



**Community Development and Policy Learning  
in Further Education  
in Ireland**

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## **Executive Summary**

In 2007 Combat Poverty commissioned a study to investigate and describe the nature of in-service learning opportunities in all aspects of social policy in the field of community development. The study is one of a series commissioned under the *Having Your Say* programme and was designed to support the future learning opportunities of those working in the field of community development. This study is focused on courses of study outside the third-level sector. What was of interest to the study were courses in further, adult or continuing education of at least 10 weeks duration that had an explicit community development or community work content or focus.

The study examined a wide range of course providers in the further and adult education sector, in the community and voluntary sector and in the provision of vocational education committees. The study assembled the details of over 500 potential course providers and contacted them by email. This sweep of information gathering threw up a very small number of courses.

The FETAC Levels 5 and 6 in Community Development that had a policy content were of particular interest. The policy content of Level 6 is considerably stronger than that of Level 5. These courses of study are part of the National Qualifications Framework. However, over the period 2002–2006, only 167 participants availed of these courses. Part of the reason for this small number may be that there was no perceived demand for the courses and providers were reluctant or did not have the competence to provide them.

However, it may be the case also that employees in community development prefer to pursue non-degree certificate and diploma courses offered by the third-level sector.

The study noted that the well-established organisation Community Action Network plays a dynamic and active role in delivering community development education and training and is regarded as a specialist in the field.

The study drew a number of conclusions. In the areas of training of trainers for course delivery, or curriculum design and development, the field of Community Development is under served and under invested. The study found negligible opportunities for public or social policy learning in further education inside or outside of workplaces.

The study recommended that Combat Poverty / *Having Your Say* programme should consider filling some of the void in training trainers to deliver community development programmes or particular policy-oriented modules. The *Having Your Say* programme has published a series of easy-to-read materials in the field of Community Development that are suited to more formal learning opportunities.

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# Chapter One

## Background to the Research

### Context of the study

In 2005 Combat Poverty launched a three-year programme called *Having Your Say*. The aim of the programme was to strengthen the voices and practices of people and communities living in poverty in the development and implementation of anti-poverty policies and programmes. The *Having Your Say* programme was devised following a consultation process with anti-poverty organisations. It also took account of previous Combat Poverty work to support community development and anti-poverty groups to use the lessons from their day-to-day practice to inform and influence public policy.

The consultation process for the *Having Your Say* programme suggested that, in an Irish context, there was limited familiarity with terms such as ‘policy,’ ‘policy making’ or ‘policy influencing’ by many community workers active in groups working on anti-poverty issues. Many indicated limited knowledge and expertise of policy frameworks, structures and processes<sup>1</sup>. Combat Poverty determined that this was a potential ‘deficit’ in the programme, which needed to be explored and addressed.

### The 2006 study<sup>2</sup>

Combat Poverty commissioned a study, produced in 2006, which examined the social policy content of community development education in a number of third-level institutions. The 2006 study identified 30 Community Development courses emanating from the higher education sector across the country.

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<sup>1</sup> This analysis is drawn from Combat Poverty text 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Conroy, P. and O’Leary, H. (2006) *Assessing Student Learning Opportunities in Community Development in Ireland*. Combat Poverty: Dublin.

Courses were available at levels ranging from certificate through to masters degree and were delivered and managed via a variety of complex methods, including:

- Traditional full-time courses offered entirely on-campus
- Outreach courses
- Distance learning courses with some visits to a campus or other local centre
- Courses designed by four different providers and delivered by each of the course designers on a harmonised basis
- Courses designed by one provider and then franchised out to another provider.

The nature of the delivery and management of courses allowed for a wide geographic spread of learning though with some gaps. However, the field was fast changing and a course on offer in a particular location in one year would not necessarily be available in the same place in the following academic year.

The cost of the courses varied greatly even where they were of similar duration and award level. The fees were of particular importance in the case of part-time courses, which are not eligible under the free fees scheme at third level.

Placement in a supervised work environment is an important feature of courses of study for practitioner-based professions and jobs such as social work or social care and teaching. This form of learning was not available in 17 of the 30 courses assessed.

A number of courses did not conform to an established National Framework of Qualifications level, although efforts are being made by providers and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) to rectify this situation. The social policy content of courses was variable. The majority of courses contained explicit social or public policy modules. Eight courses had segments

of a social policy module, while very few courses had absolutely no relationship with social or public policy.

A summary of the findings was published in 2006 and presentations of the findings were made at a seminar of persons interested in community development education, as well as to the Advisory Board of the *Having Your Say* programme. A listing of the courses was published in 2006 as a supplement to *Action on Poverty Today*, the Combat Poverty journal. An updating of the course information commenced in 2006 with a view to making it more widely accessible.

### **The commissioning of the 2007 study**

To complement the findings of this study, Combat Poverty in 2006 commissioned a second study to examine community development opportunities for students outside of third-level institutions.

The study was intended to:

‘ . . . investigate, describe and assess the extent and nature of in-service learning opportunities on social policy, policy engagement (e.g. policy analysis, policy development, policy promotion, policy evaluation) within community development provision. This may include a range of short or longer-term courses (12 weeks to one to two years) or training opportunities in community development education which may be delivered internally in the workplace or externally by other course providers<sup>3</sup>.

The report of the study had four aims:

- To establish baseline information on the range of policy learning opportunities for in-service learning

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<sup>3</sup> Combat Poverty (2006) *Invitation to Tender: To assess social policy learning opportunities within community development courses outside of the third-level formal education system.*

- To assess the opportunities to acquire policy skills as part of professional development, training or education opportunities in community development outside of the third-level formal education system
- To identify opportunities and mechanisms for the Having Your Say programme / Combat Poverty to develop a role to support or strengthen the policy learning opportunities and experiences within those courses
- To make recommendations to the *Having Your Say* programme / Combat Poverty on the feasibility of future engagement in this area.

The first aim involved establishing the scope of the study. This involved identifying the 'unit of analysis' or the courses that complied with the study aims. From completion of the first aim, the second aim of assessing opportunities could be conducted. The third and fourth aims derive from the findings and are contained in Chapters Four and Five of this report.

### **The scope of the study**

Community development is not strongly developed as a profession. In contrast with nursing, teaching or social work, there are few highly structured and organised opportunities for multi-level professional development. In other words, formal professional development is diffuse and dispersed. As a consequence, a variety of courses and opportunities contribute to professional development of community work / community development at a range of different learning levels and in a variety of settings.

Provision of further education, adult education, community education and workplace education is an enormous mosaic of constantly changing borders. Unlike Community Development courses provided by third-level institutions, there is no single set of institutions that provide community development

education outside of the higher education sector. There is no single directory of courses in Community Development by speciality, level or region.

## **Learning in Ireland**

In 2000, the Lisbon Summit of the European Council set itself the strategic goal of becoming the 'most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world'. This aim has been reinforced at subsequent council meetings. A key area of the strategy is to give higher priority to lifelong learning as a basic component of the European social model<sup>4</sup>.

A structure of comprehensive lifelong learning is an explicit policy goal of the Irish government. In addition to EU employment and social inclusion policy, it is being driven by several factors:

- Post-industrial society, where the concept of a 'job for life' is no longer a reality
- Knowledge-based, globalised economy where all workers need to be flexible to the needs of a dynamic labour market
- Demographically ageing population with less school-leavers coming on to the labour market
- The structure of social partnership allows for partnership in the provision of work-based learning
- Perceived link between paid employment and social inclusion.

The lifelong learning agenda commenced tentatively in Ireland in the early 1990s and has been confirmed in key policy documents since that time, including:

### *In the context of National Social Partnership*

- *Programme for Economic and Social Progress, 1990–1993*
- *Programme for Competitiveness and Work, 1994–1996*
- *Partnership 2000, 1997–2000*

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<sup>4</sup> Lisbon European Council 23–24 March 2000. Presidency Conclusions.

- *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, 2000–2003*
- *Sustaining Progress, 2003–2005*
- *Towards 2016, 2006–2015.*

*In the context of social inclusion*

- National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion, 2001–2003
- National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion, 2003–2005
- National Report for Ireland on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion, 2006–2008
- National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007–2016

*In the context of the labour market*

- Employment Action Plan, 1998
- National Employment Action Plans, 1998–2005
- National Reform Programme, 2005.

The most recent national partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*, adopts a lifecycle approach to social policy. For people of working age, priority actions in relation to employment include a focus on lifelong learning<sup>5</sup>.

‘In the context of enhancing employability . . . This involves . . . the ability of employees to continuously develop their skills and competencies through lifelong learning and up-skilling . . . ’

Two further documents have set out government policy on further, adult and community education. Ireland’s first White Paper on Adult Education, *Learning for Life*, set some key priorities for the sector, including:<sup>6</sup>

- The allocation of resources to address adult literacy needs

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<sup>5</sup> Government of Ireland (2006) *Towards 2016. Ten-year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006–2015*. p.50. Stationery Office: Dublin.

<sup>6</sup> Government of Ireland (2000) *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*.

- An increase in opportunities for adult learners with less than upper secondary education
- The promotion and development of a role for adult education and training as a vital component within an over-arching framework for lifelong learning.

The Taskforce on Lifelong Learning was established in 2000 and was made up of a range of stakeholders as well as eight government departments. The taskforce reported its work in 2002 and established a framework containing these elements:<sup>7</sup>

- Developing and implementing the National Framework of Qualifications
- Ensuring basic skills for all
- Providing comprehensive and coherent guidance and information
- Addressing delivery, access and funding issues
- Better learning opportunities in the workplace and for workers.

Within this context of the explicit promotion of lifelong learning, the adult, community and further education sector has mushroomed and developed to form a complex set of arrangements and options for second chance learning, professional up-skilling and personal development.

### **Further and adult education and training in Ireland**

The Qualifications (Education & Training) Act, 1999, defines further education and training broadly as 'education and training other than primary or post-primary education or higher education and training'<sup>8</sup>.

Further education programmes are typically vocational in nature and may reflect the needs of the local, regional or national labour market. Programmes are delivered by a large range of providers and are funded from a variety of

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<sup>7</sup> *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (2002)* Stationery Office: Dublin.

<sup>8</sup> Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999. Part 1, Section 2 (1).

sources. A further and important feature of the sector is the diverse profile of learners.

### **The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC)**

Since 2001, FETAC has been the single national awarding body for further education and training. It replaces awards previously made by NCVA, FÁS, Teagasc and Fáilte Ireland. Between June 2001 and 2006, FETAC made 500,000 awards across Ireland. In 2006 alone, 189,693 awards were made. As the FETAC 'brand' gains more and more currency with employers, learners are gravitating towards it and thus creating demand for FETAC accredited courses.

Within the 10-level National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) FETAC has specific responsibility for awards at Levels 1–6. The lower Levels 1 and 2 remain at pilot stage in 2007.

The NFQ and FETAC awards have been designed to facilitate learner mobility. Holders of a FETAC award at Level 5, for example, should in theory be able to apply for a Level 6 course in any discipline, not just the one relating to their Level 5 award.

In addition, the Higher Education Links Scheme facilitates progression to a variety of higher education courses via specific FETAC Level 5 certificates and Level 6 advanced certificates. Under this scheme a number of places are reserved by higher education institutions for FETAC applicants for entry to a range of third-level courses<sup>9</sup>. FETAC Level 5 Certificate in Community Development and FETAC Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Community Development are specifically linked to higher education courses in a number of higher education institutions.

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<sup>9</sup> FETAC *Progression from FETAC Level 5 Certificates and Level 6 Advanced Certificates to Higher Education Courses 2007*.

Although learner mobility is an important feature of the FETAC awards system, the structure of awards allows for accreditation and recognition of learning for those whose achievement may remain at a single level. As such, a FETAC award at any level is a stand-alone achievement.

FETAC awards are made in numerous fields of knowledge and skill from Netmending to Theatre Production to Community Development. The validation of awards at different levels does not necessarily mean that a particular subject or field of study should be made available at each level. The learning outcomes related to each level show that it would not be desirable or even feasible to offer all disciplines at all levels.

**Table 1 Learning outcomes related to each of FETAC Levels 1–6**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Learning outcome</b>
Level 1	Ability to learn basic facts and repetitive skills as well as to sequence learning tasks
Level 2	Ability to learn new skills and knowledge in a supervised environment and to carry out routine work under direction, with basic literacy and numeracy
Level 3	Ability to perform relatively simple work-related tasks. Confirming a minimum level of employability, while incorporating practical capabilities and understanding of theory.
Level 4	Independent learning associated with what may be required for first time entry to many occupational sectors.
Level 5	A broad range of understanding and/or skills, which may lead to specific occupations; working independently while subject to general direction.
Level 6	A comprehensive range of understanding and/or skills, which may be vocationally specific and/or of a general supervisory nature. Also includes detailed theoretical understanding.

Source: [www.fetac.ie](http://www.fetac.ie)

FETAC courses are validated with three goals in mind. Any course should achieve at least one of three goals for learners<sup>10</sup>:

- A link to further or higher education or training
- A link to employment
- Personal development.

There are approximately 1,400 further education centres registered with FETAC. Examples of providers include:

- Vocational Education Committees (VEC)
- Colleges of further education
- Youthreach
- FÁS training centres
- Workplace
- Senior Traveller training centres
- Private training providers
- Adult and community education and training centres
- Institutes of technology
- Agricultural and horticultural colleges.

Provider registration with FETAC is through agreement of quality assurance procedures.

### **Vocational Education Committees (VEC)**

Vocational education committees, under the aegis of the Department of Education and Science, are responsible for the local delivery of a number of programmes including:

- Post Leaving Certificate courses (PLC)
- Youthreach for early school-leavers

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<sup>10</sup> Ralaheen discussion with FETAC, 2007.

- Senior Traveller training centre programmes
- Adult literacy and community education
- The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)
- Self-funded part-time adult education programmes in second-level schools.

## **Community and adult education**

In the 1980s a new form of adult and community education began to emerge with the development of locally-based and often locally-funded adult education groups. A number of these centres were managed by women and specifically targeted women learners and made provision for childcare.

During the 1990s funding to adult education centres increased and target groups expanded to include educationally disadvantaged populations more generally. Among these developments were the recruitment of community education facilitators and the introduction of the Back to Education Initiative following the White Paper on Adult Education in 2000. The sector has expanded to include larger numbers of learners and the sector now delivers programmes from pre-foundation level up to third level.

The need to develop learning opportunities, including further education, is recognised in the Programme for Government 2007.<sup>11</sup> The programme commits to:

‘proactively address the issue of learning in the workplace which impacts on the employability of individuals.’

...

(The Programme) will develop the further education sector to enable it to play a strong role in providing employment relevant education and training opportunities.’

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<sup>11</sup> Department of an Taoiseach (2007) An Agreed Programme for Government, June.

While the above is not a commitment to community development education, it provides a floor on which the rationale for further community development education investment can stand. It is somewhat surprising, then, to find that the proposals of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion for further or adult education are not as broad based as the Programme for Government and that these proposals could be generally interpreted as leaning towards a call for further training as opposed to education<sup>12</sup>.

There are approximately 487,400 Irish people aged 15 years or over living in the State whose highest level of completed education was primary school or who never went to school.<sup>13</sup> The demand for further and adult education is fuelled by the difficulties many adults have experienced in their school-going days. The formal education system has 'failed' many of today's adults by an inability to retain and support school students through to a complete secondary education and by failing to offer compensatory programmes in disadvantaged areas. This is particularly the case for those who were educated in or prior to the 1960s and who had to leave school at 13 or 14 years and for whom there was no 'free' secondary education.

Linking the policy component of community development to lived experience can be difficult if people have had an experience of being ignored, discouraged or their views not taken into account. This is described by a report on policy work on the ground:

'The main difficulty encountered was evidence that our issues were being taken on board by the particular agency. We have been seen in

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<sup>12</sup> Office of Social Inclusion (2007) National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007–2016, Department of Social and Family Affairs, Stationery Office, Dublin, pp.43–45.

<sup>13</sup> CSO (2007) *Census 2006*, Principal Socio-economic Results, Stationery Office, September, Table 19a, p.169. See also Table 21.

some instances to be making complaints about the system versus trying to find a solution in partnership to overcome the issue'<sup>14</sup>.

The place of policy in relation to community development and the experiences of deprived or disadvantaged communities is not always transparent or explicit. In addition, the complex way in which some policies emerge or evolve through the social partnership process, the Oireachtas and crisis management can make it difficult, and even contentious, to establish a clear and visible policy formation line. This can contribute to a perception that the study of social policy is too complex to grasp and unrelated to the lives of poor people.

### **Workplace training and education**

The notion of the workplace as the locus for training has gained credence in recent years. However, it is worth bearing in mind that a substantial number of industrial workers are employed by multinational corporations which are located in Ireland precisely because, amongst other reasons, employees are already educated and trained. In effect, the concept of paid educational leave is relatively undeveloped. Some employers in the professions of banking, accountancy and law provide paid educational leave before employees' examinations. This does not appear to be a widespread practice and is an area meriting further research.

### **Funding sources for Adult and Community Education Providers**

A perplexing myriad of funders are engaged with further, adult and community education. This stands in contrast to higher education. Why this is the case is unknown. It may be a perception that poverty and disadvantage are related to education. It may be that some education investment is tax deductible for US

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<sup>14</sup> Siobhan Airey (2006) *Communities, Voices and Change A Report on the policy work of CDPs, FRCs, and Partnerships*, Combat Poverty Agency, p.32.

companies, or it may be that education is regarded as a reliable destination for funds. The following is a selection of bodies that fund further education:

- Local authorities
- Department of Education and Science
- Department of Health and Children
- Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
- Department of Social and Family Affairs
- Department of Foreign Affairs
- Fáilte Ireland
- FÁS
- Teagasc
- Comhairle
- Co-operation Ireland
- Create
- Pobal
- Development Co-operation Ireland
- Combat Poverty
- Age and Opportunity
- National Disability Authority
- Banks
- Supermarkets
- Dublin Bus
- Trust foundations.

The range of funding sources has implications for a strategic approach to community development education at further and adult education levels.

### **Participation in adult education in Ireland**

Every year approximately 300,000 adults participate in formal and informal education in Ireland. This includes the whole range of options from evening classes to higher education. Table 2 shows the number of adults participating in education outside of higher education over a range of years.

**Table 2 Participation in Adult Education, various years**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Numbers (Estimates)</b>	<b>Date</b>
Literacy schemes	40,000	2006
Senior Travelling Training Centres ( <i>STTCs</i> )	1,485	December 2004
Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme ( <i>VTOS</i> )	5,242	December 2006
Youthreach	2,841	December 2006
Post Leaving Cert Courses ( <i>PLCs</i> )	30,215	October 2006
Community education	40,000+ participants in women's groups	2004
Back to Education Initiative ( <i>BTEI</i> ) – <i>Formal and Informal Strand</i>	9,835	December 2003
<b>Total</b>	129,618	

*Source: AONTAS Participation in Adult Education in Ireland, partially up-dated by Fayne, H., Ralaheen, 2007.*

Table 2 above shows that in a given year there could be up to 130,000 adults participating in various adult, further and community education programmes.

## Chapter Two

### Approach and Method of Carrying Out the Research

#### Establishing a baseline

To establish a baseline for the study, the following factors were considered for the inclusion or exclusion of community development provision that might contain a social policy content.

#### *Project management*

A number of courses attended by community workers are focused on the context rather than the policy content of community development. This is illustrated by courses designed for the management of not-for-profit bodies, which are not explicitly attached to community development but nevertheless may attract community development staff and volunteers. These courses were **excluded** from the study as not being directly related to community development and the policy process.

#### *Specialised courses*

Other courses are intended for community work in particular settings such as community development with migrant workers and asylum seekers or refugees. The training work conducted by Integrating Ireland in conjunction with Community Action Network is an example. Such courses are specialist in that they include the policy formation and policy process in relation to one particular segment of community development. These courses were to be **included** according to their policy content.

#### *Once-off local courses*

Community Development courses for grassroots volunteers and activists are also emerging, which receive small funds from government programmes or philanthropic trusts and foundations for the community and voluntary sector. These funds can range from 500 to 5,000 Euro. These courses were generally

**excluded** from the study as being too short in duration, usually lasting less than 12 weeks.

#### *Learning opportunities*

Opportunities for advancement may arise through the provision of workshops or weekend sessions at particular conjunctures in community development. These are opportunities for learning but not necessarily in the framework of a course and not necessarily policy oriented.

Within this heterogeneous arrangement of courses and opportunities, there is need to analyse what are the emerging, sustainable and well-received developments in learning opportunities with a policy dimension of interest to the *Having Your Say* programme.

The study took a further step in establishing a baseline of courses by communicating and signalling the study to agents on the 'supply and demand' side'. Stakeholders were asked to inform the research of any relevant Community Development courses.

An advisory committee to the study commented on the boundaries of the study. Following this consultation it was decided that to be included in the study, courses should fit certain fixed criteria:

- Of no less than 10 weeks duration
- Outside of the higher education sector
- Contain explicit Community Development or community work learning
- Are delivered internally in the workplace or externally by other course providers
- Have been delivered or are planned for delivery between September 2006 and September 2007.

These criteria permitted the unit of research to be narrowed down with specific contours.

Courses not included in the study included:

- Courses that were explicitly aimed at community development practitioners, volunteers and managers but that did not contain explicit community development or community work learning
- Courses aimed at community development workers and volunteers on aspects of community work other than community development or community work in itself
- Stand-alone courses in social or public policy, which are not part of community development education or training
- Courses developed as a result of community development or community work, rather than courses in community development or community work

For example, in 2007 Gorey Adult Education offered a National College of Ireland Certificate in Managing Organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector. While the certificate was aimed specifically at managers or supervisors engaged in community organisations, the primary focus was on management rather than principles or practice of community development *per se*.

Equally, in late 2006, the European Anti Poverty Network Ireland provided interesting training in EU social policy and its relevance to local issues and needs to representatives of 20 community organisations. The focus of the training was exclusively on social policy and therefore the course was not included in this study.

Triskele Community Training and Development also recognises the need for activists and community development workers to understand the structures with which they must engage. Triskele offers, for example, a training course

'Understanding Local Government Structures'. It also offers stand-alone courses in elements of social policy such as 'Equality Awareness Policies and Procedures'.

Once more, the availability of these courses demonstrates an important response to a need within the community and voluntary sector. However, as the courses are stand-alone and not part of community development education, they do not fit the criteria of this study.

Enterprise Boards provide training and support to new community development organisations. However, the main focus of this interaction would be on training, mentoring and financial assistance.

Other examples of courses not included in the study are:

- Level 5 Security Studies
- NCI Certificate in Managing Organisations in the Voluntary and Community Sector
- Writing Successful Funding Proposals
- Volunteer Support and Supervision
- Literacy courses.

### **Contacting further and adult education**

Following the above exclusions, a listing of 583 organisations was compiled. This process was done using Ralaheen's own internal resources and sources and advice given by other social networks. All 583 were contacted via email with an information note (see Appendix 1).

- County and city VECs
- Colleges of further education
- Senior Traveller training centres
- CDP support agencies

- Bulletins
- County and city enterprise boards
- Area-based partnerships
- Community partnerships
- Territorial employment pacts
- Family resource centres
- Community development projects
- National anti-poverty networks.

Some of the organisations were contacted as possible providers of community development education, while others were contacted as possible sources of learners and some for their local knowledge and expertise in the terrain.

### **Web searches**

The study undertook a number of web-based key word searches on Learning Point / The Wheel and Activelink to explore courses that ought to be examined for their Community Development or policy content.

### **Discussions with stakeholders**

The study undertook seven discussions with key providers in the field of adult and community education.

- National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
- FETAC
- Family Support Agency
- Training Initiative Ireland
- AONTAS
- Community Action Network
- Kerry Education Service.

These were open-ended discussions about the aims of the research and contributors gave considerable time to the research.

### **Limitations of the method**

The research would like to claim that it has undertaken an exhaustive exploration of the courses that fell within the remit of its terms of reference. However, a limitation of the method is that it may have missed some courses, particularly those that are pilot or experimental and those that are in individual workplaces or units of networks. A particular confusion that arose in the course of the study was between courses destined for or targeted to the community development sector, and courses with a Community Development content that contained potential policy modules.

Chapter Three presents a summary of the findings.

## Chapter Three

### Findings of the Study

#### **Main findings**

The results of the search for courses with a policy content at further and adult education levels, i.e. outside higher education, revealed few learning opportunities. Despite extensive developments in adult and community education, this is not manifesting itself in Community Development courses offered outside of higher education institutions.

#### **Direct contact**

The emailed information note seeking details of courses attracted a negligible response. This was not surprising given the equally large void in colleges of education, FETAC and web searches.

A small number of organisations that were contacted returned information on courses currently being provided in local areas. Table 3 shows the types of organisations that took the time to consider the request and to provide details of courses of interest to the study.

**Table 3      Some responses to email request for information, 2007**

<b>Type of organisation</b>	<b>Courses highlighted</b>
Private training provider	Presentation Skills Management Skills – people; project; crisis; change Fundraising Train the Trainers
Private training provider	Leadership Skills

County Enterprise Board	Training, mentoring and financial assistance to develop community enterprise projects
Training Provider (NI)	Supervision Skills
CDP	Self-esteem Residents / Tenants Courses Youth Leadership courses (Adventure) Child Protection Courses
CDP Support Agency	Community Development courses emanating from higher education bodies

The courses highlighted were of interest to the study as indicators of the flurry of training and development activity that organisations source or provide for staff, volunteers and client groups *as a result of community development practice*.

### **Network searches**

Keyword searches were carried out on two web resource sites likely to be used by staff and volunteers in the community and voluntary sector.

The Wheel / Learning Point network gave the following results for 'community' courses:

- 151 results
- No relevant courses.

The Wheel / Learning Point results for Community Development and Rural Development courses were:

- 49 results
- No relevant courses.

The Activelink virtual network listed 71 training courses and workshops in January 2007, none of which were within the scope of the study. A further test in February 2007 generated 90 training courses and workshops, none of which were within the study scope.

### **Other courses**

The study found just two courses ‘floating’ outside the higher education sector. These were the Tipperary Institute/Thurles Action certificate in Estate Management and Community Development. This course has a public policy content in the structures and operation of local government and basic administrative and equality law. A second course in Training for Transformation had content entitled ‘Social Analysis’ that may, effectively, be remote from social policy.

**Table 4 Non-FETAC accredited Community Development**

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Social Policy content</b>
Tipperary Institute / Thurles Action	Certificate in Estate Management and Community Development	Structures and operations of local government
Partners	Training for Transformation	Social Analysis

*Source:* Information supplied to Ralaheen, 2007

During the course of the research, Pobal, in partnership with Community Action Network (CAN), announced its intention to launch a new course, Community Work in a Changing Ireland, starting in the academic year 2007. The course is aimed at people working in community work positions within the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP). The programme of five three-day workshops arises from Pobal’s commitment to ensuring that

community workers within LDSIP 'have opportunities to develop their competencies in community work in order to enable them to fulfil their roles and meet their objectives with satisfaction, comfort and efficiency'<sup>15</sup>.

This is an interesting development in relation to the up-skilling of at-work community workers. Course accreditation is emanating from the higher education sector (NUI Certificate) and therefore it falls outside the remit of this study.

### **Colleges of further education course listings**

Colleges of further education did not appear to be delivering Community Development courses or modules. Out of 160 colleges of further education, 81 were offering courses under the headings of child / community / social / health. Of these 81, just three were offering courses in Community Development, of which two appeared to be youth-oriented courses and just one a FETAC Level 5 Community Development course.

### **Back to Education Initiative**

Funding is available under the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) to provide courses at FETAC Levels 5 and 6 although priority is given to the provision of courses at Levels 3 and 4. In 2006, based on reports submitted by providers, three VECs provided relevant courses under the BTEI:

- City of Dublin VEC FETAC Level 5 Community Development
- County Dublin VEC FETAC Level 5 Social Care (1 module in Youth Work)
- Galway City VEC FETAC Level 5 Youth Work.

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<sup>15</sup> Pobal (2007) *Community Work in a Changing Ireland. Community Development Training Initiative for the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme.*

This provision would have been delivered to a mixed group and not specifically targeted at people already working in the sector<sup>16</sup>. BTEI is due to be expanded by 2,000 places by 2009<sup>17</sup>.

The study was informed by a stakeholder that proposals to offer courses in Community Development as part of the Back to Education initiative were sometimes rejected as being insufficiently skill-oriented or lacking in a vocational dimension. The study does not have the evidence to substantiate this allegation. The Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Science was not in a position to provide the study with a listing of the titles of BTEI-funded courses.

### **FETAC Courses in Community Development and Youth Work**

Although Community Development has been developed and made available at FETAC Levels 5 and 6, the number of participants remains low, partly because the supply of courses is low. The supply may be low because there is no perceived demand for such courses. The following table shows actual numbers:

**Table 5 FETAC Level 5 and 6 Community Development**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Level 2 / 5 Awards*</b>	<b>Level 3 / 6 Awards**</b>
2002	26	8
2003	-	-
2004	10	6
2005	72	-
2006	45	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>14</b>

*Source:* FETAC, arranged by Ralaheen. FETAC advise the numbers are approximate and should be treated with caution

<sup>16</sup> Communication with the Further Education Sector, Department of Education and Science, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Government of Ireland (2006) *Towards 2016. Ten-year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015*. Stationery Office: Dublin.

\* FETAC Level 5 is the equivalent of the former NCVA Level 2

\*\* FETAC Level 6 is the equivalent of the former NCVA Level 3

Over five years, just 167 participants availed of FETAC Levels 5 and 6 in Community Development. This is very small considering that almost 130,000 people avail of adult and further education (excluding higher education) in Ireland every year. The numbers availing of Level 6 are extremely small – just 14 students over five years.

Discussion with stakeholders offered some lines of thought on the question. The FETAC Level 5 course is actually very labour intensive to deliver and some parts, especially on policy, are quite challenging to learners who have been absent from formal education for a time. The number of educators or trainers capable and interested in delivering the module is limited at the present time. There is no specific location or source for training of trainers courses. There also may be some perceived vagueness as to course content and its relevance for employment, according to stakeholders.

Comparing Community Development with Social Care is worth observing. Trade unions such as IMPACT have strongly promoted the idea of courses in Social Care for employees working in the disability sector, for example, and there is a growing demand for such courses. Bodies such as St Michael's House have invested heavily in curriculum development research, pedagogy, library materials and workbooks for employee students within the sector. They also have developed a specific and obligatory module in Disability and Social Policy for the advanced level students. Employers have been persuaded by trade unions to stimulate skill progression within the sector, even where there is no guarantee of upward mobility. A HETAC course attracts a constant cohort of students.

FETAC Level 5 Youthwork has also had low participation rates.

**Table 6 FETAC Level 5 Youthwork, 2004–2005**

Year	Level 5 Awards
2004	19
2005	20
Total	39

*Source:* FETAC, arranged by Ralaheen. FETAC advise the numbers are approximate and should be treated with caution.

### **FETAC and Social Policy modules**

An examination of the social policy content of FETAC Level 5 Community Development and FETAC Level 5 Youthwork indicates that the courses in social studies and social analysis are not directly related to a study of policy formation, policy analysis or public policy critique<sup>18</sup>. However, they do prepare a student for the discussion of policy development and formation. The course content is related to developing an understanding of the social dimension of society and social concepts, such as Equality. These two courses form part of the optional or 'elective' modules and therefore are not obligatory for all students.

FETAC Level 6, in contrast, contains learning opportunities for critical and dynamic understanding of social analysis and combining social analysis with community development practice. The course on Social Analysis is intended for students of at least three to five years experience in community development who have held positions of responsibility and intend to develop a leadership role in the community and voluntary sector<sup>19</sup>. With this profile in sight, one can appreciate that community workers with this background may well opt for specific skills courses in leadership and management rather than in Community Development.

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<sup>18</sup> FETAC Social Analysis Level 5 E20157 and Social Studies Level 5 G20031.

<sup>19</sup> FETAC Social Analysis Level 6 L31311 April 2005.

The course is delivered in eight three-day modules of a total of 24 days. Part of the module is in policy development 'designed to enable participants to understand the policy context, how to formulate policies from practice and how to influence change'.

### **FETAC accessibility**

The accessibility of FETAC courses for young learners is not as encouraging as might appear at first sight. FETAC courses at Levels 5 and 6 are sometimes restricted to students over the age of 23.5 or 24.5 years, unless they have sufficient points via the CAO to merit entrance in their own right. As a result younger learners effectively are excluded in some instances from FETAC Levels 5 and 6 unless they can enter and pass a (related or unrelated) FETAC Level 4 course, which permits them to graduate upwards to Level 5 the following year.

**Table 7 Social Policy Modules within FETAC Community Development and Youth Work awards**

<b>FETAC Level</b>	<b>Title of Social Policy Module</b>	<b>General Aims</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
<b>Community Development Level 5</b>  <b>Youth Work Level 5</b>	Social Studies (Elective)	Learners who successfully complete this module will: - Become familiar with sociological concepts - Develop an understanding of their position as an individual, a family member, and as part of the community and wider society - Become familiar with the major economic, cultural and social structures that make up our society and their effects - Recognise how economic, political, cultural and social	- Introduction to Sociology Research Skills - Social Services in Childcare - Health and Community Services - Work and Leisure - Further Sociology - Social Issues - Equality Studies	Examination 50%  Project 50%

		<p>structures are related and interdependent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand the impact of discrimination on individuals and groups in society</li> <li>- Examine critically contemporary social issues</li> <li>- Acquire basic research skills</li> <li>- Increase their effectiveness in life and work through understanding social issues.</li> </ul>		
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<b>Community Development Level 5</b>  <b>Youth Work Level 5</b>	Social Analysis (Elective)	This module aims to enable the student to: - Clarify their own values and attitudes in relation to a variety of social issues, e.g. race, gender, class, poverty, inequality and globalisation.	- Social Analysis concepts - From the personal to the Political - Practice Development	Project 50%  Assignment 30%  Learner Record 20%
<b>Level 6</b>	Policy-making in Community Development	Not available to the study at this time, 2007.		

**Table 7 Social Policy Modules within FETAC Community Development and Youth Work awards continued**

<b>FETAC Level</b>	<b>Title of Social Policy Module</b>	<b>General Aims</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
<b>Level 6</b>	Social Analysis	Learners who successfully complete this module will: - Describe and critically reflect on familiar situations of exclusion - Have a deeper understanding of the key dynamics which inform such situations - Develop an analytical framework for understanding contemporary society using social analytical tools - Use social analysis to inform and enhance their practice in community development.	- Personal Constructs of Inequality - Concepts and Dynamics of Social Analysis - Social Analysis Tools and its Application	Project 60% Assignment 40%

Source: Kindly supplied to the study by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), 2007

## Chart 1

## A New Module

### **Amnesty, Community Action Network and Ballymun Community Law Centre Pilot Scheme**

Since 2006, Amnesty International Ireland, which has a core focus on human rights, Community Action Network and Ballymun Law Centre have developed a collaborative partnership to develop a new style of community development inspired human rights course. The provisional title of the course is Human Rights and Collective Action. The course is being prepared specifically for accreditation at FETAC Level 5 and thus corresponds to the contours of the National Framework of Qualifications and will permit progression to further and higher education. The course is designed to be an 'elective' or optional module within a Community Development award.

The participants in this course have been identified as grassroots activists interested in studying social change. The course rationale involves a concept of empowerment by knowledge of grassroots activists. Prior to its approval as a FETAC course, it has to be piloted and reviewed systematically. The first of three pilot testings will start in October 2007 in a rural area. The typical course is delivered in portions over the equivalent of eight days.

Kieran Clifford of the Amnesty campaigns team is optimistic that this style of course will be attractive to a new and younger generation of community activists.

Given the stage of pre-accreditation development of the course, no written information is available on it as yet. It is expected that details will be available in mid-2008.

*Source:* Ralaheen discussion, 2007

## Chart 2

## A New Programme development

### **Family Resource Agency promotes community development learning**

The Family Resource Agency was established under the Family Resource Agency Act of 2001. It is a public body under the auspices of the Department of Social and Family Affairs. The establishment of over 100 family resource centres has been promoted by the Family Resource Agency. The centres are now networked together and have their own Forum of Family Resource Centres. Working close to the ground in disadvantaged areas, family resource centres have the capacity to work flexibly to meet local needs and have regional and specialist technical support agencies to draw upon as a development resource.

In an evaluation of the work of family resource centres, education and adult education was seen as a first step for marginalised groups to take responsibility for their futures<sup>20</sup>. The centres are in a position to allow local people, volunteers and staff to get a second chance at adult or further education<sup>21</sup>. More than 14,000 participants engaged in formal and informal educational programmes in the 2004–2005 period.

The Family Resource Agency benefited from a special grant in Budget 2006. This will enable the Agency to increase core staffing for outreach work in some centres and to promote education in the area of community development over the 2007–2010 period. Year by year, community development learning opportunities will be rolled out in the training of trainers, a mentoring programme and leadership. It is hoped that the community

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<sup>20</sup> Minister S. Brennan, T.D. Speaking at the opening of Cobh Family Resource Centre, 25.09.06.

<sup>21</sup> Family Support Agency (2006) Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme 2004-2005, Dublin. p.26.

development education initiative will be of particular interest to volunteers with the Centres.

Community Action Network (CAN) will be one of the partners invited to support these new learning opportunities in the form of accredited training at FETAC Levels 5 and 6. Family resource centres have already been working on policy issues through active networking, attendance at regional and national seminars and through research and policy publications. This new community development initiative will provide focused and formal learning opportunities over the three-year period.

*Source:* Ralaheen discussion, 2007

### **Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs**

The Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs offers grants to applicants who wish to offer courses at local level. Of 407 Education and Training once-off grants, just 11 or 2.7% were for Community Development or Social Analysis. The study could not establish trends in this area and the Department apparently does not intend to do so<sup>22</sup>.

### **Third-level courses**

In 2005, the *Combat Poverty / Having Your Say* study identified 17 pre-degree level courses emanating from higher education institutions, both on and off campus, at certificate and diploma level. These mainly part-time, fee-paying courses had places for up to 340 learners per year, at an average of 20 students per course. These courses are not located on the National Framework of Qualifications and do not offer progression towards or within

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<sup>22</sup> It is not the practice of the Department of CRAG to maintain detailed data on the categories of funding awarded. As a result the data available relates only to a single year period prior to this funding being transferred to CRAG.

the field of higher education where programmes of study offer public and social policy learning opportunities.

This comparison suggests that the adult and further education community development territory may be occupied by third-level institutions. This educational and territorial occupation may or may not be in the interests of students of community development.

### **Investment in the public good**

Curriculum development has benefits in the long term for learners and providers. It is expensive, essential and needs to be frequently revised in areas such as public and social policy. In this study, investment in curriculum is coming from not-for-profit or public bodies such as the Family Resource Agency, Amnesty, or Community Action Network. Without this investment in the medium to long-term interests of community development, learning opportunities either will be stifled or converted into untested and opaque course programmes which may be suited only incidentally to providing policy learning opportunities adapted to the complexity of contemporary policy formation.

Ongoing investment in community development curriculum is essential to ensuring that:

- Educational standards are maintained and students are exposed to fresh thinking from Ireland, Europe and overseas
- Pedagogical methods are developed and reviewed for the effectiveness of education, including participative and interactive teaching-learning frameworks
- Policy dimensions and policy context are integrated carefully into the curriculum segments.

### **Learner uncertainty**

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Community Development and Policy Learning in Further Education  
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Employment in the field of community development is frequently by way of contract or based on project or funding. Learners are not always decided that community development can offer them a long-term future or a career path. Learners on the same programme may have an uncomfortable mix of motives such as:

- Better job within the sector
- Better job outside the sector
- Improving community development practice
- Focus of learning at this point of time is community development but this may change.

Chapter Four presents some conclusions from the study.

## Chapter Four

### Conclusions

- **Opportunities to acquire policy skills**

The study found negligible opportunities for potential students of Community Development to study public or social policy outside of courses offered by higher education Institutions, despite perusing several hundred sources of potential training and education.

- **Available educational infrastructure**

The study identified a wide range of agencies, bodies, institutions and structures available to host Community Development or policy courses in both urban and rural environments.

- **Volume of learners**

The volume of learners emanating from the sector (150+) is well below the needs of the community development sector in terms of contributions to policy making and policy formation. This takes account of the increased volume who will graduate from the Family Support Agency Initiative over three years.

- **New curriculum**

There is no centre for the development of curriculum in Community Development that is suited to the levels of further and adult education. In the absence of such a publicly funded and resourced centre, the skills to develop and test curriculum are not widely available.

The study identified the Community Action Network as an important body delivering Community Development education.

Besides Community Action Network, the study identified just one other body, a consortium, experimenting with a new curriculum module and this may be of interest to monitor in the future development of FETAC.

Only a small number of colleges of further education have been involved in the delivery of Community Development education.

To some extent, learning is funder-driven in that opportunities for management courses in the community and voluntary sector are substituting for in-depth study of the policy issues.

- **Training of trainers and educationalists**

The study could not identify any initiative in the field of training of trainers to deliver existing or new social and public policy-oriented training in the field of Community Development. The development of curriculum and the training of trainers to deliver it usually go hand in hand.

- **The Consortium Initiative**

The decision by the Amnesty consortium to develop a human rights oriented module within a Community Development framework is an interesting and stimulating development. It is akin to the St Michael's House decision to develop a Social Policy module within the Social Care framework. Such experiments, albeit fragmented, may offer one of the ways forward for the future. It may be appropriate for Combat Poverty / *Having Your Say* to consider developing a Participation and Organisation module within the FETAC framework, which could be offered on a single module basis.

## Chapter Five

### **Recommendations to the Having Your Say programme / Combat Poverty on the feasibility of future engagement in this area**

- **Increasing the supply of Community Development courses with a policy content**

Combat Poverty / *Having Your Say* should explore with the Community Action Network whether there is a demand for further training of trainers for the FETAC Level 6 Community Development award, which contains a policy content<sup>23</sup>.

- **Increasing the uptake of the module on Policy Analysis**

Combat Poverty / *Having Your Say* could explore with Community Action Network the feasibility of their delivering FETAC accredited units Level 5 and/or 6 on Social Analysis as stand-alone units, with an increase in trainers to do so.

- **Using *Having Your Say* policy materials**

Combat Poverty / *Having Your Say* could add value to the concluding period of the Programme by repackaging the programme materials (which are in a short, easy-to-read and accessible format) with a proposal that groups and networks host one-day seminars on selected policy oriented-materials. This could include a panel of suggested speakers or facilitators, such as authors of the materials or co-ordinators of networks

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<sup>23</sup> This recommendation and the one which follows have not been proposed by CAN but arise directly from the study.

## Appendix One

### Information Note

#### **'Assessment of social policy learning opportunities within community development courses outside of the third-level formal education system'**

As part of the *Having Your Say* programme, Combat Poverty has commissioned research to:

- Establish baseline information on the range of learning opportunities for in-service learning by community development staff
- Assess opportunities to acquire policy skills as part of community development training/education opportunities outside of third-level education systems
- Identify opportunities and mechanisms for Combat Poverty to support or strengthen policy learning opportunities within the above courses
- Make recommendations to the *Having Your Say* programme / Combat Poverty on future engagement in this area.

The study will examine courses which correspond to specific agreed criteria such as:

- Outside of the higher education sector
- Contain explicit Community Development or Community Work learning
- Are delivered internally in the workplace or externally by other course providers
- Be of at least 10 weeks duration
- Have been delivered or are planned for delivery between September 2006 and September 2007.

Ralaheen Ltd has been invited to carry out the study. Research will start on the study in December 2006 and be completed in early 2007.

Lecturers, trainers, community development managers, adult education coordinators and directors, voluntary and statutory bodies engaged with community development, are invited to contribute to the study.

Further information about the research can be obtained from:

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