

International Seminar
on
Making Learning More Attractive
Strengthening Links with Working Life and
Society

Royal Hospital Kilmainham Dublin
7th and 8th May 2003

SUMMARY REPORT

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Part funded by the
European Union

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Foreword

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland hosted a Seminar on *Making Learning More Attractive, Strengthening Links with Working Life and Society* on 7th and 8th May, 2003 in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin on behalf of the Department of Education and Science. The Seminar was convened as a contribution to the European Union's Future Objectives process for education and training systems. It aimed in particular to advance the work of Thematic Group H, which is part of this process. The Seminar was opened by Mr Noel Dempsey, T.D., Minister for Education and Science. Some 60 delegates representing 24 European states, organisations and Irish and European stakeholders participated.

The Seminar provided participants with the opportunity to hear about adult learning policy and practice across nine OECD countries; recent developments in Ireland in relation to the national framework of qualifications; the role of partnerships in developing and delivering workplace learning programmes; and the progress made and the challenges remaining in establishing criteria for the validation of informal and non-formal learning in Europe. These themes were identified on the basis of discussions held in Thematic Group H on making learning more attractive and strengthening the links with working life and society.

The Authority would like to thank the speakers, the EU Commission for its financial support, the members of Thematic Group H and the participants for their contributions to the Seminar.

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Introduction

Thematic Group H is one of a number of working groups set up to implement the work programme of the European Union's Future Objectives of education and training systems in Europe. This process, applying the Open Method of coordination, was endorsed by the Barcelona European Council in March 2002. It is made up of representatives of the EU Commission, EU member states, the European Economic Area states, the candidate countries for EU accession and the social partners. (A list of Group H members who attended the Seminar is contained in Appendix A.)

The remit of Group H is '*making learning more attractive, strengthening links with working life, research and society*'. Its work is linked to the concepts of lifelong and life-wide learning - learning for personal development and active citizenship as well as learning for work and economic ends. It is also concerned with how and where individuals learn.

Group H is interested in developing flexibility in education systems with a view to increasing access for different groups of learners and different kinds of learning; it is particularly interested in motivating young learners and adult learners. It is concerned with how to develop a learning culture, centred on the learner, that gives effect to lifelong learning. It is interested in the validation of learning throughout life. It is also interested in the idea of partnerships and how partnerships might be used to enhance co-operation between formal education and training, the private sector and other stakeholders.

A mid-term review of progress towards meeting the Future Objectives will be presented to the Spring 2004 European Council. In order to help progress the work of Group H the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland on behalf of the Department of Education and Science convened this Seminar for members of the Group and invited stakeholders from Ireland. (A copy of the Seminar Agenda is contained in Appendix B.)

The Seminar covered themes relevant to the work of the group:

- The role of frameworks of qualifications in promoting lifelong learning
- Practices to encourage and involve adult learners
- The role of partnerships in promoting learning
- Validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The aim of the Seminar was to give Group H members and other relevant stakeholders the chance to hear and to discuss the experiences and views of those involved in promoting, setting up and reviewing learning programmes with a view to developing policies that make learning more attractive. Papers were presented that provided insight into such programmes at international, national, regional and local level. These programmes were initiated and/or developed by central and local government, by state agencies, by training providers, by trade unions, by employers and by employee-learners.

What follows is a summary report of the Seminar proceedings. The rapporteur and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland are responsible for this publication and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained herein. The report includes a brief overview of each of the papers as well as a list of the key ideas contained in each one. There is also a summary of the key themes and issues that emerged from the papers and from discussions during the Seminar.

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Welcome Address

Mr Noel Dempsey, T.D.
Minister for Education and Science

The Minister stated that the European Union is expanding, competition on a global scale is increasing and Europe is faced with an increasing pace of economic and technological change. Changes are needed to maintain competitiveness in this changing world, and to meet the demands of lifelong learning. The Minister stressed that an education and training system and a new qualifications system was needed to address a more diverse learning community throughout further and higher education. The ultimate goal is to make Europe's education and training systems a world quality reference by 2010.

To do this, the Minister emphasised the need to increase the transparency of qualifications and competences, increase compatibility of education and training systems, and promote access to lifelong learning for all.

He went on to say that new systems must be embedded in a culture of lifelong learning. They must meet the need for greater choice; greater access and greater reach; and greater relevance to work and social and civic life. In addition, these new systems must recognise and validate informal and non-formal learning, prior learning and work-based learning.

He hoped that the Seminar would give participants a chance to learn from each other – from what others have done and are doing – in order to make rapid progress towards establishing the culture of lifelong learning and, more specifically, making learning more attractive and strengthening links with working life and society. The aim was to generate results that will bring about change and make a positive difference to learners.

Opening Address

Mr. Gordon Clark

Head of Unit, Directorate General, Education and Culture, European Union
Commission

On behalf of the EU Commission, Mr Clark thanked the Minister and the Department of Education and Science for supporting this Seminar and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland for hosting and organising it on his behalf.

Mr. Clark noted that the Future Objectives of Education and Training systems was agreed by the European Ministers of Education and endorsed by the Barcelona European Council in March 2002. He stated that it provides a clear, long-term and dynamic policy framework for close cooperation and development between Member States, Stakeholders and the Commission in the field of Education and Training. Mr. Clark outlined the linkage between this Seminar and the work of Group H of the Future Objectives process. He emphasised the point that the work of Group H, in promoting a new culture of learning - one that includes learning in any setting and places the learner at the centre - is particularly important in taking forward the Lifelong Learning agenda.

He said that during the Irish Presidency in the first half of 2004, the Commission hoped that a renewed impetus can be given to implementing lifelong learning strategies. He stated that it should be possible, among other things, to address some of the elements highlighted in the Report of the Irish Taskforce on Lifelong Learning - for example, issues such as access, equality and guidance. He mentioned these priorities in particular because *'facilitating the access of all to education and training systems'* is one of the three strategic objectives of the Future Objectives process. Indeed, *'Making learning more attractive'* comes under this objective.

Mr. Clark noted that there is much to be gained by closer European cooperation in the fields of Education and Training. This Seminar, he said, was therefore both timely and relevant - for the preparations for the Irish Presidency and for policy development and implementation at the EU level under the Future Objectives process.

1. Overview of presentations

In this section we look briefly at each of the presentations and highlight the key ideas that emerged from each one.

Presentation 1

The Irish national framework of qualifications – its role in promoting lifelong learning

Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú
Chief Executive, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

***Key ideas:** National framework, single entity, map of qualifications; recognition and promotion of lifelong learning; accessible, coherent, transparent, relevant to personal, civic, social and work life; enabling access, transfer and progression; learner focused; outcomes focused; development: co-ordinated consensual approach, research, consultation and collaboration with all stakeholders, open debate and discussion, learning from and input to European developments.*

The need for reform of the awards systems for education and training was widely recognised for many years and began to take shape with the introduction of new legislation on education and training and the qualifications system in the 1990s and the set up of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland in 2001.

The Authority, in effect, acted as initiator and enabler - bringing together the relevant parties and taking the process of framework development forward via research, consultation, collaboration and consensus building with all stakeholders. The development of the framework has been informed by and inputs into international developments in education, training and qualifications.

An outline framework has now been determined. It aims to cover all learning achievements, and is designed so that all learning achievements can be measured and related to each other through the framework. More specifically, it focuses on learner needs, setting standards for awards in a

coherent and transparent way, promoting the quality of awards and providing a coherent, understandable system to co-ordinate and compare awards. It links to the lifelong learning agenda by facilitating the recognition of all forms of learning, increasing the possibilities to value and recognise all learning achievements. Policies and criteria for credit, progression routes, entry arrangements and information provision will support access, transfer and progression.

The next steps in the process include the development of a broad communication strategy and a timetable for full implementation of the national framework of qualifications by June 2006.

Further details on the development of the national framework of qualifications can be found on the Authority's website, www.nqai.ie, and those of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council, www.hetac.ie, and the Further Education and Training Awards Council, www.fetac.ie.

Presentation 2

Beyond Rhetoric: adult learning policies and practices

Mr. Patrick Werquin
Directorate of Education, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and
Development (OECD)

***Key ideas:** Importance of thorough review and evaluation; learning from others; no one solution - different environments, different strategies, tailored recommendations; integrated approach successful – motivation, work-related learning, financial incentives, quality, co-ordination, but making learning attractive is key.*

Patrick Werquin's presentation brought us the highlights of a recent OECD review of adult learning practices in nine countries (1999-2002): Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. In general, the review concludes that, while the countries surveyed are moving in the right direction, there is still a great deal of work to be done.

What emerged was that while there are common elements in the practices and policies of some countries there is no single approach. Different cultural, social and economic environments have led to different strategies and different support systems - from general action plans to targeted initiatives. Recommendations to individual countries were tailored to take account of their different environments and experiences. For example, eLearning was found to work well in Finland and a recommendation was made for eLearning initiatives there to be developed further.

The review highlights the benefits of adopting an integrated or co-ordinated approach to policy amongst the key partners. Such an approach was found, for example, to increase the attractiveness of learning and to improve the quality of adult learning.

The key elements of this approach are:

- Motivation, that is, making learning more attractive
- Employment related learning
- Financial incentives
- Quality training
- Coordinated approach

Of all these elements it was argued that motivation – making learning more attractive - is the most important. Without it, the rest do not matter.

Further details are available on the OECD's website: www.oecd.org or http://www.oecd.org/EN/links_abstract/0,,EN-links_abstract-602-20-no-no-1240-0,00.html

Presentation 3

The Return to Learning Initiative

Ms. Helen Ryan
Project co-ordinator, National Adult Literacy Agency

Mr. George Holden
Project participant, South Dublin County Council

***Key ideas:** Recognising and acknowledging needs; taking action; working in partnership – government department, state agency, local authorities, training providers and learners; learning from the experience: piloting, review and evaluation; promotion, presentation and perception: advertising it the right way, finding ‘a hook’, building relationships with potential learners early in the process, listening to and understanding their needs.*

The National Adult Literacy Agency, in partnership with the Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group, developed a workplace literacy programme for local authorities. It was called the ‘Return to Learning Initiative’. The programme was piloted in the period 2000-01 among employees of five local authorities across Ireland. It was run in co-operation with Vocational Education Committees and with funding from both the local authorities and the Department of Education and Science.

The project had two main aims:

- To encourage people to take part
- To provide basic literacy training for employees of the local authorities with low literacy skills.

The programme took place at the workplace and on work time. Participants acknowledged that this was a key factor in attracting them to take part. Participation was voluntary. The content and delivery of the programme was adapted to suit the needs of the learners and was developed and adjusted after initial discussions with learners.

The pilot project was a success. The evaluation highlighted anticipated and unanticipated benefits for all – learners and employers. For employees, these benefits were personal, social, civic and work related; an interest in progression; and buy-in to the idea of lifelong learning. For the employer, benefits included a workforce with greater skills, greater confidence and greater morale.

Almost all of the participants went on to take part in other courses. The programme has been extended and is now available to all thirty-four local authorities in Ireland.

Experience from the programme highlighted the importance of key triggers in motivating learners:

- Motivation 1 – ‘Getting them in’: use of a low risk/low fear factor strategy - workplace setting, on work time, voluntary participation, funded by central and local government (employer), with relevant and attractive topics for the learner.
- Motivation 2 – ‘Getting on’ or keeping interest: taking a flexible, adaptable approach; building rapport between learner and tutor; and making the experience interesting and fun.

Further details, including an evaluation report on the initiative, are available from the website of the National Adult Literacy Agency at www.nala.ie/pubs

Presentations 4 and 5

Skillnets partnerships case studies:

The role of partnerships in developing and facilitating education and training

Skillnets was set up in 1999 with funding from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Its broad objective is to help enterprises improve and sustain competitiveness by investing in training and skills development.

More specifically, it aims to help groups of enterprises develop ways of establishing and then meeting their training needs by setting up training networks. The enterprises take the lead - Skillnets role is to help mobilise them and support them with finance and advice.

Since 1999, Skillnets partnerships or networks have been set up at a regional level as well as on industry-specific and sector-specific bases. They promote learning and up-skilling with a focus on the relevance of the training, suitable delivery and recognition through national certification. Two examples of partnerships were presented at the Seminar.

Case Study 1: Creating a learning culture in companies *Up-skilling and cross-skilling for craftworkers in the National Engineering Training Skillnet*

Mr. Eamon Devoy
Network promoter, Technical Engineering and Electrical Union

Mr. Alan Moore
At time of project - Network co-ordinator, Education and Training Services

Key ideas: *Initiated by a trade union; partnership created between trade union, employers and employees; Skillnet as enabler; network set up; aim to create learning culture in manufacturing environment; promote and provide opportunities for lifelong learning; workplace based; training relevant to work; delivery flexible; benefits to all involved, anticipated and unanticipated – greater skill level, cross-skilling, personal development; move from regional level to national level; recognition of learning – development of new national certificate.*

The aim of *The National Engineering Training Skillnet* was threefold:

- to create a learning culture within participating companies;
- to develop core skills of craftworkers; and
- to improve competitiveness.

It was initiated by a trade union (the Technical Engineering and Electrical Union). The set up was a new experience for all involved – trade unions, employers and employees. The trade unions and the employers moved away from their traditional adversarial relationship and in partnership were able to motivate workers to return to learning and up-skilling many years after their initial training.

The network focuses on developing a broad range of technical competencies, core skills and an understanding of production processes. It is now developing a greater emphasis on personal development skills and is extending its focus beyond the Leinster region to the country as a whole.

The partnership approach yielded many benefits, not least a realisation of the benefits of the non-adversarial approach, and the benefits of being part of a network (including, for example, the chance to share knowledge with other enterprises). The benefits for the enterprises also included a better skilled workforce and increased competitiveness; the benefits to the individual included the accumulation of relevant and transferable skills. In addition, there were benefits to the sector (and the training process) in the development of a national certificate recognising and validating the workplace learning.

Further details are available on the Skillnets website: www.skillnets.com and on the Leinster Engineering Skillnet site: www.lets-skillnet.com

Case Study 2: Creating a regional network for training and development *The North Mayo Skillnet*

Mr. Peter Brady
Network promoter, Dekko Heating Technologies

Mr. Carl Blake
Network co-ordinator, ICE

Key ideas: *Employer-initiated; need for high quality cost effective training in a remote area; sustainable approach required; Skillnet as enabler; regional network set up; enterprises sharing ideas, information, knowledge, experience, materials; need for trust and reciprocity; needs-based work related training; short term and long term skills development; benefits to all – regional economy - increased attractiveness to inward investors, enterprises – cost saving on training, increased skill base, higher standards, staff retention, greater competitiveness, employees – work related skills, greater morale, personal development.*

The area of North Mayo is rural and relatively remote and many enterprises, large and small, and in a range of sectors, have had difficulty getting access to high quality, relevant training. For many, the only suitable training was available in Dublin – a long and costly journey in actual terms and in down time of key workers.

The North Mayo Skillnet was established to address this lack of local availability. Local enterprises initiated the idea and *The North Mayo Skillnet* was set up in 1999. It aimed to:

- identify areas of common interest to enterprises in the region;
- develop relevant training programmes and practices to meet the needs of the enterprises; and
- share ideas, information, knowledge, experience and materials.

In other words, the idea was to provide high quality local training that would meet the needs of local enterprises (relevance) and be cost efficient/effective. The focus was on both short-term and long-term skills needs, motivating learners and creating a sustainable long-term approach to learning and training.

In setting up the network some barriers were encountered – chiefly, a fear of sharing information with other enterprises and a fear of investing in training staff only to lose them. The end benefits proved that these fears were largely unfounded – more gains were had from sharing than not sharing; a cost effective way of operating and delivering training was achieved; and staff retention increased.

Further details are available on the Skillnets website: www.skillnets.com and www.northmayo.ie

Presentation 6

The recognition and assessment of non-formal learning and informal learning

European experience and avenues for co-operation

Mr. Jens Bjørnåvold

Directorate General Education and Culture, EU Commission

***Key ideas:** Importance of recognition, assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning; need for common guiding principles to ensure communication and comparability between systems, to allow mobility between markets/regions; need for credible, high quality, cost efficient system; need for criteria to recognise rights of the individual; challenge – to plot a way forward based on review of experience to date.*

This presentation took account of the work of the EU Commission's technical working group on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The work of this group is feeding into the work of Thematic Group H and the Copenhagen Process on increased co-operation in European vocational education and training.

Jens Bjørnåvold highlighted the need for common guiding principles to help in the development of high quality, cost efficient approaches to the validation of non-formal and informal learning experiences, and to allow different systems to communicate. Experiences in Europe have suggested several possible criteria. As well as general-purpose criteria, criteria must address the rights of the individual as well as quality, credibility and comparability. Jens questioned whether this approach was the best way forward and sought feedback from the members of Thematic Group H - in particular on whether these criteria form a sensible starting point; whether they comply with those already established; and whether they bring added European value.

2. Key themes and issues

In this section, we look at the key themes and issues that emerged from the papers presented and the discussions that followed.

Getting started

Most of the papers described how programmes were set up. There were many common elements:

- the necessity for communication, consultation and collaboration with all stakeholders and the importance of establishing trust to help this process along;
- the role of partnerships and networks; and
- the importance of three key roles in establishing programmes – initiator, gatekeeper and facilitator.

Communication, consultation and collaboration

All papers highlighted the importance of bringing people – stakeholders – together face-to-face, making connections and establishing partnerships and networks.

For example, part of the OECD Review of adult learning policies and practices involved bringing key stakeholders together face to face. As Patrick Werquin noted, this had never happened before – despite adult learning policies and practices in most of the countries visited being well developed. Seán Ó Foghlú also noted this – the first time that all stakeholders in Ireland were brought together was during consultations about the development of the national framework of qualifications. That this approach is effective was demonstrated by the level of progress (and agreement) that has been made in a relatively short space of time. The benefits of it were also demonstrated by the success of the North Mayo Skillnet, which brought together in a network a group of enterprises, some of whom were competitors, to share ideas and knowledge as well as resources.

The importance of establishing trust and openness are key to successful collaboration. There was evidence of this in the Leinster Engineering Technical Skillnet and in the North Mayo Skillnet. Some participants in Mayo, for example, were initially frightened about sharing information and resources, fearing that they would lose their competitive edge.

At another level, the importance of openness and transparency - as demonstrated by the Irish national framework of qualifications - is an important tool in demonstrating accessibility to potential learners.

The role of partnerships and networks

In many of the examples presented at the Seminar we saw how partnerships and networks have been used to address some key issues:

- Widening access to education and training – for different age groups, in particular adult learners; in different work settings; in different (and difficult) geographic regions; and for different types of learning, different learning needs and styles
- Ensuring that learning is accessible, relevant and effective, and that it meets local, regional and national needs
- Providing adaptable, flexible solutions to education and training needs
- Developing a learning culture centred around the learner (but initiated, for example, by trade unions and employers)
- Recognising and validating learning
- Opening the door to further learning
- Promoting lifelong learning.

Key roles in the process

Three roles appear to be critical in setting up and delivering successful learning programmes: the roles of initiator, gatekeeper or connector, and enabler or facilitator.

Initiator

There is now recognition of the importance of lifelong learning and of developing a lifelong learning culture. It all begins with a first step and several presentations highlighted the role of the ‘initiator’, the person or organisation who sees the need and decides to do something about it. In Helen Ryan’s Workplace Basic Education programme, it was a union official who noticed that some people signed into meetings with an ‘X’. In the Leinster Engineering Technical Skillnet, it was a trade union keen to see development of skills among craft workers. In the North Mayo Skillnet it was employers, private sector enterprises, who wanted to invest in high quality training but could not find it locally.

Gatekeeper

Another key role is that of ‘gatekeeper’ – the person or organisation with the ‘power’ to set things in motion. These ‘gatekeepers’ are people or organisations who have the authority to get things done, who know ‘who’s who’, who can make the connections, who can bring people together and start the collaboration. Seán Ó Foghlú noted in his presentation that the introduction of legislation establishing the National Qualifications Authority and the awards Councils was in effect the catalyst for the development of the Irish national framework of qualifications – once established and empowered real progress was quickly made. The National Adult Literacy Agency played the same role in the development and progress of the Workplace Basic Education programme.

Enabler

The role of gatekeeper appears to overlap with another key role – the role of ‘enabler’ or ‘facilitator’. We saw in Patrick Werquin’s presentation that one of the elements of a successful approach to adult learning is co-ordination. Again, this is one of the roles that the National Qualifications Authority has taken in developing a national framework of qualifications; and the role that National Literacy Agency played in establishing and supporting the Workplace Basic Education programme. The Skillnet organisation acted an enabler for the Leinster Engineering Technical project and the North Mayo network, providing a financial support and advice.

Attracting participants

This is the heart of the matter. The question here is: once you have the programme, how do you get people to take part in it? Several papers offered insight into this.

The OECD Review highlighted six key elements including: make it attractive, make it accessible, offer financial incentives, offer quality, and take a holistic, partnership approach. In the three examples of programmes set up in Ireland the importance of each of these was clearly demonstrated.

Make it attractive: presentation and perception

A first step in making a learning programme attractive is to advertise it in the right place in the right way. Patrick Werquin gave an example of how not to do it: the use of a poster to advertise a literacy programme. How the programme is presented to and perceived by potential participants

is vital. In the Workplace Basic Education programme Helen Ryan and George Holden noted that by including computer training in the description of the programme its overall attractiveness to the target audience was enhanced. Many people came forward to enquire about the programme – the mention of computers was the ‘hook’ that drew them in. Once they registered their interest they met with a tutor and discussed their interest and their needs before the programme began. This helped develop trust and rapport, which were key to the programme’s success.

Make it accessible

Another important element is accessibility. This is very strongly linked to making learning more attractive. In all three of the examples presented, training took place in the workplace, on work time. This was important for two main reasons. Firstly, it was convenient for participants (and for employers). Secondly, it took away some of the perceived risk involved. At this early stage of the process, with many participants returning to learning after a considerable break, they were taking many things on faith: that they could ‘cope’ with the training, that they could deal with questions from fellow workers and family, that they would benefit from the training, that an investment in themselves was worth it. Taking part at the workplace and on work time appeared to reduce these risks. The fact that participation was voluntary also helped.

Patrick Werquin noted that the venue or the method of delivery should suit the learner. Research has shown that many people cite lack of time as a reason for not taking part in learning activities yet they spend many hours watching television. A way of reaching these people might be to offer courses on television – at a time that is accessible to them.

Another important aspect reinforced in some of the presentations, and also related to accessibility, is the need for training and education – in terms of content, delivery, location - to be adaptable and flexible rather than fixed and rigid.

Offer financial incentives

Financial incentives - or in the context of the examples presented at the Seminar, no direct cost to the learner - were also important in encouraging participation, especially for those taking part in training or education for the first time in many years. Once convinced that there are benefits – as George Holden explained – many continue and are happy to pay some of the cost themselves.

Cost of training was also a motivating factor for the enterprises involved in The North Mayo Skillnet – indeed it was the factor which drove them to set up their own local training network.

Being cost effective is a key element in what makes the training a sustainable part of the work culture.

Offer quality

Quality is another vital ingredient. A key aspect of quality is relevance. As all of the examples showed, and as the OECD and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications recognise, training and education must be relevant to the needs of the learner. Work-related training and education must also be relevant to the needs of the enterprise. These two sets of needs are not mutually exclusive, they overlap. The papers showed that training and education which benefited the learner/employee – developing and enhancing skills, engendering greater confidence and morale – also benefited the enterprise, the economy, and the community. While some of these benefits were anticipated, many were not. We look in more detail at the nature of benefits below.

Another important aspect of quality is delivery. George Holden emphasised the importance of having a good rapport with the tutor. He also stressed the need for training and education for adults to be both interesting and fun.

Benefits

Two interesting things emerged here. Firstly, that while many benefits were anticipated, many were not. Secondly, that there were benefits for all:

- At a personal level – new and improved skills, confidence, enthusiasm, desire to progress
- For the enterprise – greater skills base, higher staff morale, increased staff retention, greater productivity, increased (and sustainable) competitive advantage
- For the economy - increased competitiveness, attractiveness to inward investment, sustainable development
- For wider society – increased participation in (and enjoyment of) social, cultural and economic life.

The importance of review and evaluation

It is clear that maintaining high standards is important. The key is to pay attention to all the core ingredients – in particular, attractiveness, accessibility, relevance and quality - and to keep in mind at all times how it is for the learner. This is crucial. One way to ensure this is to review and

evaluate programmes – to keep alive an understanding of the learner’s perspective, to learn how best to maintain, refine and improve attractiveness, accessibility, relevance and quality.

The key to progression

As the examples showed, once people experience a quality programme they are keen to continue. The first programme has a vital role to play in ‘unlocking the door’ to progression. In a way it is the most difficult but most important obstacle to overcome. Once it is overcome, once learners have the confidence, the examples showed that they also have the enthusiasm to progress. Helen Ryan reported that 90% of those involved in the Workplace Basic Education programme went on to take part in other courses. This takes us back to the notion of attractiveness. As George Holden and others demonstrated, personal testimony (of learners, of employers) about the experience and the value of the experience is a very powerful tool in inspiring and encouraging others to take part, and in selling the idea of lifelong learning.

It seems that lifelong learning is a sort of virtuous circle. A need is recognised, a programme is designed to fulfil it, interest and awareness built, people take part, they tell others about their experiences – they become ambassadors. They find that they benefit at several levels - the personal, social, civic and work levels. And in turn family, social and civic life benefit; individual enterprises and the wider economy benefit. It is a ‘Win-Win’ situation.

This takes us back to where we came in. To maintain the virtuous circle requires communication, consultation and collaboration between all stakeholders – governments, government departments, local government, state agencies, employers, learners and the wider community.

Appendices

A. Seminar attendees

Names in Bold indicate members of Thematic Group H and the organisation/state they represent

* Indicates speaker.

<i>First Name</i>	<i>Surname</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Country</i>
Meabh	Allen	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	Ireland
Erna	Arnodottir	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	Iceland
Inez	Bailey	National Adult Literacy Agency	Ireland
David	Barry	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Ireland
Jens	Bjornavold*	European Commission	
Carl	Blake*	North Mayo Skillnet	Ireland
Peter	Brady*	North Mayo Skillnet	Ireland
Claire	Byrne	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	Ireland
Raymond	Camilleri	Ministry of Education	Malta
Eamonn	Carey	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	Ireland
Gordon	Clark	European Commission	
Brid	Connolly	European Association for the Education of Adults	
Joyce	Connon	Workers Educational Association (Scotland)	UK
Miriam	Conway	National Training and Employment Authority - FÁS	Ireland
Eamon	Devoy*	National Engineering Training Skillnet	Ireland
Arien	Deij	European Training Foundation	
Katty	Deloof	Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap	Belgium
John	Dolan	National Training and Employment Authority - FÁS	Ireland
Leah	Foley	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	Ireland
Carlo	Frising	Chambre des Employés Privés	
Pilar	Gomez	Ministerio Educación, Cultura y Deporte	Spain
Marie	Gould	Further Education and Training Awards Council	Ireland
Sean	Harkin	Department of Education and Science	Ireland
Annelise	Hauch	Ministry of Education	Denmark
Astri	Hildrum	Ministry of Education and Research	Norway
Hans-Peter	Hochstaetter	Hessisches Kultusministerium	Germany
George	Holden*	South Dublin County Council	Ireland
Maire	Hunt	Skillnets	Ireland
Toon	Janssen	Ministry of Education, Culture and Science	Netherlands
Jean-Michel	Joubier	European Trade Union Confederation	
Maria	Jozsova	Ministry of Education	Slovakia
Barbara	Kelly	Further Education and Training Awards Council	Ireland
Margaret	Kelly	Department of Education and Science	Ireland
Angela	Lambkin	Further Education and Training Awards Council	Ireland

Richard	Langford	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	Ireland
Alain	Letier	Ministère de la Communauté Française	Belgium
Zsófia	Lux Jánváriné	Ministry of Education	Hungary
Rosella	Magli	Expert - Thematic Group H	Italy
Jorg	Markowitsch	3s Unternehmensberatund GmbH	Austria
Roisín	McCabe	Youth Forum	
Roger	McCune	Council for the Curriculum Examination and Assessment	Northern Ireland
Yvonne	McGivern	Rapporteur, Working Knowledge	
Mairéad	McMahon	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	Ireland
Doreen	McMorris	Department of Education and Science	Ireland
Roisín	McSweeney	Further Education and Training Awards Council	Ireland
Mindaugas	Misiunas	Ministry of Education and Science	Lithuania
Alan	Moore*	National Engineering Training Skillnet	Ireland
Jim	Mullen	Department of Education	Northern Ireland
Anna	Murphy	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	Ireland
Martina	Ní Cheallaigh	European Commission	
Alan	Nuzum	Skillnets	Ireland
Barry	Nyhan	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training	
Seán	Ó Foghlú*	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	Ireland
Annika	Persson	Ministry of Education and Science	Sweden
Slava	Pevc Grm	Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training	Slovenia
Miroslav	Prochazka	National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education	Czech Republic
Tarja	Riihimaki	Ministry of Education	Finland
Yvonne	Rudden	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	Ireland
Helen	Ryan*	National Adult Literacy Agency	Ireland
Liam	Ryan	Higher Education and Training Awards Council	Ireland
Jacques	Thierry	Ministry of Education	France
Nermin	Turan	Ministry of National Education	Turkey
Adrina	Wafer	Further Education and Training Awards Council	Ireland
Patrick	Werquin	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	
Elita	Zondaka	Vocational Education Centre	Latvia

B. Seminar agenda

‘Making learning more attractive – strengthening the links with working life and society’

7th and 8th May 2003

Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin

Wednesday 7th May

14.00 – 14.30 Welcome [and Opening] Address

Noel Dempsey, T.D., Minister for Education and Science

Gordon Clark, Directorate General, Education and Culture, EU Commission

Chair: Dr. Anna Murphy, Director of Framework Development, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

14.30 -15.15 The national framework of qualifications - promoting lifelong learning

Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú, Chief Executive, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Discussion

15.15 – 16.00 Beyond rhetoric: adult learning policies and practices

Mr. Patrick Werquin, Directorate of Education, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

Discussion

16.30 – 17.30 A partnership approach to promoting adult literacy: the return to learning initiative

Ms. Helen Ryan, Project co-ordinator, National Adult Literacy Agency, Mr.

George Holden, Project participant, South Dublin County Council

Discussion

Thursday 8th May

09.00– 10.45 The role of partnerships in developing and facilitating education and training

Chair: Dr. Anna Murphy

Case Study 1: Creating a learning culture in companies – up-skilling and cross-skilling for craftworkers in the National Engineering Training Skillnet

Mr. Eamon Devoy, Network promoter, Technical Engineering and Electrical Union

Mr. Alan Moore, previously Network co-ordinator, Education and Training Services

Discussion

Case Study 2: Creating a regional network for training and development for industry - the North Mayo Skillnet

Mr. Peter Brady, Network promoter, Dekko Heating Technologies

Mr. Carl Blake, Network co-ordinator

Discussion

11.00 – 12.00 The recognition and assessment of non-formal and informal learning – European experience and avenues for co-operation

Mr. Jens Bjørnåvold, Directorate General Education and Culture, EU Commission
(this presentation will take account of the work of the Commission's expert working group on informal and non-formal learning)

12.00 – 12.30 Conclusion of Seminar

Presentation of main themes and issues by rapporteur, Yvonne McGivern, Working Knowledge

13.30 – 16.30 Meeting of Thematic Group H (for group members)

C. Biographies

Mr. Carl Blake

Carl is currently Project Manager for I.C.E. Group, a multi-service company in the West of Ireland that specialises in training and which acted as external project manager to the North Mayo Skillnet. Carl is the Network Co-ordinator with responsibility for facilitating the North Mayo network and ensuring the implementation of the training and project plan.

Mr. Jens Bjørnåvold

Jens is currently working as an expert in the European Commission, Directorate General on Education and Culture. He is part of the unit working on policy development in vocational education and training, with particular responsibility for matters relating to transparency and recognition of qualifications (valuing learning).

Mr. Peter Brady

Peter is General Manager of Dekko Heating Technologies, a manufacturer of custom-heating products based in County Mayo. Dekko is one of the 19 companies who make up the North Mayo Skillnet. Peter has been involved closely as the project promoter since the Skillnet was set up in 1999.

Mr. Gordon Clark

Gordon is currently Head of Unit in the Directorate General, Education and Culture at the European Commission. He is, amongst other things, responsible for the preparation of the Lifelong Learning Memorandum and Communication and for both Groups F (Mobility) and H (Making learning attractive) under the programme of the Future Objectives of Education and Training.

Mr. Noel Dempsey, T.D.

Noel Dempsey T.D. has been a Dail Deputy since 1987. He was previously a career guidance counsellor. He has been Minister for Education and Science since June 2002. He was Minister for the Environment and Local Government (1997-2002) and party Spokesman on the Environment (1994-1997). He has also been Minister of State in the Departments of An

Taoiseach, Defence and Finance (1992-1994). He served at local government level for many years and was a member of Meath Vocational Education Committee.

Mr. Eamon Devoy

Eamon is Assistant General Secretary of the Training Technical Engineering and Electrical Workers Union. He is the project promoter of the Leinster Engineering Technical Skillnet project.

Mr. George Holden

George has been employed as a driver with South Dublin County Council for 13 years. Prior to that he worked with Coca Cola and the Irish Defence Forces. He took part in the Workplace Basic Education Return to Learning initiative, both in its pilot phase and in its follow-up phase. He has since enrolled on further education and training courses.

Mr. Alan Moore

Alan's background is in engineering and sales. He joined Education Training Services in 1998 and was seconded to the Leinster Engineering Technical Skillnet project in 2000 as the Skillnet manager. He has now returned to Education Training Services to organise and deliver training to various Skillnet projects.

Dr. Anna Murphy

Dr. Anna Murphy is Director of Framework Development with the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. She was previously senior policy analyst working on skills needs, trade and European Union affairs with Forfás (the national advisory board for enterprise, trade, science, technology and innovation). She has previously carried out research on international trade and EU enlargement whilst at the European University Institute, Florence, University College Dublin and the Centre for European Policy Studies in Brussels.

Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú

Seán was Secretary to the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland when it was established in 2001. He was appointed as its first Chief Executive in February 2002. He was previously Head of Policy and Planning in the Higher Education Authority. He also worked in the Department of Education and Science on a range of projects including the preparation of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 and the Universities Act, 1997.

Ms. Helen Ryan

Helen joined the National Adult Literacy Agency in 1998, initially as development worker and currently as Project Co-ordinator. She has been involved with the development of three literacy projects: the *Literacy through the Media* project, providing literacy tuition over television and radio; *Workplace Basic Education*; and intensive basic education programmes in partnership with FÁS. She currently manages the *Literacy through the Media* project as well as developments in the Workplace Basic Education programme.

Mr. Patrick Werquin

Patrick is Principal Administrator in the Education and Training Policy Division of the Directorate for Education, at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris. He is currently working on national qualification systems, adult learning, literacy and new competencies and assessment of adult skills. Among other things, he is in charge of the Thematic Review of Adult Learning. He has just taken over a new OECD activity on the impact of National Qualification Systems on lifelong learning.