

Lifelong Learning opportunities in the workplace for traditionally

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Lifelong Learning in Ireland.

- Lifelong Learning is 'all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment related perspective'
- The Irish National Association for Adult Education, AONTAS, estimates that about 30,000 adults in Ireland are involved in educational courses, either part-time or full-time, for professional development or personal development.



The Irish labourforce and Lifelong Learning.

- The National Economic and Social Council, NESC, estimates that 60% of those who will be in the labourforce in 2020 are already in employment.
- Skill levels in Ireland require immediate attention, 30% of the workforce have ISCED level 2 or less and 10% of the workforce only have ISCED level 1 or no qualifications at all.
- The upskilling of low-skilled workers is central to Irelands Lifelong Learning strategy.





Report, 'Challenges of Workplace Learning' December 2006.

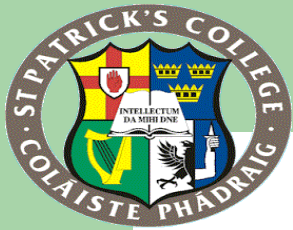
- More than 100,000 people aged under 30 in the Irish workforce left the educational system without a Leaving Certificate, they have below ISCED level 3 educational attainment. 18% of young people in the Irish education system leave second level education before reaching the Leaving Certificate
- Many of the people who leave school early and move into employment do so on low wages and into low-skilled industrial and service sector jobs.
- While some companies and organisations have good in-house training programmes, many of these workers have limited scope for subsequent career progression
- Training options are widely available in the workplace but are rarely practically accessible to the low skilled





Forfas report 'Data analysis of In-employment Education and Training in Ireland' (2005)

- The report reconfirms the fact that 'previous educational attainment is strongly related to participation in all forms of continuing education and training, the higher the level of educational attainment the greater the rate of participation in vocational education and training'
- Compared with the European Average, Ireland have higher-than-average proportions of both low skilled persons and higher skilled persons.



Economic Context in Ireland.

- There was a economic boom in Ireland from the late 90's until 2007. The economy is now in a recession period.
- The NSCE state that the 'maintenance and net expansion of job requiring low levels of skills' was a 'valuable feature' of Ireland's economic boom.
- In the White Paper on Adult Education 'Learning for Life' (2000), Section 6.9 'New Entrant to the Workforce' it states 'new entrants may be joining the workforce at the low skill end, poorly prepared or sectoral or economic downturn or for progressing their own careers'.
- In the event of an economic downturn, many of the young people who entered the job market in the past decade will lose their jobs and will find their lack of skills a major barrier to taking up subsequent employment.



Educational Disadvantage Committee (2004) priority areas for action in adult education:

- Establishment of a Workplace Basic Education Fund, which was subsequently set up by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in 2005.
- Introduction of statutory learning leave for people with less than ISCED level 3 because 'Ireland lags behind other industrialised countries in having no legislative basis for paid educational leave to enable people to gain qualifications later in life, having been educationally disadvantaged in their earlier years'
- The introduction of free fees for part-time students was also recommended.





Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 'Tomorrow's Skills: towards a National Skills Strategy (2007)

Objectives for upskilling the workforce, by 2020

- 7% of the workforce will have qualifications at ISCED level 1 to 2.
- 45% of the labour force should have qualifications at ISCED level 3.
- 48 percent of the labour force should have qualifications at ISCED level 4 and above;
- 500,000 individuals within the workforce will need to progress by at least one ISCED level.



The National Training and Employment Authority, FÁS.

- FÁS strives to ensure that its policies and programmes reflect best practice in social inclusion through increased participation and progression by marginalised groups, including members of the traveller community, early school leavers, ex-offenders, and migrant workers in the workforce.
- ‘One Step Up’ concept; training and development programmes focused on people in the workforce but particularly those with low skill levels.
- ‘Skills for Work’, is a national programme under the ‘One Step Up’ initiative, aimed at providing training opportunities to help employees deal with the basic skills demands of the workplace.
- The ‘Competency Development Programme’; the mechanism for funding/ subsidising education and training people in employment where priority is given to programmes targeted at increasing the competencies of people employed in low skilled occupations.



The Back to Education Initiative, BTEI (Part time)

- The overall aim of the BTEI is to increase the participation of young people and adults with less than ISCED level 3 in a range of flexible learning opportunities.
- Part-time programmes under the BTEI provide a re-entry route for those in the workplace who wish to upgrade their skills in line with emerging needs and a chance to combine education and training with family, work and other responsibilities.



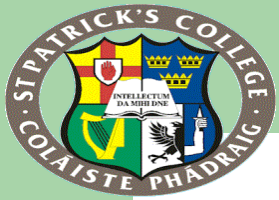
Dublin Employment Pacts 'Learning and work programme'

- The Learning @ Work programme involves local projects seeking to up skill low skilled young workers who are in employment through supportive interventions agreed with employers and workers.
- The objectives of the project is to work with young people who left school early and are in low-skilled employment in order to upgrade their levels of education and skills.
- It targets young adults, 17+ who left school before completion of the Leaving Certificate and who have been in employment for a minimum of 6 months.
- The projects bring skills and educational opportunities on a modular basis to people in the workplace. The training covers administrative skills, forklift driving, warehousing, ICT, Personal Development, Communications, mathematics and English up to Leaving Certificate level (ISCED level 3)



Results from Dublin Employment Pacts 'Learning and work programme', Employers:

- The positive outcomes of participating include: a visible improvement in the quality of work by participants, a positive improvement in attitude and motivation by the participating employees, a general increase in productivity and noticeable improvement in staff morale as a result of training
- For some employers, the development of personnel who would remain and progress within the organisation.
- The key barrier to participation was facilitating the release of valuable staff.
- The general view of the projects was that face-to-face contact is needed, even to get an employer to consider the programme. Employers want to hear about how such training can directly impact positively on their business.



Results from Dublin Employment Pacts 'Learning and work programme', Employees:

- Projects found it quite difficult to attract employees to participate.
- Many have unhappy memories of school and exams first time round and this is an initial barrier, which has to be overcome.
- The formula that emerged in all of the pilot actions combined personal development, confidence building and communication skills with vocational modules.
- A key aspect of the intervention was the provision of a range of informal supports to participants including; development of individualised training plans, basic literacy support, provision of course materials free of charge; ongoing contact with all participants to ensure no problems arose; guidance as to further options in terms of education.



Local Partnerships; Tallaght Partnership and Ballymun Partnership.

- Tallaght Partnership, 'Mor Learning @Work programme; mainstreaming the Learning@ Work programme at local level.
- Ballymun Partnership have a Lifelong Learning sub group which encourages adults in the area to participate in Lifelong learning.
- Ballymun Partnerships report, '*Learning for Living, Lifelong Learning and Training Strategies for Ballymun*' from September 2006
- There was a section in the report on 'Lifelong Learning and its benefits in the Workplace, that stresses how vital it is to create progression pathways for local people and sets out that this presents a challenge especially in the case of lower paid workers.
- The report included a survey of employers in Ballymun and surrounding areas, which highlights that employers need to be made aware of supports available to help them train their employees (e.g. One Step Up – FAS) as 50% of the survey respondents were unaware of such schemes.



The National Association of Travellers Centres, NATC and Senior Traveller Training Centres, SITC's

- The aim of the centres is to provide Travellers with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to successfully make the transition to work and to participate fully in their communities.
- The target group is travellers who have left school with either minimal or no qualifications, however, there is no upper age limit.
- Programmes place a key emphasis on the core skills of literacy, numeracy, communications and new technology skills, while providing a range of vocational options allied with a work experience programme.
- The National Association of Travellers' Centres provides a diploma in Youth and Community work through an open distance learning course. This diploma programme has been designed to assist Travellers working in the youth and community work fields.



Business in the Community, BITC programmes for disadvantaged groups

- Linkage Programme for ex-offenders, a joint project with the Probation Service. The objective of the programme is to get people working, and to support them while looking for a job and when in employment.
- Ready for Work, RFW for homeless people, provides work experience and guidance to people who are looking to move on from homelessness into employment and training.
- EPIC Programme, which stands for Employment for people from immigrant communities. The goal of EPIC is to assist this target group with finding employment, training and education.
- Training and Employment Officers, TEO's work on all the programmes, their role is to find job opportunities and to provide the necessary supports, advice and training for individuals participating in BITC programmes.



Pobal, Community Services Programme, CSP.

- CSP supports community businesses and social enterprises through funding local services and employment opportunities for particularly disadvantaged groups in society.
- CSP funds approximately 325 social enterprises to deliver practical services in their communities. These range from house maintenance and homecare for elderly and disabled people, to management of community centres, to garden maintenance businesses employing recovering substance abusers.
- The programme is funded under the National Development Programme 2007-2016. The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is the lead government department for the programme and Pobal manages the programme on their behalf.



Quotes from Employees who have taken part in the CSP Programme and the Learning @ Work initiative :

- In relation to leaving school early, an employee stated; 'I always had this kind of thing...my education not being completed' 'it boils down to my basic education, your primary education, my secondary education' 'if you do miss out on that, I...do feel that, no matter what course you do later in life, you never get that fulfillment' 'I've always been playing catch up with my education, I think it's had a negative effect on my ability achieving' 'even though I am achieving' 'I still have issues, and they're personal issues that won't change' 'unless I go...back and do my junior cert and my leaving cert' 'it's a personal thing'.
- In relation to educational plans for the future the employee stated to 'complete what I'm doing at the moment' 'long term I would love to achieve a degree' 'I've seen people doing degrees... I know...it can be done'.
- One employee who works for the community resource centre and is a participant on this programme stated; 'we get a lot of training' 'any training



Quotes from Employers who have taken part in the CSP Programme and the Learning @ Work initiative :

- In relation to the benefits of education and training one employer believes that it results include *'better quality of work, there can be increased efficiency' 'a chance for people to move up in the organisation' promotion' 'I have certainly seen where people have moved up in the organisation' 'The advantages are...can provide a greater commitment by the employee'. 'We're gaining from the experience...links with other organisations'.*
- In relation to the motivation of staff to take part in education or training courses, one employer explained that 'there's no barriers from the organisation but from the staff there's a reluctance to partake in the training'. 'because of the people that we're dealing with and the area they all come from', 'because of their social background' 'they're quite comfortable just to have a job', 'they feel they've got there by having a job that they can relate to and do', 'they're not interested in moving on at all' 'they're not interested in a path and a career'.



Good Practice in the area of Lifelong Learning in the workplace in Ireland.

- Learning @ Work programme, Dublin Employment Pact and the Tallaght Mor Learning@ Work project which resulted from this.
- Fas 'Skills for Work' programme.
- Ballymun Partnership's report 'Learning for Living, Lifelong Learning and Training Strategies for Ballymun', because it includes employers through a survey, employees and local people but looking at push factors for setting involved in Lifelong Learning and the community sector by relating the skills gained from their Personal Development courses to the world of work.
- National Association of Travellers Centres Course , Diploma in Youth and Community Work.
- Business in the Community, BITC programmes for ex-offenders, ex-homeless and immigrants.



Conclusion

- Programmes and initiatives have been undertaken, but these need to be expanded on further, for example, Learning@ Work needs move outside Dublin and Back to Education needs to make more part-time options available.
- Awareness of programmes among employers needs to be increased, the benefits of participation for employers and employees also needs to be highlighted.
- Statutory entitlement to educational leave for those with less than ISCED level 3 qualifications needs to be introduced.