper second-level educa-

tion, of whom 529,600 have not completed lower second-level;

✓ the inflexibility of the Irish education system, with its predominant emphasis on full-time provision, time-specific entry and exit opportunities;

✓ the problems in engaging with hard-to-reach groups.

An examination of the specific objectives of BTEI reveal that the Initiative has a general transversal co-ordinating role including :

✓ bringing together the providers of adult education programmes/courses funded by the Department of Education and Science and other government departments for the Information Days where BTEI was launched on a regional basis;

✓ promoting greater synergy between different forms of adult education provision;

✓ providing a bridge from literacy provision to other adult education programmes;

✓ increasing participation of hard-to-reach groups including early school leavers, older learners, disadvantaged men including those experiencing rural isolation, disadvantaged women, ex-offenders, drug users, people with disabilities, Travellers, homeless people, those in the workplace with basic skills needs, immigrants for whom English is not their mother tongue;

✓ enabling existing programmes to cater for a range of target groups with the result that there is an immediate greater mix of adult learners from different backgrounds in and across programmes that up to the arrival of BTEI were restricted to providing learning opportunities for participants from a narrow range of target groups as dictated by their own specific funding criteria;

✓ developing common monitoring, review and reporting arrangements across the programme providers;

✓ developing common advertising and recruitment materials to be used by all BTEI providers (Department of Education and Science 2002b).

BTEI cost •6.3m in 2002 and, in future, it will cost over •17m for a full year. There are 6,000 places in 2002 and it is planned to expand provision each year so as to provide 20,000 places on an annual basis by 2006.

BTEI provides a clear opportunity for enhanced co-operation, co-ordination and coherence across adult education programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science. The challenge for those involved at national and local levels is to ensure providers resist the tendency to use BTEI funding to develop another stand-alone, "vertical" adult education programme with its own local co-ordinator, staffing and courses and with limited contact with other stand-alone adult education programmes. To follow this tendency will be to short-change adult learners by depriving them of the opportunity of making smooth progress along learning pathways to,

through and between programmes that hitherto have been largely delivered in isolation from one another.

The Interculturalism Initiative

In 2001 the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Science established a committee to oversee an Interculturalism Initiative for a number of adult education programmes within its remit. This move was prompted by the growing diversity of adult learners in full-time and part-time adult education provision in Ireland and by the fact that the promotion of interculturalism is one of three core principles of adult education provision enunciated in the White Paper. The National Co-ordinators of VTOS, YOUTHREACH and the STTCs were members of the committee along with Further Education Section personnel and experts in the area of interculturalism. A consultancy team was hired to research policies and practices for the promotion of interculturalism through adult education in other countries; to develop interculturalism assessment modules accredited by FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council) to be used by adult education providers; to make recommendations to the committee on what needs to be done to foster interculturalism through adult education.

By the end of 2002 a number of assessment modules on interculturalism had been submitted to FETAC and the report to the committee was being finalised. It is anticipated that the assessment modules will be piloted with adult learners in 2003. The pilot study will serve to further promote interaction between the various "stand-alone" adult education programmes on the ground and to address

issues of common concern across those programmes. The Interculturalism Initiative complements and has contributed to, the national consultation on the promotion of anti-racism and interculturalism in the overall education system which took place September -December 2002.

Quality Frameworks

i) FETAC Quality Assurance

Throughout 2002 a FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council) representative Working Group on Quality Assurance was involved in the development of a quality assurance framework for learning sites seeking FETAC certification for its learners. It is intended that within the framework providers will develop and implement policies and procedures to maintain and improve the quality of their programmes of education and training. The key principles which will underpin the development and implementation of quality assurance in the framework are: learner focus; transparency; consistency; local responsibility. All providers seeking to offer FETAC certification will be required to demonstrate their capacity to deliver quality programmes and services in their own contexts.

Towards the end of 2002 and the end of the NETA project, development of the framework was well advanced. Plans for 2003 include the finalising of the quality framework and the development of guidelines detailing quality standards and quality assurance strategies for centres seeking registration with FETAC. As the vast majority of the adult learning programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science and other government departments offer courses with FETAC certification the quality framework has

potential to act as a significant cross-programme and cross-sectoral co-ordinating measure for adult learning.

ii) The Inspectorate and Further Education

In 2001, a member of the Department of Education and Science Inspectorate became involved in the inspection of the adult education programmes funded by the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Science. Throughout 2002 the inspector familiarised himself with the wide range of adult learning funded by the Department, through desk research, through consultation with Further Education Section personnel and National Co-ordinators and through visits to adult learning centres. The visits were followed by reports to the Inspectorate. Going beyond the important quality assurance aspects of this development, the appointment of the inspector and his subsequent research and reports were welcomed by adult education stakeholders on the basis that they constituted a transversal co-ordination measure for the adult education programmes under the remit of the Department of Education and Science and also contributed to the development of a systemic approach to adult education within the Department of Education and Science itself, an approach that had been strongly recommended in the White Paper.

iii) YOUTHREACH and STTCs Quality Framework Initiative

The Quality Framework Initiative for YOUTHREACH and the STTCs has already been described under the heading of measures to promote the internal co-ordination of adult education programmes. It has also been included in Model 2. which illustrates the transversal co-ordina-

tion of adult education provision overall as the framework serves to act as a cross-programme co-ordination and co-operation measure in relation to the two programmes in question.

iv) NALA Quality Framework
The NALA Quality Framework for literacy provision has also been described under the heading of measures to promote the internal co-ordination of adult education programmes and it is included in Model 2. for the same reasons as the inclusion of the Quality Framework for YOUTHREACH and STTCs.

The development of quality frameworks for YOUTHREACH, STTCs and the literacy service in the period 2000-2002 has served as a model of development which other adult education programmes are planning to emulate in 2003 in the interests of providing the best adult education service possible for participants in all learning environments.

e) Programme Supports

Adult Educational Guidance Initiative 2000-2002
The major transversal or cross-programme development under the heading of Programme Supports in the period 2000-2002 was the development of the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (Department of Education and Science and the National Centre for Guidance in Education 2002). The need for such a service was underlined by the White Paper and in early 2000 ten adult guidance services were established on a pilot basis to meet the guidance needs

of participants in VTOS, adult literacy and community education programmes. Phase 2 with a further eight services was added in Autumn 2001 and a third phase of eight further guidance services was put in place in Autumn 2002. This brings to twenty-six the number of local services in place by the end of the NETA project in December 2002. To date 4737 learners have availed of the guidance service provided by the Phase 1 and 2 services. It is anticipated that a comprehensive guidance service meeting the needs of all VTOS, literacy and community education participants throughout the country will be in place by the end of the National Development Plan in 2006.

The AEGI is overseen by an Advisory Group with representatives from a wide range of agencies. The guidance services aim to provide:

✓ comprehensive information on adult learning opportunities in an easily accessible way, including a national website of learning opportunities, updated locally;

✓ a telephone helpline service as well as ICT information points in libraries and community education centres;

✓ training in front-line guidance skills for adult educators;

✓ a framework of qualifications for adult guidance staff;

✓ quality assurance systems.

A feasibility study has been completed on the development of a publicly accessible database of adult learning options, integrated with those of other agencies and in-

corporating a national telephone helpline. Approval is currently being sought for the "design and build" stage which is scheduled to take place in 2003.

Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Services - YOUTHREACH and STTCs

The Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Services in place in YOUTHREACH and the STTCs in September 2000 continued to expand in the period 2000-2002 and in September 2002 a National Co-ordinator for the services took up duty. Her initial work consists of a review of guidance, counselling and psychological services in YOUTHREACH and STTCs and the identification of training and service needs.

The Expansion of Childcare Services

The provision of childcare for learners continues to expand across adult education programmes with increasing funding being made available to providers by the Department of Education and Science and other government departments. In 2002 childcare was being funded for 1672 children of 1338 parents participating in adult education programmes funded by the Department. However, demand outstrips supply on all adult education programmes and, in the context of rapidly rising childcare costs, funding expanded provision will remain a key challenge for the immediate future.

Taking the Co-ordination Agenda forward in relation to Adult Learning in Ireland

The NETA project in Ireland, 2000-2002, has been framed by two publications which are highly significant for adult education, viz., *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education* published in August 2000 and the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* published in October 2002.

As has been stated, the aims of the NETA project in Ireland were to participate in, monitor and report on the extent to which the implementation of the proposals in the White Paper (and some additional measures) were, in the interests of adult learners, contributing to:

✓ increasing *internal* co-ordination and coherence *within* individual adult education programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science;

✓ developing the coherence of provision for target groups of specific interest to the NETA project and partners, viz., early-school leavers, women without basic education certification or vocational qualifications and immigrants;

✓ increasing *transversal* co-ordination and coherence *across* adult education programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science and *between* these

programmes and adult learning programmes funded by other government departments;

✓ developing a systemic approach to adult education within the overall education system funded by the Department of Education and Science.

Accordingly, it is interesting to read that the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* welcomed what is termed "the significant progress" which had been made in the implementation of the agenda set out in the White Paper on adult education. It recommended that the initiatives then underway should be built upon and strengthened to achieve the aim of ensuring that all adults have access to formal and non-formal learning. Clearly, in the view of the Taskforce in October 2002, much had been achieved in the twenty-six months that had elapsed since the publication of the White Paper in August 2000.

This was also evident to the co-ordinator of the NETA project in Ireland over the twenty-eight months period of the project. She participated in and monitored developments and reported on them on an ongoing basis to the NETA partners. The final report, as contained in this chapter, describing progress in implementation and the resulting co-ordination and coherence of adult education provision, clearly indicates that a great number of the White Paper recommendations were, indeed, implemented during the period of the NETA project 2000-2002. In addition, in the opinion of the NETA co-ordinator, the developments that took place contributed significantly to the internal co-ordination and coherence of adult education programmes and to the transversal co-ordination and co-

herence of overall adult education provision funded by the Department of Education and Science. A number of developments, such as the establishment of the qualifications infrastructure, the consultative process on the EU *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* and the publication of the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning*, also contributed significantly to a growing coherence between adult learning programmes in the Department of Education and Science and those of other government departments.

From the point-of-view of two of the target groups of the NETA project overall – early school leavers and women without basic education certification or vocational skills - it is fair to say that access, participation and worthwhile outcomes are now, in 2002, more achievable than they were in 2000 at the beginning of the NETA project. Specifically, the developments in the YOUTHREACH and STTCs programmes outlined earlier have led to enhanced services for early school leavers. Similarly, the recent developments in relation to community education described earlier will provide more and better learning opportunities for women throughout Ireland, in particular those with the lowest levels of education.

Additionally, and in a more general sense, many of the developments since the publication of the White Paper will improve adult education provision for the two target groups in question. In many places in Ireland a guidance service is available to the participants in community education; outreach may come through the BTEI or, indeed, the guidance service; part-time learning opportunities at many different levels are available free of charge

or at a very reduced fee for a very wide range of people through BTEI, including early school leavers and women with the lowest levels of education; the literacy service is much expanded everywhere in Ireland; full-time learning opportunities continue to be available to specific target groups through long-standing programmes such as VTOS, YOUTHREACH, STTCs and PLCs; certification is available within an emerging national qualifications framework; transfer and progression routes are becoming clearer and more readily accessible; lifelong learning is on the agenda across all learning provision; childcare support is more likely to be available; quality frameworks and expanded national co-ordination ensure that providers and other key stakeholders are 'doing things right' as well as 'doing the right thing' in relation to the target groups; the quality of adult education provision looks set to be enhanced by the arrival of NALC and other national structures.

As regards the third NETA target group, immigrants, a number of advances have been made over the period of the NETA project. An immigrant's eligibility to participate in adult learning courses funded by the Department of Education and Science in Ireland is determined by her/his status in the country and ranges from full eligibility on the same grounds as the majority population to a limited eligibility to receive English language tuition where English is not her/his mother tongue. The adult education-wide Interculturalism Initiative and the education system-wide consultation process on Promoting Anti-Racism and Interculturalism in Education have raised awareness among adult education stakeholders of the learning needs of immigrants, of the need to promote interculturalism in all adult learning environments and of their own learning

and skills needs in this respect. A major contribution to this area has come from the IVEA (Irish Vocational Education Association), the representative body of the VECs, which has commissioned research on the learning needs of immigrants and in mid-2002 published a document entitled *Pilot Framework for Educational Provision for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Minority Linguistic Groups, Volume 1: Lifelong Learning*. Copies have been circulated to all VEC personnel involved in the provision of adult learning opportunities throughout the country. In early 2003 regional workshops are planned where the framework will be presented and its implementation will be progressed.

Interestingly, in the context of the aims of the NETA project in Ireland, but not surprisingly, the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* also pays attention to the issue of co-ordination and coherence *within* and *between* adult learning provision funded by a range of government departments. It warns of the need to avoid 'fragmentation of effort (which) could significantly inhibit the achievement of the vision and strategic framework' for lifelong learning set out in its report.

For example, notwithstanding the advances made in relation to the provision of guidance for specific groups of adult learners through the AEGI, in the period of the NETA project, 2000-2002, the report draws attention to the fact that the "key issue" it identified in relation to guidance and information was "lack of coherence, with no single portal or point of contact through which learners can easily access information on (all) the opportunities open to them". This is a major challenge for the immediate future and the report of the Taskforce makes a number of

suggestions for joint actions by various government departments for the development of an integrated strategy for the promotion of co-ordinated responses to the guidance needs of adult learners in all learning sites.

The report also calls for continued and enhanced co-operation and co-ordination of provision *between* the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, the two government departments with the leading policy and funding roles in relation to adult learning in Ireland. As has been seen in these pages, such co-operation and co-ordination has been growing in the period of NETA, 2000-2002. The report also stresses the need for *internal* coherence in each government department and underlines its belief that policy in relation to all of the sectors under the Department of Education and Science - primary, secondary, further and higher education - must be driven by "the lifelong learning imperative". This recommendation echoes and gives weight to, the call in the White Paper for a systemic approach to adult education in the Department of Education and Science whereby it is seen as an integral part of the education system – a development on which, as has also been seen in these pages, advances have been made in the period of NETA.

Clearly, much has been done to enhance the co-ordination and coherence of adult education provision in Ireland during the short period of the NETA project, 2000-2002, but much remains to be done as contexts evolve and the challenges of living in rapidly changing and increasingly complex environments drive the demand for adult learn-

ing opportunities. The publication of the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* at the end of the NETA project period in Ireland has been welcomed by adult educators throughout the country. Its comprehensive and cross-sectoral approach has been applauded and it is seen as supporting and reinforcing the recommendations on adult education policy, funding and provision set out in *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*. Together the two documents will act as key reference points in the decade ahead and as a powerful call to action to all the stakeholders to continue the move towards co-ordination and coherence in adult learning provision.

The work undertaken in the NETA project will continue. Monitoring, reviewing and reporting on the growth of co-ordination, coherence and cohesion in adult learning is part of practice in the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Science and the National Adult Learning Council (NALC) will have a crucial role to play in this respect in the years ahead. The model of co-ordination developed in the NETA project and set out as Model 2. in Section 4.2 of this report, will evolve over the coming years and will be added to and refined in the best interests of the key stakeholder in adult learning – the adult learner.

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Conclusion

The NETA project ran from September 2000 to December 2002, following a work programme with the following goals:

✓ Setting up a transnational European partnership;
✓ Organising a national partnership in Spain of formal and non-formal sectors involved in adult education;
✓ Carrying out regional and national studies of the adult education situation;
✓ Using the above study to identify adult learning needs and any major weaknesses in adult education provision;
✓ Identifying best experiences and practices in responding to the learning needs of three groups - young people leaving the education system, women with a low level of education and training, and immigrants - in order to disseminate them among other learner;
✓ Identifying models for co-ordination in adult education and defining the competencies which constitute informal learning and individual experiences.

In Spain, one of the main driving-forces behind the NETA project was the process of decentralising education that

Spain, like other countries in the European Union, has recently undergone, transferring the relevant jurisdiction to the Autonomous Communities. It is anticipated that decentralisation, together with the fact that the goals of the education authorities and a good number of institutions, non-profit organisations and trade unions include adult education and training, may lead to a certain degree of fragmentation and the duplication of provision.

It has, therefore, been necessary to set up working partnerships and foster co-operation between institutions as well as non-formal sectors. The national partnership that was set up during the NETA project has enabled us to debate and propose ways to maximise efforts and resources and adapt them to real needs, i.e. needs that have become evident through the existing demand for learning opportunities. It has also enabled us to exchange experiences and practices that have proven effective in working with the three target groups. We find that the data supplied by the three regional governments on participation in adult education point to a qualitative and quantitative change in the demand from the population, as well as a growing need for additional education and vocational training provision. However, since real-life situations mean that no single solution can be implemented, a joint search for solutions is proposed, based on the actual characteristics of the women and men in each population group.

In the NETA project in Denmark a review of competencies was carried out at a regional level in the County of Viborg. The study provided an opportunity of assessing the results of policies to improve adult education at a regional level. This review will be extended to other regions

in Denmark and an organisation has been set up, with the involvement of all the relevant organisations and agencies, to develop and recognise the relevant competencies.

Over the course of the NETA project in the County of Viborg, several studies were carried out in order to identify best practices related to guidance for adult, so that these experiences, which have been offering encouraging results for several years now, will be disseminated.

The NETA project in Ireland points to the crucial importance of co-ordination, coherence and cohesion in the provision of learning opportunities for adults, especially adults with low levels of educational achievement such as early school leavers, women without educational or training qualifications and immigrants.

Access, participation and outcomes are greatly enhanced for adult learners when policy, structures, funding, provision, qualification infrastructures and learning supports are coherent and cohesive across the entire spectrum of adult learning opportunities. To put it simply, the resultant transparency, 'logic' and enabling nature of the organisation and provision of learning opportunities make it easier for adult learners at all levels to find their way to, around, through, out of and back into, learning, formal and non-formal, in a wide range of learning settings, as the need or the desire arises throughout their lives.

The guiding principle lies in keeping the adult learner in all her/his diversity and with all her/his learning needs for the fulfilment of key adult roles – social, cultural, spiritual,

economic, political – at the centre of the endeavour. With this approach, adult education will be efficient and effective not only in terms of addressing individual learner needs but also in terms of addressing the collective needs at local, regional and national levels.

The NETA project in Ireland also underscores the importance of on-going monitoring and review of policy implementation and the development of conceptual frameworks for describing what is actually unfolding. The monitoring and review carried out by the NETA project was necessarily broad sweeping given the period of momentous change for adult education in Ireland in which the project was operating and the scope of the project and, clearly, there is also a need for more detailed observation, analysis and evaluation of developments as they occur.

With these contributions NETA project wants to highlight the significance of a renewed adult education as the key to personal, social and economic development and its importance to build a Europe of knowledge—with "knowledge" used here in the widest sense to cover all spheres of learning over the entire length and breadth of people's lives, whether it is formal, non-formal or informal.

Finally, we should not conclude this assessment of the project *NETA: What Are We Doing in Adult Education?* without mentioning the actual process of the development of the project. All the NETA partners have learned a great deal from this project, particularly from the difficulties that it has entailed, which posed a continuous challenge from the beginning and have forced us to come up with differ-

ent strategies, first to get the partnership up and running and subsequently to maintain it as a going concern.

The greatest difficulties that the NETA project encountered occurred at a transnational level, with the challenges posed by the withdrawal of two of the partners (Portugal and Rumania)—once the project had been launched and the arrival of a new partner (Poland), the latter proving to be a drawn-out process. Unfortunately, despite all the efforts made, Poland was unable to remain on board and withdrew when the project was in its final stages.

These are some of the unforeseen factors that arose during the course of the project. Factoring in the possibility of unforeseen factors arising is essential in a transnational project, since their consequences may determine a project's progress and even bring it to a premature end. It is, therefore, advisable to consider not only expected results and desired end products, but also the whole process that will determine whether a successful conclusion can be reached.

Index

The NETA Project in Ireland

Hvad laver på vi voksenuddannelsesområdet ?

Cad tá á dhéanamh againn in aos-oideachas ?

Neta

¿Qué hacemos en educación de personas adultas?

What are we doing in adult education?

www.mec.es/adultos/NETA

Who is Participating in NETA:

Dirección General de
Promoción Educativa
C. A. de Madrid

Comunidad Escolar
Periódico Digital de
Información Educativa

C. A. de Murcia

Consejería de Educación y Cultura

Viborg County Council Amt.
Dinamarca

D. G. de Centros Educativos
y Formación Profesional
C. A. de Castilla - La Mancha

Junta de Comunidades de
Castilla-La Mancha
Consejería de Educación y Cultura

Furher Education Section.
Department of Education
and Science
Irlanda

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