

Community Education for Social Transformation

National Skills Conversation: Challenges and
Opportunities for Adult Education and Literacy

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Community Education: A Powerful but Under-Resourced Catalyst for Social Change

"Something, somewhere is really going awry for quite a lot of people [...] education is huge as part of it."

– *Community education practitioner*

Overview of Methods

Who we talked to:

Community education practitioners and Community Education Facilitators; key policy stakeholders; learners

How we did it:

A survey (n=38), interviews (n=7), and 3 focus groups (n=12) were used to collect detailed information (Total n=57).

How we came to our conclusion:

Thematic analysis: organised information into themes, and looked for patterns

Community Education in Context

Key issues: Communities face social isolation (n=13), low education (n=13), poverty (n=11) and unemployment (n=11)

Key goals: social inclusion (n=26), personal development (n=18) and skills development (n=15)

- **Accessible, Local Education**
- **Wraparound Support Services**
- **Transformative Pedagogies**

Transformative Outcomes (1)

Tackling Intergenerational Unemployment

"I think if there's been any movement [regarding intergenerational unemployment], it's been through our organisations in the community, because we're the organisations that are there, they see us, they trust us."

- Community education practitioner

Transformative Outcomes (1)

Tackling Intergenerational Unemployment

"Since completing my courses, I had the confidence to go to the local school and speak with the headmaster, who offered me a job working one-to-one with a child. I could not believe it – I'd got myself a home for me and my boys, a job; life was good, and I could finally say I was happy."

- Jenna Peacock, community Education learner

Transformative Outcomes (2)

Civic Participation

"A lot of the work we do is helping people to kind of engage, to find their voice, to find their confidence [...] People start to kind of question and they feel they have the power and confidence to address [...] individual issues for themselves, but also in their community."

– Community education practitioner

Transformative Outcomes (3)

Outcomes for Families

"For my family, the benefits have been profound. My children now have a more resilient, emotionally present mum. I've learned how to advocate for them – through speech delays [...] and beyond.

My parents have seen the transformation too – my mum even joined me on a mindfulness course. We've also begun learning how to support my dad, who has Alzheimer's, using the tools I've acquired. For my community, I now give back as a Group Leader for the MAS Project, supporting women facing perinatal mental ill health through peer support."

— Hazel Wilson, community education learner

Transformative Outcomes (4)

Social Cohesion and Integration

"Community education immensely helps me to connect socially with the locals because I do a lot in my community and this has helped me in building strong relationships [...] I have taken it upon myself to encourage every newcomer I come across to get involved in it. More so, I offer my services and skills which I got via community education to whosoever needs it as my way of giving back to my community."

— Marlene Uju, community education learner

Challenges to Practice

- **Access & Unmet Demand** – Community education addresses barriers to access, yet practice is restricted
- **Funding Challenges** – recognition in policy does not equal recognition in budgets
- **Measurement Limitations** – what is valuable is not measured
- **Impact on Educators** – sustainability, morale and burnout
- **Collaboration** – as an opportunity for innovation and survival response

A Way Forward

Sustainable Funding Models

Establishing multi-annual funding that matches real costs ensures community education stability and growth.

Professional Recognition

Adequate resourcing and staffing- recognise the vital role of community education professionals.

Collaboration and Innovation

Supporting collaboration fosters innovation, shared learning, and strengthens community education's impact

Inclusive Community Education

Community education is a proven model addressing inequality and revitalising democratic engagement inclusively.

Thank you!

AONTAS Community Education
Project Launch Event



You're invited!

**Community Education for Social
Transformation Research Report**

**Community Education Against
Disinformation Workbook**

Launch Event

7th October, IHREC, Dublin.

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