Borders, Boundaries & Bridges: Learning with our Neighbours
An adult learning conference organised by the Northern Ireland Forum on Adult Learning and AONTAS

Friday 12th October, 2018

Niamh O’Reilly, CEO, AONTAS
Overview of adult learning in Ireland

• Current levels of adult learning participation
• Issues impacting learners
• Policy system for adult learning
• AONTAS vision for the future of Adult Learning
Current levels of Adult Learning
Adult Education Survey 2017

• Adult Education Survey – last over 12 month period in 2017.
• Statistics relate to aged 25-64 years
• Participation in lifelong learning among adults in Ireland (53.9%) was higher the EU-28 average of 45.1% and Ireland
• Labour Force Survey lifelong learning participation rate is 8.3%
Unequal Participation in Lifelong Learning (LLL)

- Highly skilled individuals - with a lifelong learning participation rate of 9%
- People low in basic skills (2.5%)
- However the beneficial impact of adult learning for the latter cohort is far greater (BeLL, 2014)

Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Highly skilled</th>
<th>Medium skilled</th>
<th>Low skilled</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
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Source: Eurostat (EU-28, 2018)
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Current levels of Adult Learning
Adult Education Survey 2017
Barriers to participation in lifelong learning (AES, 2017)

DID NOT HAVE THE PREREQUISITES (E.G. ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS) 19
DID NOT HAVE TIME DUE TO FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES 32
OTHER PERSONAL REASONS 26
RESPONDENT'S HEALTH 21
TRAINING CONFLICTED WITH WORK SCHEDULE AND/OR WAS ORGANISED AT INCONVENIENT TIME 15
TRAINING WAS TOO EXPENSIVE OR THE COST WAS DIFFICULT TO AFFORD 15
### Barriers to participation in lifelong learning (AES, 2017)

- **DID NOT HAVE THE PREREQUISITES (E.G. ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS)**
  - Primary or below: 19
  - Lower secondary: 8
  - Third Level Degree: 2

- **DID NOT HAVE TIME DUE TO FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES**
  - Primary or below: 37
  - Lower secondary: 32
  - Third Level Degree: 45

- **OTHER PERSONAL REASONS**
  - Primary or below: 26
  - Lower secondary: 9
  - Third Level Degree: 8

- **RESPONDENT’S HEALTH**
  - Primary or below: 21
  - Lower secondary: 15
  - Third Level Degree: 4

- **TRAINING CONFLICTED WITH WORK SCHEDULE AND/OR WAS ORGANISED AT INCONVENIENT TIME**
  - Primary or below: 15
  - Lower secondary: 19
  - Third Level Degree: 36

- **TRAINING WAS TOO EXPENSIVE OR THE COST WAS DIFFICULT TO AFFORD**
  - Primary or below: 15
  - Lower secondary: 15
  - Third Level Degree: 25
Self-directed learning and ongoing lifelong learning

Self esteem, self-directed learning, learning to learn skills

Equity of Access to the NFQ

Welcome learning environments that suit – community education organisations, ETBs, Higher education

Information, guidance, childcare availability/funding, financial supports, transport/mobile/online, timing
Learners Perspectives
National FET Learner Forum in 2018

372 Learners

- 1 National Event
- 5 Regional Events

- 15 ETBs
- 147 Full-time Learners
- 225 Part-time Learners

13 Programmes
What Learners are Saying

"The tutors in our college were absolutely superb"

"It was tough going at the start, as you said I could do with the help and support from other people all round, get you the bit of confidence to go on and do it"

"My goal is to keep on doing these courses and hopefully to get a job from it"
I have had to cut down on groceries weekly to attend this course.

Bus is €40, but I only have €11.50 Travel Allowance.

Not advertised enough.
Addressing Issues facing adult learning

- **Type of programmes**
  - Accredited and non-accredited learning and RPL
    - Minor awards in the local community, full awards, non accredited programmes that build learning to learn skills, support a daily structure and provide social, cultural capital and community engagement.
  - Part-time, full-time, flexible programmes at times that work around learners’ commitments (family or otherwise)

- **Essential Learning Supports that can mean make or break**
  - Bursaries for expenses, Food/travel allowances
  - Mentoring, Counselling
  - Onsite/funding for childcare
  - Guidance, Outreach
Summary Irish Policy Structure for Adult Learning – ‘Further Education’

- Department of Education and Skills
- SOLAS: Further Education and Training Authority
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
- Higher Education Authority (HEA)
- Education and Training Boards (ETBs)
- Community Education Providers
- Higher Education Providers (HEIs)

[http://www.solas.ie/SkillsToAdvance]
Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in Ireland
AONTAS Vision for Adult Learning
Lifelong learning for All

- Equitable
- Diverse in provision (p/t, local, RPL, community education/ETB/Higher Ed)
- Learner centred
- Barriers to participation are addressed
- Recognition and funding support for adult learning for:
  - Social inclusion and cohesion
  - Active citizenship, democracy, and participation
  - Migration and demographic change
  - Sustainability
  - Health and wellbeing
  - Employment and digitalisation
Keep up to date with AONTAS work

**Website:** www.aontas.com

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