

Lifelong learning in Ireland and Lithuania: Some examples of Irish policy and practice for Lithuania to consider?

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The article deals with the questions of a broader vision for active citizenship, community development, personal development and social inclusion than a view of lifelong learning as being for a merely economic rationale. It is based on the results of the 6FP research project "Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe: The Contribution of the Educational System". The material reveals statistical data and policies analyses. The main focus is put on growing recognition that widening participation in lifelong learning must be reinforced in the future if Ireland is to capitalise on its economic success over the last decade or so. Some examples of good practice in Ireland with regard to lifelong learning may be transferable to the context of Lithuania.

Key words: citizenship, social inclusion, lifelong learning

INTRODUCTION

Ireland has moved from a country with high unemployment and net emigration to one of net immigration and unemployment rates of less than 5%. Despite this recent economic growth, Central Statistics Office (2004) figures indicate that for close to one-fifth of the adult population over the age of 15, the highest education achieved is at primary level. Furthermore, only 45% of Ireland's current adult population have completed secondary education, and Ireland has the second lowest level of literacy among 22 countries recently surveyed by the OECD (2000). In that survey, 24% of Irish adults were found to have a level of literacy below that required for fully effective participation in society. There is growing recognition that widening participation in lifelong learning must be reinforced in the future if Ireland is to capitalise on its economic success over the last decade or so (OECD, 2004). The importance of lifelong learning has become even more centre stage given the current demographic trends where, in Ireland and throughout Europe, including Lithuania¹, there is a decline in births.

Historically, Ireland has had a strong community-based adult education sector underpinned by high levels of volunteerism. As a consequence, social forces have always been viewed as key drivers, alongside the economic forces

at play, in the promotion of the lifelong learning agenda. Lifelong learning is seen as a key to personal development and social inclusion as '*...education empowers individuals to participate fully and creatively in their communities*' (Department of Education and Science 1995). This paper will outline a range of policies and practices in the Irish context with regard to lifelong learning. Having highlighted the broad scope and vision for lifelong learning in the official government White Paper on Lifelong Learning (2000), the following key themes will be focused on, namely, social inclusion, access to third level education for traditionally marginalised groups, literacy interventions, community development approaches with a focus on women's community groups, active citizenship, gender, and adults with specific learning difficulties.

It is clear from the table below that ethnicity is a key issue in Lithuania (as well as Ireland) with regard to lifelong learning.

In short, the situation of national minority education and labour market is as follows: high level of unemployment, social marginalisation, new social marginalisation for groups of unemployed persons and lack of support for employing the most socially assailable groups of unemployed persons. It is significant to note that unemployed representatives of national minority groups have lower education, no proper professional training, and are passive as far as involvement into labour activities are concerned. The lack of knowledge of state language (Lithuanian) is also one of the key obstacles for those belonging to national minorities to gain

¹ According to provisional results of the Population and Housing Census 2001 in Lithuania, the Lithuanian population decreased by 184,000 or 5% of the population since 1989.

Table. Economically active population in Lithuania 1989–2005 by ethnicity²

	Population		Among them:							
			Employed		Unemployed		Non-active		Not indicated	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total	2803988	100	1273820	46	308377	11	1189232	42	32559	1
Lithuanians	2308694	100	1056581	45.8	243705	10.6	986047	42.7	22361	1
Poles	196028	100	85284	43.5	26222	13.4	82613	42.1	1909	1
Russians	194702	100	82972	42.6	26527	13.6	82458	42.3	2745	1.4
Others	81588	100	36482	44.7	10422	12.8	33508	41.1	1176	1.4
Not indicated	22976	100	12501	54.4	1501	6.5	4606	20	4368	19

professional training and find a suitable job. The focus on the themes described above in relation to the Irish context and lifelong learning all have relevance to issues of ethnicity. Nevertheless a direct examination of the very important theme of ethnicity in relation to Ireland and Lithuania for lifelong learning is beyond the direct scope of this article.

THE SCOPE OF LITHUANIAN STATE STRATEGIES IN CONTRAST TO THE BROADER SCOPE OF THE IRISH WHITE PAPER ON LIFELONG LEARNING (2000)

In light of the challenges faced by Lithuanian society today, as well as taking into account that knowledge society, secure society and competitive economy are defined as priorities in the Long-Term Development Strategy of the Lithuanian State, the mission of education in Lithuania is as follows for the National Education Strategy 2003–2012:

1. To help an individual *to understand* the contemporary world, to acquire cultural and social competences and to become an independent, active and responsible person willing and able to learn and create the life of his own and the life of society.

2. To help an individual *to acquire a vocational qualification* corresponding to the level of modern technologies, culture and personal skills, and *to create conditions* enabling lifelong learning, which encompasses continuous satisfaction of cognitive needs, seeking to acquire new competences and qualifications that are necessary for the professional career and meaningful life.

3. To ensure *balanced and knowledge-based development* of the economy, environment and culture of this country, domestic and international competitiveness of the economy, national security and evolution of the democratic society, thus strengthening the creative powers of the society.

4. *To guarantee continuity* of culture nourished by the nation and the country, continuous process of creation, protection of identity, as well as to foster the open and dialogic nature of the culture.

In March 2004, Lithuanian Ministers of Education and Science and Social Security and Labour approved jointly the Strategy for Lifelong Learning³ and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy. These documents defined the *tasks and objectives* for the development of Lifelong Learning Programme:

- increase the impact of vocational training and continuous education on the employment strategy;
- increase the accessibility of training, in particular to those who got the least advantage from the system of education;
- develop the facilities of the system of education increasing respective investments for institutions providing services in the sphere of education, vocational information, guidance and counselling, and the renovation of technical base;
- improve the coordination of lifelong learning, encouraging a closer cooperation in this sphere;
- improve funding of continuous education and training through special funds and involvement of employers and employees;
- upgrade qualification skills of teachers and other staff performing vocational counselling;
- differentiate the development of the regional structure of lifelong learning, taking into consideration the social and economic needs of the regions;
- elaborate the training quality monitoring system and define the training quality indicators.

Building on the Green Paper on Adult Education (1998) and driven very much by the EU agenda on lifelong learning, the Irish Government published its White Paper on Adult Education entitled *Learning for Life* in 2000. This key document represents Ireland's most significant policy development in adult education / lifelong learning to date. Crucially, the White Paper marks the adoption of lifelong learning as the 'governing principle' of education policy in the Republic of Ireland. Within the Irish context, the lifelong learning agenda has come to be based on three fundamental attributes:

- it is **lifelong** and therefore concerns everything from the cradle to the grave;
- it is **life-wide** recognising that learning occurs in many different settings;

² Sources: Beresnevičiūtė, V. 2005, „Etninių grupių socialinės integracijos dimensijos šiuolaikinėje Lietuvos visuomenėje“, *Etnišumo studijos*. Vilnius: Eugrimas: 140.

³ *Official Gazette*. 2004. No. 56-1957.

- it focuses on **learning** rather than limits itself to education (White Paper, Learning for Life 2000).

The Irish White Paper in recognising Adult and Community Education as a key sector in the lifelong learning continuum – defined adult education as ‘*systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training*’. In setting out its policy objectives for lifelong learning, a number of core themes are highlighted, namely that lifelong learning should embrace personal, cultural and social goals as well as economic ones and be seen as promoting collective as well as personal advancement. Additionally, the needs of marginalized groups are to be addressed explicitly and the role of community education providers in the field of adult education is to be strengthened. Underpinning the overall framework of lifelong learning are six areas of priority:

- **Consciousness Raising:** to realise one’s full potential; self-discovery; personal and collective development;
- **Citizenship:** to grow in self-confidence, social awareness and social responsibility; proactive role in shaping overall direction to the society and community / societal decision-making;
- **Cohesion:** to enhance social capital and empower those significantly disadvantaged;
- **Competitiveness:** adult education role in providing a skilled workforce;
- **Cultural Development:** role of adult education in enriching the cultural fabric of society;
- **Community Development:** role of adult education in development of structural analysis and collective sense of purpose.

Rather than being merely a tag-on to the economic rationale for lifelong learning, the Irish White Paper centres the issue of social cohesion through its emphasis on active citizenship through personal, community and cultural development.

The theoretical influences on the Irish White Paper are implicit and include Eduard Lindemann’s liberal-progressive tradition which ascribes a social role to adult education in supporting the democratic order. Lindemann’s view that adult education has a social role and is non-vocational in character resonates with aspects in the White Paper such as focusing on cultural development, consciousness raising and citizenship. Community development and consciousness raising approaches are strongly influenced by Paolo Freire’s seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, as well as by other thinkers regarding theories of transformation such as Mezirow. Community development principles are imbued within the logic of having Local Area Partnership schemes throughout mainly socio-economically disadvantaged areas of Ireland, as well as within the Home-School Community Liaison Scheme making bridges between schools and parents traditionally marginalized from the education system. Other influential models of community development include Tom Lovett’s work in Northern Ireland and Liverpool regarding ‘liberating’ community adult

education. Consciousness raising and cultural development embrace humanistic traditions regarding personal development such as those of Carl Rogers, and also Malcolm Knowles’ influential *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*.

The Irish Department of Education and Science (DES) and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) have joint policy responsibility for lifelong learning. The Irish government has designated a Minister of State, located within the Department of Education and Science, with special responsibility for Adult Education, Youth Affairs and Educational Disadvantage. The Adult Education Guidance Service aims to provide quality adult education guidance service to participants and those interested in attending literacy and adult and community education programmes in Dublin’s inner city and Dublin South-West. The Service provides information on a wide range of courses. These include Literacy, Post-Leaving Certificate Courses (PLCs), Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), those offered by Adult and Community Education Centres and Access to Third Level Colleges and Universities. Adult Literacy and Community Education Programmes are run under the auspices of the Adult Education Board of the City of Dublin VEC (Vocational Education Committee). They cater for the needs of particular groups within the local community; these include Women’s Groups, Centres for the Unemployed, Family Centres and Education Resource Centres.

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND LIFELONG LEARNING IN IRELAND

In terms of links between the formal education system and lifelong learning, a number of key initiatives at each educational level have been developed with the promotion of lifelong learning and social inclusion as a core objective. At both primary and secondary levels in 1999, the successful Home School Community Liaison scheme was introduced in schools with a designated disadvantaged status. Central to this scheme is partnership and collaboration between parents and teachers in the interests of the child’s learning. The Scheme is delivered through a co-ordinator (teacher) who is assigned to a school or group of schools and who works from the school-site outreaching to the families and broader community, including providing education such as literacy support for families. The aims of the scheme are

- 1) to maximise active participation of children in the schools of the scheme in the learning process, in particular those who might be at risk of failure;
- 2) to promote active cooperation between home, school and relevant community agencies in evoking the educational interests of the children;
- 3) to raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children’s educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills;
- 4) to enhance the children’s uptake from education, their retention in the education system, their continuation

to post-compulsory education and to third level and their attitudes to lifelong learning.

Since 1988, the Departments of Education and Science and Enterprise, Trade and Employment have been funding *Youthreach*, a key education programme which complements mainstream secondary education and facilitates the lifelong learning of those most at risk of educational disadvantage. *Youthreach* is aimed at school leavers between the ages of 15 and 21 who have left school with no formal qualifications. *Youthreach* programmes provide opportunities for basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience. *Youthreach* is generally full-time, and part-time courses can be arranged. Opportunities to improve literacy and numeracy are available at all *Youthreach* centres. *Youthreach* programmes are offered in out-of-school settings located throughout the country, generally in disadvantaged areas. While *Youthreach* is a national programme, centres are locally managed, and programmes reflect the particular social, economic and cultural environment in which they operate. The *Youthreach* programme focuses on the holistic development of the individual and is both participant-centred and participant-led, with the programme following trainees' identified interests and needs with participants and staff acting as equal partners in the learning process. There is an emphasis on recognising and rewarding achievement rather than reinforcing failure and flexibility at all levels (management, relationships, programme). Interactions are less formal and relationships with staff are 'warmer' than in schools, and many observers argue that this is an important component in the programme's success. The young people perceive themselves to be listened to, respected and treated as adults. Groups are relatively small – the tutor–learner ratio is about 10:1. Participants receive a financial stipend each week for participation. The programme works particularly positively with young people from the Travelling community and other ethnic minorities.

FAS, as Ireland's national training and employment authority, provides and delivers services and learning opportunities in a way that seeks to address social exclusion. The vision is that each learner will be given access to the skills, supports and resources needed to engage in learning on a lifelong basis. FAS operates on a strong community partnership model networking closely with whatever the community where it is based. The core values of FAS include; access for all, employability, equity, choices and integration. FAS in conjunction with the VEC operate the Return to Education Programme which enables participants on FAS-funded Community Employment (CE) schemes to be released half-time from their work experience programme to avail of intensive literacy tuition by the VECs while still in receipt of their training allowance.

The Irish National Development Plan (2000–2006) set as a priority the “*continued investment in education and training and, in particular, through developing a*

strategic vision for lifelong learning.”⁴ In light of this, investment in education under the Plan was to concentrate on:

- prevention of early school leaving;
- increasing the retention rate at second level;
- expanding adult and second chance education and training opportunities;
- widening access to third level education;
- improving the funding situation for Research, Technological Development and Innovation (RTDI) — in 2000 it was the lowest in Europe;
- establishment and continuous development of a coherent National Qualifications Framework which underpins a strategy of lifelong learning;
- supporting the requirements of the labour market.

Social partnership agreements entered into by the government over this time period, i.e. the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (PPF) (2000–2002) and *Sustaining Progress* (2003–2005), more particularly the former, explicitly referred to Lifelong Learning:

1) the PPF acknowledged lifelong learning as the key to a future of sustained economic growth and social development at a time of ongoing change and called for the development of a strategic framework for lifelong learning. Establishment of a Taskforce on Lifelong Learning;

2) while *Sustaining Progress* specifically referred to ‘...still maintaining the promoting and investing in Lifelong Learning within available resources’, work on implementing the recommendations of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning will be progressed as a strategic priority as resources permit;

3) provision in the form of significant funding to be made available for the rapid expansion of adult literacy services;

4) targets set for increasing the mature student intake from 2000–2005 and from 2006–2015.

ACCESS TO THIRD-LEVEL EDUCATION IN IRELAND FOR TRADITIONALLY MARGINALISED GROUPS

A recent significant development in terms of promoting lifelong learning within the third-level education sector was the creation of the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education. This office facilitates educational access and opportunity for groups who are under-represented in higher education – those who experience socio-economic disadvantage, those with a disability and mature students – and provides financial incentives to universities to meet target numbers of these students through reserved places and Dedicated Access Officers.

With regard to access to higher education, there are a range of schemes and measures available to assist students from disadvantaged background to avail of third

⁴ National Development Plan 2000–2006, para. 5.21.

level and further education. The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education is the key driver in this area. The measures include

- lowering of entry requirements for courses for third level for socio-economically marginalized groups, with alternative requirements such as essay, interview and/or aptitude test plus references. Similar positive discrimination for access to third level for mature students and students with a disability;
- fee reduction and/or suspension. However, there is a continuing debate / argument over third level fees in that part-time courses are fee paying and full-time ones not;
- provision of Back to Education Allowances / Grant Aid;
- access courses and dedicated full-time College Access Officers in every university. Full-time mature students' officers also;
- outreach initiatives, as well as university campus visits for students from traditionally socio-economically disadvantaged areas, visits for primary and secondary school students to break down cultural barriers and to introduce them to students who can serve as role models for them as many will know no one who has ever been to third level;
- community education;
- mentoring and peer supports for access students;
- college tutors and writing workshop supports;
- on site childcare;
- financial incentives for third level institutions to increase access for socio-economically marginalized groups, including ethnic minorities. The institutions compete for state funding based on their performance with regard to increasing access;
- modularisation of courses.

LITERACY INTERVENTIONS IN IRELAND

The Irish Educational Vocational Association, IVEA, represents the interests, at national level, of Ireland's thirty-three Vocational Education Committees (VECs). The IVEA has a diverse range of functions which at all times seeks to protect, promote and enhance the interests of vocational education and training within the wider education sector and the country at large. It offers a support service to groups offering adult education in a community setting through providing Adult Literacy and Community Education Programmes catering for the needs of particular groups within the local community such as Women's Groups; Centres for the Unemployed; Family Centres and Education Resource Centres; Education Service to Prisons; Education for members of the Traveller minority community; Disability Support Service; a Foundations Project – working in partnership with homeless services. Adult literacy services are provided through the VECs, which employ Adult Literacy Organisers and staff funded through the Department's Adult Literacy and Community Education budget. At the time

of the publication of the OECD survey, the budget was €1m for the entire country, some 5000 learners were benefiting from the service, and unpaid volunteers gave 85% of all tuition.

Mapping the Learning Journey (MLJ) is a framework for summarising and recording progress of literacy learners. This is the culmination of many-year work and consultation with literacy learners and practitioners from Ireland and abroad. MLJ will be offered in basic education settings, including adult literacy, and will be supported through training and advice. MLJ is designed to help learners and tutors identify and record progress in a way that supports the teaching-learning process. The MLJ User Guide focuses on supporting teaching and is not an accreditation system.

Participation in adult literacy programmes has increased from 5,000 in 1997 to 22,733 at the end of December 2001. TV adult literacy and awareness programmes have been commissioned and broadcast on the national television channel RTE, with the 2001 series of READ WRITE NOW attracting an average weekly audience of 235,000. A free-phone help line manned by trained tutors and free learner support materials supplement this TV programme. Videos of the series have been distributed to literacy schemes, Youthreach / Traveller and VTOS centres, public libraries and video outlets. In relation to adult literacy, since publication of the International Adult Literacy survey, IALS, the provision in the education sector for adult literacy has increased from a base of €1.079m in 1997 through €16.476m in 2002. Overall €93.4m has been committed to this area across the six years of the NDP, with a target of reaching 113,000 clients.

A joint FAS/VEC Return to Learning Programme that combined work experience within the Community Employment Scheme with intensive literacy tuition is also being expanded nationally. Furthermore, a workplace literacy programme has been piloted successfully and is being extended to all local authority areas, in co-operation with LANPAG (the Local Authority National Partnership Board). A workplace literacy group with the key social partners and education and training agencies has recommended the establishment of a Workplace Literacy Fund.

Morgan & Kett's (2003) adult prison literacy survey highlighted exceptionally high levels of problems with literacy among both older and younger prisoners across a range of Irish prisons. In partnership with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Department of Education and Science, County Roscommon Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) provides over 10,000 hours of tuition in the Education Unit of Castlerea Prison. The curriculum ranges from Literacy and Basic Education to degree level, and students may opt for part-time or full-time courses. Many of those courses are accredited and students sit the usual state examinations if they so wish. The Education Unit employs the liberal Adult Education model which is

characterised by voluntary student participation, a broad curriculum, student autonomy in subject choice, student identification of their own needs and an emphasis on meeting specific educational needs of all students.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)⁵ in its Learners' Development Plan outlines a range of activities that aim to promote active citizenship and empowerment. Through a range of courses available, adult learners are enabled to develop skills and become more confident in participation in decision-making, group work and facilitation, as well as engagement in wider society. A Government Task Force in Active Citizenship was established in April 2006 to determine how to promote greater citizen participation in communities and in society. The Task Force is to consider on a broad basis at official level the policies and actions which can help or hinder civic engagement, while on an individual level it will seek to identify the supports that help encourage people to become involved and to stay involved.

The Community Platform is a grouping of voluntary organisations united in their work for social justice through principles of community development. The Community Platform is represented on the Community and Voluntary Pillar which forms one part of the Social Partners grouping involved with Government in negotiating national agreements. NALA attends Platform meetings on a monthly basis. Community Education Facilitators (CEFs) encourage links between both formal and informal education providers to help create a positive learning experience for adults in community education.

The Irish White Paper on Adult Education 2000 recommended the nationwide appointment of thirty-five CEFs under the aegis of the Department of Education and Science (DES) throughout the VEC. Their work is to support and assist new and existing Community Education groups on such issues as development of courses, resources, accreditation / certification and progression routes for learners. They encourage links between both formal and informal education providers to help create a positive learning experience for the adult in community education.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER IN IRELAND

Adult education and lifelong learning has traditionally been driven by a dynamic community-based women's education sector. A Women's Education Initiative was established in 1998 with assistance under the 1994–1999 Community Support Framework (CSF) to assist

projects to address the current gaps in provision for educationally disadvantaged women. In the 2000–2006 Operational Programme this measure has been broadened into the Education Equality Initiative focusing on both disadvantaged women and men, in view of the under-representation of men in adult education generally, and the particular difficulties experienced in attracting disadvantaged older men. The Green Paper notes that 80% of community education participants are women and there is now recognition of the need for distinct outreach strategies to motivate men to participate in adult education (Owens 2000). AONTAS⁶ has developed the Women's Community Education Quality Assurance Framework (www.aontas.com). The groups such as ACCESS 2000 Wexford; Clondalkin Women's Network; Longford Women's Link and Amerge Group were engaged in the project of the Quality Assurance Framework for Women's Community Education. The map of best practice as shaped by the four networks formed the basis of the Quality Assurance Framework. Through this project AONTAS is supporting Community Education in determining its own set of standards, which will help to ensure continuous improvement and professional growth in the sector. In 2006, AONTAS will be pushing for funding to develop the Framework with a broader range of groups to ensure that its impact is as great as possible.

The Irish Statutory Committee on Educational Disadvantage (2005) *'proposes a new strategy that places the solutions to educational disadvantage within an inclusive lifelong learning framework'* and recognises that *'the adult and community education sector has been very active in pushing the boundaries and in promoting systemic change'*. An example of community development policy is the Shanty Project in Dublin, involving mainly women centred in the community of Tallaght West, the top 1% of most disadvantaged areas in Ireland. The vast majority are lone parents and social welfare recipients, including some asylum seekers. Most left the formal educational system at a very young age, some not even reaching secondary school. 450 participate in 23 classes (average size 15 in a class) each year. The learners and the tutors create the learner-centred curricula, with even the accredited programmes being learner centred. A full counselling service is provided with approximately 35% of the course participants having accessed the counselling dimension also. They work closely with local drug projects and with methadone users (age 17–25) in providing personal development and education. Courses on Personal Development, Communication Skills, Basic Literacy and Numeracy Training are their starting point. These courses

⁵ NALA is a membership organisation with voluntary status, concerned with the national co-ordination, training and policy development in adult literacy work in Ireland.

⁶ AONTAS is the Irish National Association of Adult Education, a voluntary membership organisation. It exists to promote the development of a learning society through the provision of a quality and comprehensive system of adult learning and education, which is accessible to and inclusive of all.

allow participants, the majority of whom left school at 14/15 years, to proceed in a carefully planned progression route to mainstream education, training or employment. The second strand of courses reflects the needs of the local community for training in leadership, e.g., training for community drug workers and estate management courses. These courses have been developed at the behest of local community groups. These courses allow a process of empowerment; people are encouraged to access and voice their own education and training needs thereby supporting people to take control of their own lives as individuals and communities. The third strand of courses they run allows people to access further education. Some of their past students have gone on to third level Colleges and Universities, gaining certificates, diplomas and degrees. The fourth strand of courses has as the immediate goal retraining for employment; their state of the art computer centre will allow further courses to upskill long-term unemployed people for employment. Their proximity to City West Business Campus, which will employ 12,000 people, allows them ready access to a potential job market.

GENDER AND LIFELONG LEARNING IN IRELAND

The Gender Equality Unit was established in June 2001 under the Equal Opportunities Promotion and Monitoring measure of the National Development Plan. The Equality Unit is currently establishing its strategy which includes creating awareness of gender equality among all the stakeholders in the education system, including the staff of the DES. It provides a support and advisory service on mainstreaming equality between women and men – gender mainstreaming. They believe that equality of opportunity between women and men, girls and boys, now affects the lives of every person who comes into contact with the education system.

Central to women's learning opportunities / participation in lifelong learning is the issue of childcare. Flexible needs-based childcare support for adult learners is a key to participation, though there is a growing difficulty with the cost of insurance, access to appropriate premises / facilities and availability to trained childcare personnel. AONTAS recommends that adequate, affordable and accessible childcare should be an integral part of funded programmes and not an add-on or an afterthought (AONTAS, 2003, p. 4).⁷

Owens (2000) observes that some more marginalized men's personal development groups serve as a 'gateway to education' through linking men to relevant programmes and supporting them through the process rather than offering education in its own right. To engage marginalized men, Owens (2000) emphasises the importance of counsellors to provide emotional support for participants and identifies programme participants as a

key resource to motivate other marginalised people to participate in adult education.

ADULTS AND SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN IRELAND

While Specific Learning Difficulties are considered to be dyslexia, dyspraxia, Asperger's syndrome and ADHD, only dyslexia is properly addressed with procedures in place for additional supports. Not all sectors have policy documents on Specific Learning Difficulties for adults and where there are policy documents, they concentrate in the main on dyslexia only.

The BUA Centre, Blanchardstown, Dublin, provides assessment and support for adolescents and adults with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. Staff at the centre also provide functional strategies and support for other associated specific processing / learning difficulties such as Asperger's syndrome and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The BUA Centre promotes inclusive education nationally through its unique screening facility together with comprehensive educational, vocational and functional activity support services for third-level students and adult learners with Specific Processing / Learning Difficulties. BUA has a broad and highly qualified multidisciplinary team who work closely together and are committed to providing a best practice service.

The Kerry Deaf Adult Learning project aims to address the severe gaps in the provision of education and training opportunities of Deaf Irish Sign Language users in Kerry by capacity building 18 deaf adults to actively participate in local educational provision. It delivers a 2.5-year accredited programme to 18 deaf adults, a modular programme based on the British model developed by the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP). After the training is completed the participants will be trained to become accredited Deaf Adult Tutors and provide the programme to other local deaf people and their families, statutory and non-statutory organisations.

CONCLUSIONS

The Irish Government White Paper (2000) offers a broader vision for active citizenship, community development, personal development and social inclusion than a view of lifelong learning as being for a merely economic rationale. There has been a strong commitment, at a local as well as at the national level in Ireland, to a view of adult education beyond that of focusing simply on the individual – to acknowledging the role of adult education in community development. Women's groups have been particularly to the fore in Ireland with regard to community development at a local level. Some examples of good practice in Ireland with regard to lifelong learning, for example, with regard to issues of basic education and prisoners, adults with specific learning

⁷ cf. Childcare and Adult Education, AONTAS, 2003, p. 4.

difficulties as well as other key themes, may be transferable to the context of Lithuania if there were Lithuanian State commitment to fund such projects and policies.

There are a number of concerns for improvement in the Irish context that need to be acknowledged. These include the need for speedier implementation of the White Paper, increased proportion of the education budget to be given to lifelong learning, the need for part-time students to be given more financial supports and the need for a dedicated family literacy budget.

Received 25 October 2006

Accepted 20 November 2006

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TĘSTINIS MOKYMASIS AIRIJOJE IR LIETUVOJE: KELETAS AIRIJOS POLITIKOS IR PRAKTIKOS PAVYZDŽIŲ, SVARSTYTINŲ LIETUVOJE?

Santrauka

Straipsnyje suaugusiųjų tęstinio mokymosi klausimai nagrinėjami platesniame pilietybės, bendruomenių ir individualaus tobulėjimo kontekste, kreipiantis socialinio įsitraukimo link. Šia prasme nagrinėjant tęstinį mokymąsi neapsiribojama vien daugiau ar mažiau ekonomiškai pagrįstu jo pasirinkimu. Straipsnyje remiamasi 6BP programos vykdomu projektu „Visą gyvenimą besimokančios Europos link: švietimo sistemos indėlis“, panaudojant statistikos duomenis bei Lietuvoje ir Airijoje vykdomos politikos analizę. Kreipiant dėmesį į tai, kad vis platesnis dalyvavimas tęstiniame mokyme Airijoje ateityje galėtų tapti ekonominę naudą teikiančiu dalyku, keletas Airijos geros patirties pavyzdžių galėtų būti svarstyti Lietuvos sąlygomis.

Raktažodžiai: pilietybė, socialinis įsitraukimas, tęstinis mokymasis