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Fourth Report

Adult Literacy in Ireland

May 2006

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Foreword

In accordance with its Orders of Reference, the Joint Committee on Education and Science agreed to seek submissions regarding Adult Literacy with a view to the preparation of a Report. The Committee invited submissions from the public and also heard oral presentations on the matter. This report also builds on the report produced by the Joint Committee on Education and Science of the 28th Dáil. The Committee hopes that this report, which contains twenty-eight recommendations for the future development of this important sector of the Irish educational system, will contribute to the continuing debate on Adult Literacy in Ireland.

The Joint Committee would like to acknowledge the contribution to this report made by the many individuals and organisations who responded to the public advertisement placed by the Joint Committee. The contribution of those who subsequently made oral submissions is also acknowledged. In the course of their work, the consultants who assisted the Joint Committee in the preparation of the report, conducted several interviews and received information from a number of other sources. The Joint Committee would also like to thank those individuals and organisations.

The Committee is indebted to the two consultants on this project, Mr. Jim Dorgan, of Curtin Dorgan Associates and Ms Elizabeth McSkeane, who assisted the committee in the production of this report and would like to put on the record its appreciation of the professional and efficient work done by them on this report.

The Joint Committee requests that its recommendations in relation to this issue are taken on board and recommends that it would invite the Minister for Education and Science or the Secretary-General of the Department of Education and Science to attend a meeting of the committee, in six months time, to report to the Committee on the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Committee in this report.



Michael Moynihan T.D.,
Chairman,
Joint Committee on Education and Science
31 May, 2006.

Table of Abbreviations

ALO	Adult Literacy Organiser
AEO	Adult Education Organiser
DES	Department of Education and Science
DETE	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
NALC	National Adult Learning Council
NALP	National Adult Literacy Plan
NDP	National Development Plan
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
SLD	Specific Learning Difficulty
VEC	Vocational Education Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) undertaken by the OECD in a number of western countries in 1995, showed that one in four adults in Ireland had basic literacy problems and that this ratio was almost the highest amongst the countries surveyed.
2. The response to the IALS, and to the greater awareness of the importance of literacy, was a large increase in resources devoted to literacy services in Ireland. The national budget is now around € 25 million, most of it disbursed to the VECs who organise and carry out literacy training in their respective areas.
3. The Joint Committee believes that a high level of literacy problems in Ireland is unacceptable and it should be a national priority to reduce it within as short a time as possible. This requires the adoption of a long term programme with an objectively measurable target and an adequate budget.
4. Specifically the Joint Committee proposes that the long term objective should be to halve the number of persons on the lowest level of literacy – as defined by the IALS - and to do this in half a generation, or 15 years.
5. As an intermediate step, the Joint Committee proposes that during the course of the National Development Plan 2007-13, a programme should be implemented which will require a quadrupling of the adult literacy tuition budget from €25 to about €100 million by 2013 with an additional €25 million for improving ancillary and support services.
6. It is recommended that this should be used to double the annual number of students, to increase the average number of hours of instruction per student and to enhance ancillary and support services.
7. A new national adult literacy survey should be taken up as soon as possible to judge the current state of literacy after more than a decade since the first one. Thereafter surveys should be taken up every three years to the end of the programme in 2013 to evaluate progress. The specific objectives of the adult literacy programme and its rate of implementation can be adjusted in the light of these surveys.
8. Preparation of the National Adult Literacy Programme for 2007-13 should be accompanied by:
 - An evaluation of the outcome of the various measures implemented during the period 2000-2006. This evaluation should be completed before the end of this year.

- an implementation strategy for the National Adult Literacy Programme which should be drawn up in consultation with the key stakeholders
9. It is also necessary to have a national framework of levels of literacy and a multi faceted assessment strategy which are relevant to students of literacy. Work on this is underway and should be completed as soon as possible.
 10. The Joint Committee recommends that the National Adult Learning Council should be activated as a matter of urgency and the implementation of the National Adult Literacy Programme should be assigned to it.
 11. Below national level, the Joint Committee recommends that there should be an adult literacy infrastructure in each county and city, to advise on the local implementation of the literacy programme.
 12. With the development of literacy services proposed in this report it is necessary to review staffing arrangements. The Joint Committee recommends:
 - a professional structure should be developed for literacy tutors,
 - third level qualifications should be formally recognised as professional accreditation for adult literacy practitioners;
 - the role of volunteers should be clarified by drawing up a volunteers' charter which sets out their responsibilities and their rights.
 13. Numerous proposals have been made for new and improved programmes and initiatives for literacy training. Many have already been implemented and evaluated. It is not necessary for the Joint Committee to comment in detail on all of these projects. However, the Joint Committee wishes to highlight some issues of general relevance which have emerged from certain initiatives :
 - The standard literacy input is for 2 hours per week for about 30 weeks. The Joint Committee recommends that 4 hour and 6 hour options should be available and that the length of courses should be extended.
 - About 25% of all students in the literacy service are non English speakers. The Joint Committee recommends that there should be a national strategy based on consultation with the relevant stakeholders for the design, delivery, assessment and evaluation of courses for non English speakers who do not have a literacy problem per se. Such courses should not be funded from the budget for adult literacy.
 - Workplace literacy is an important teaching and learning strategy. There is a need to offer literacy courses in the work place for potentially vulnerable employees. The Joint Committee recommends that stakeholders should formulate a national strategy to raise awareness and to advise and implement innovative programmes.

14. The Joint Committee also recommends emphasis and resources to be given to a dedicated family literacy budget for the country.
15. Resources are also needed for the
 - Development of a literacy strategy for Travellers
 - Exploitation of new technology to develop innovative approaches to literacy training
16. Despite the increase in literacy services in recent years, it is believed that a substantial number of people are unaware of them, or do not know how to access them or are unwilling to do so. The Joint Committee recommends that a national literacy awareness programme should be launched.
17. It is also important that awareness training should be given to persons in the public service who are in contact with the public in those areas, such as health and social welfare, where literacy problems may be an issue among recipients.
18. Some persons have literacy problems which are attributable to specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia. These special needs are not readily identified or addressed within the general adult literacy service. It is therefore crucial that identification of these special needs be carried out by professional educational psychologists. The Joint Committee recommends that specialist assessments should be available to the adult literacy sector.
19. Many submissions have emphasised the importance of ensuring that persons with literacy problems are aware of the services available and receive appropriate guidance. The Joint Committee recommends
 - Increasing resources to partnership initiatives facilitating access to literacy support through various routes (workplace, health service, etc);
 - Ensuring that participants in adult literacy training have access to guidance and support services.
20. Many recommendations were received by the Joint Committee about the deterrence of costs to many potential literacy students. These costs include getting childcare or eldercare and transport. The Joint Committee recommends that all programme budgets include provision for students who need help with these costs.
21. The Joint Committee further recommends that there should be a feasibility study, including costs, of providing incentives to participants in adult literacy training through social welfare, training allowances or tax credits
22. Finally, because literacy problems have to be addressed by a range of actions by the state, the Joint Committee recommends that means of ensuring contact and

coordination between all relevant Departments and state agencies should be identified and implemented.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Since the publication of the OECD International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), adult literacy has been identified as an issue of major social and educational concern for Ireland. The unprecedented level of attention now being focused on adult literacy in recent years is due to:

- The IALS results for Ireland, which were published in 1997 and which demonstrated that 25% of the adult population could manage only Level 1 literacy and numeracy tasks on a five-level scale of difficulty; and that the incidence of the problem in Ireland was higher than in all but one of the other countries in the survey.¹
- Increasing awareness of how the changes taking place in society are making greater and more complex demands on individuals and systems thus putting people with literacy problems at an increasing disadvantage.

1.2 The IALS findings provoked a far-reaching reaction in the Department of Education and Science (DES) and in Government generally. A substantial increase in funding for adult literacy followed under the National Development Plan (NDP) 2000 – 06. Since then, the service available to support people with literacy and numeracy needs has expanded greatly, as has the number of people accessing the service.

1.3 In early 1998 the then Joint Committee on Education and Science examined a number of witnesses with an interest in the field and on behalf of the Joint Committee, Deputy Richard Bruton prepared a report which the Joint Committee adopted and published in May 1998.²

1.4 The present Joint Committee returned to the issue last year and decided to include in its work programme the preparation of a report on the current situation in adult literacy. Submissions from the public on six key issues identified by the Committee were invited by means of an advertisement placed in the national press on 25 March 2005. A total of 38 submissions were received from individuals and organisations involved in the provision of literacy services. On September 7 and 8, 2005, the Joint Committee heard oral presentations from 28 of the individuals and representatives of the groups which had made written submissions. A summary of the issues which emerged from their submissions is contained in Annex. I. A list of contributors is given in Annex III.

1.5 On 21st December, 2005, the Joint Committee appointed James Dorgan and Elizabeth McSkeane as consultants to assist in the preparation of a report incorporating contributions from the written and oral presentations and preparing a draft concerning the future of adult literacy and numeracy strategy, policy and practice in Ireland. . In the first instance, the consultants were asked to compile a preparatory Analysis Document

¹Morgan, M. Hickey, B., Kellaghan, T. et al (1997) Report to the Minister for Education on the International Adult Literacy Survey: Results for Ireland, Dublin: Educational Research Centre/ Stationery Office, page 6.

² Houses of the Oireachtas (May 1998) First Report of the Joint Committee on Education and Science on Literacy Levels in Ireland, Dublin: Stationery Office.

summarising and analysing the submissions. That document also contains a review of general literacy issues and the development of adult literacy services in Ireland in the period since IALS. It was submitted to the Joint Committee and discussed at its meeting on 9 February 2006. A number of comments were made by members and arising from these the consultants were asked to prepare a draft final report on adult literacy in Ireland, 2006. This report is presented in fulfilment of that instruction.

1.6 The Section following this Introduction addresses general background issues and analyses the context from which the recommendations have emerged. This draws on the earlier Analysis Document and comprises: causes and impact of literacy problems, definitions of literacy, key points in the history of the development of the adult literacy service and an overview of the service as it has developed since IALS. The Sections which follow contain recommendations grouped under five headings: Section 3 addresses planning, Section 4 covers issues of organisation and structure, Section 5 explores staffing issues, Sections 6 and 7 examine specific actions and supports for participation respectively.

1.7 In drawing up the recommendations contained in this report, the Joint Committee has decided to give greatest weight to key strategic issues, in preference to detailed comment on the large number of specific actions which were described in many of the submissions. It is the view of the Joint Committee that at the present time, the most urgent requirement for the literacy sector is to review, reaffirm and where necessary amend, strategic decisions concerning the status of adult literacy on the national agenda, the vision and objectives to be adopted, the organisation and monitoring of these and the funding which should be assigned.

1.8 That said, some actions which require a degree of coordination or leadership at national level are highlighted in Section 6 and 7 below. Many more are contained in the summary of submissions given in Annex I. It should be emphasised that actions and issues which are not included amongst the recommendations are not considered unimportant: rather, their omission is due, in many cases, to the level of detail which would be needed to do them justice. The Joint Committee expects that specific actions will be addressed in the context of the proposed national structures and strategic framework.

1.9 The National Development Plan 2000 – 2006, which provides funding for the National Adult Literacy Programme for the same period, as set out in the White Paper on Adult Education³, will expire at the end of this year. The social partners are currently engaged in discussions aimed at achieving a new partnership agreement. This, along with the development of a new NDP for the period 2007-13, provides an opportunity to incorporate the recommendations of this report into the wider programme for Government and for social partnership.

³ Department of Education and Science (2000), Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education. Dublin, Stationery Office, pages 86 – 93.

SECTION 2 ADULT LITERACY IN IRELAND

SECTION 2. 1: The Nature of the Problem

The International Adult Literacy Survey

2.1.1 The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) was a very significant study for Ireland because it provided the first ever, and so far, the only set of statistics describing adult levels of literacy and numeracy in the country; and also because of the extent of the problem it described. Some of its main findings included the following:

- One in four Irish adults have difficulty with simple literacy tasks such as reading the instructions on an aspirin bottle, that is, with Level 1 tasks on a scale of five levels⁴;
- There is a substantial gap between the literacy levels of younger and older people: a smaller proportion of young people (17%) scored at the lowest level, as compared with 44% of the older age group; and a larger proportion of young people scored at the highest level, level 4/5;
- Unemployment and literacy level are closely associated;
- Yet one sixth of those *in* employment scored at lowest level;
- Overall, Ireland came second lowest on the international scale of literacy levels: only Poland scored lower.⁵

Table 1 International Adult Literacy Survey: Results for English Speaking Countries

	Prose	Document	Quantitative
Canada	16.6	18.2	16.9
USA	20.7	23.7	21.0
UK	21.8	23.3	23.2
Australia	17.0	17.0	16.8
New Zealand	18.4	21.4	20.4
Average*	16.6	16.2	15.0
Ireland	22.6	25.3	25.0
* Of all 22 participating countries			

2.1.2 The results of the IALS came at a time when there was increasing awareness of how the changes taking place in society are making greater and more complex demands on individuals. These very wide-ranging changes have also had a major impact on the nature of work, both in content – the tasks which people actually have to perform in their jobs – and in the way in which the workplace is organised. Because of these changes, individuals now need a wider range of skills in daily, social and working life.^{6 7}

⁴ Levels set by the OECD, not national levels.

⁵ Scores of the other participating countries are summarised in Annex III.

⁶ Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (2002) Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning Dublin: Stationery Office, page 5.

Impact of literacy and numeracy difficulties

2.1.3 People who have difficulties in literacy and numeracy are at risk of exclusion from social and economic life. This has been recognised in recent years, not only by educationalists but by many authorities from different sectors including the National Competitive Council, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and IBEC. Forfás, for example, comments that in spite of the healthy state of the economy and the low level of unemployment

*...there is some cause for concern. A proportion of those losing employment from vulnerable industries have low skills and/or qualifications. It appears likely that these will be more exposed to difficulties in obtaining other employment than those who are more skilled, or have better qualifications.*⁸

2.1.4 The effects which reading and writing difficulties have on the personal and social lives of the individuals themselves, in terms of quality of life, loss of opportunity, the impact on personal and social relations and on people's ability to participate in civic and community life, are widely recognised as being just as significant. In a 'learning' or 'knowledge' society people who lack basic skills are seriously marginalised and disadvantaged, not only in their employment prospects but also in daily⁹, civic and personal life.^{10 11}

Importance of addressing the problem

2.1.5 Because of these factors, the Joint Committee is convinced that ensuring that all citizens of this country are equipped with the skills they need to manage daily, civic and working life, is an essential function of Government. This is, firstly, a matter of prevention: of ensuring that young people leave the compulsory stage of education with the skills they need to participate fully in society. This Joint Committee has in the past addressed issues arising from educational disadvantage at primary and post-primary levels and in the context of this report, the importance of co-ordinating the work of the schools with the work of the adult literacy sector is addressed in Section 3 below.

2.1.6 Secondly, it means addressing the problem when it does arise and this is the area with which the Joint Committee is currently engaged. The increase in funding and the expansion of the adult literacy service which has occurred since 2000 are the first steps in achieving a radical improvement in the literacy and numeracy skills of a substantial

⁷ European Commission (1996) White Paper on Education and Training: Teaching and Learning – Towards the Learning Society, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, page 22.

⁸ Forfás (2004), Ahead of the Curve : Ireland's Place in the Global Economy. Enterprise Strategy Group Dublin: Forfás, page 7.

⁹ Morgan, et. al. (1997), op, cit, pp 68 – 77.

¹⁰ Fairclough, N. (1989) Language and Power. London: Longman, page 63.

¹¹ Department of Education and Science (1998) Green Paper: Adult Education in an Era of Learning. Dublin: Stationery Office pp 68,69.

section of the adult Irish population. It is now necessary to maximise the impact of those actions through careful planning, through strategic and targeted measures, supported by the structures and funding needed to drive a major national effort which will significantly reduce the literacy and numeracy problem in the foreseeable future.

2.1.7 The Joint Committee regards the achievement of a population with these basic skills not as an optional extra, but as an essential feature of a democratic society in which all citizens are equipped to play their part in community and working life, as well as fulfilling their potential as individuals.

Causes of Literacy Problem

2.1.8 People who have difficulties with reading, writing or numeracy often believe that this is due to their own shortcomings. This, coupled with a lack of public awareness and understanding, stigmatises the problem and contributes greatly to the low self-esteem which many individuals in this position experience. However, many people who have gaps in basic skills are extremely resourceful and develop sophisticated strategies to compensate, such as memory skills. Often they manage to hide the gaps from their colleagues, friends and sometimes even from their families. It is important, therefore, to recognise that many people who find themselves unable to cope with the literacy or numeracy demands of daily and working life are intelligent individuals who have been affected by adverse factors and often by a combination of factors.

2.1.9 Some of the causes¹² of literacy problems can be due at least in part, to particular needs arising from characteristics of the individual, such as

- A specific learning difficulty e.g. dyslexia;
- Perceptual difficulty e.g. undiagnosed hearing problem;
- Other health or physical problems;
- Intellectual disability;
- Anxiety or fear at school.

Under the right circumstances, people with particular needs arising from these characteristics can learn to read, write and handle numbers effectively. It is therefore crucial that special needs are identified as soon as possible, so that suitable interventions can be made.

2.1.10 However, many of the causes are rooted in environment and other circumstances¹³, such as:

- Large classes in primary school;
- Inappropriate teaching strategies or a generally negative experience of school;
- Poor attendance at school due to ill-health, drop-out or being kept at home to work or carry out home duties.

Like many manifestations of educational disadvantage, literacy problems have multi-faceted causes, closely associated with socio-economic factors such as poverty¹⁴ and may

¹² NALA (nd) Literacy Awareness Training Pack Dublin: NALA.

¹³ NALA (2005) Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work, Dublin, NALA.

be part of a cycle of marginalisation, low education and disadvantage within families. This fact highlights the importance of reinforcing links between different levels and sectors of education and with other government agencies as well. Increased demands on the literacy skills which people need to carry out routine tasks have also contributed to marginalising people who in the past would have had occupations which did not involve reading, writing or numeracy. That said, literacy and numeracy problems are not only a manifestation of educational disadvantage, but can be experienced by individuals from any educational or socio-economic background. Because the causes of low literacy levels are multi-faceted, the strategies required to address the problem need to be multi-dimensional as well.

2.1.11 The Joint Committee therefore wishes to stress that improving literacy and numeracy in the adult population of Ireland is a task which concerns not only the education system and the Department of Education and Science. All government departments have a role to play in addressing the educational, social and economic inequalities which contribute to this problem. It is therefore essential to identify ways in which all relevant stakeholders can play their part; and to create systems and structures by which all this activity can be co-ordinated.

Definitions of Literacy

2.1.12 There are different views about what is meant by ‘literacy’ and what ‘literacy’ is for. One approach tries to define literacy solely as a set of competencies – lists of things that people can do – which can be broken down into different types of tasks and sub-skills, all of which can be relatively easily measured. A more holistic approach views literacy as a complex combination of the skills already mentioned, but considers certain personal, social and critical dimensions¹⁵ as being a necessary part of the definition. According to one important OECD project, for example,

*Reading literacy is understanding, using and reflecting on written texts in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s understanding and potential and to participate in society.*¹⁶

2.1.13 This view of literacy emphasises the learner’s own priorities and stresses the dimensions of understanding and critical reflection.¹⁷ In other words, although the individual sub-skills involved in reading, writing and numeracy are essential, they do not, by themselves, add up to ‘literacy’. In contrast, ‘literacy’ which is meaningful, in that it equips people to make choices and handle the tasks involved in all aspects of adult life, is:

¹⁴ “There is a positive association between level of education and literacy level...level of education is one of the strongest correlates of literacy performance”. Morgan et al, (1997), op. cit., page 53.

¹⁵ Street, B. V. (1994) “Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Literacy,” in Maybin, J. (ed) (1994) Language and Literacy in Social Practice, Clevedon: Multi-lingual Matters/the Open University, pp 139 – 150.

¹⁶ OECD (2003), Programme for International Student Assessment: The PISA 2003 Student Assessment, Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, page 108.

¹⁷ Mezirow, J. (2000) “Learning to Think Like an Adult” in Mezirow, J. et al. (eds) Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress, San. Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp 9, 19.

- learner-centred, in that it addresses the learner's own priorities and acknowledges the learner as an active participant, not a passive recipient;
- Multi-faceted, because it includes dimension such as personal judgment, when and how to use a skill, critical awareness; understanding and reflection;
- Holistic in that it addresses multiple life roles.

2.1.14 Definitions of literacy are important because they underpin decisions about the type of programmes to put in place, the content of those programmes, the materials developed, the teaching methodology used and how staff is trained. They also affect how we define progress. This is particularly important when it comes to assessing learners' success in improving their literacy skills.

Dimensions of Literacy

2.1.15 Another important aspect of literacy definitions is the range of dimensions included in the term. For example 'literacy' has in the past been considered to encompass 'numeracy' as well, although increasingly these are being highlighted separately. The IALS analysed literacy in terms of three 'domains': prose literacy which involves reading newspapers, magazines and documents consisting of continuous prose; document literacy which refers to timetables, graphs, charts, maps and forms; and quantitative literacy, which is essentially numeracy. This multi-dimensional approach to literacy is common practice and indeed there are other dimensions sometimes included under the literacy banner which IALS did not probe: for example, oral/aural skills and increasingly, Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

Describing Levels of Literacy

2.1.16 Once people have started work on improving their literacy and numeracy skills, in order to gauge their progress it is necessary to have signposts of achievement – levels – by which that progress may be tracked. For example, the IALS distinguished five levels of literacy in each of the three domains of prose, document and quantitative literacy. In that system, reading the instructions on an aspirin bottle was defined as a Level 1 task. One implication of expressing literacy ability in terms of levels is that either/or terminology such as 'literate'/'illiterate' is neither meaningful nor accurate¹⁸: rather, people have different degrees of strengths and weaknesses and these are not necessarily the same in the different domains: people can be good at reading but poor at spelling; good at writing but not so good with numbers.

2.1.17 However, the five levels specified for the IALS represent a set of international indicators, rather than national standards developed for Ireland. Other countries have developed frameworks specifically for, or relevant to, the achievements of adult literacy learners. In this country, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) has recently published their current work on Levels 1 and 2¹⁹ for the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and it is likely that when the relevant work is complete,

¹⁸ Morgan et al (1997) op. cit., page 101.

¹⁹ www.fetac.ie

the description of these two levels together with the already defined Level 3 will provide the framework within which national measures will be located.

SECTION 2.2: Early Issues and Policy Development

2.2.1 Although the IALS raised awareness of the issue, the problem of low levels of literacy amongst Irish adults is not new. The fact that some Irish adults had difficulties in reading and writing was mentioned in the Murphy Report on Adult Education in 1973.²⁰ At that time and before, there was virtually no State support for the provision of an adult literacy service. One-to-one tuition was provided by concerned individuals and community groups around the country, almost exclusively by volunteers, often in the learner's or the tutor's own home.

2.2.2 By the early 1980s the situation had improved slightly. In 1983 the Commission on Lifelong Learning (the Kenny Report) quoted a survey carried out in the previous year which indicated that there were at least 40 adult literacy schemes in the country, almost all of which were run by voluntary workers.²¹ Even so, the Kenny report did not identify adult literacy as being a major educational issue. Although twelve areas of adult education were identified as requiring expansion, adult literacy was not explicitly stated. This indicates that even into the 1980s, although there was some awareness at policy level that there were Irish adults whose abilities in reading and writing were insufficient for their needs, this was not yet regarded as a serious problem and therefore, not a major priority for educational policy.

Development of VEC Literacy Services

2.2.3 In the 1980s and for much of the 1990s, the role of the people who organised literacy activity in many locations was not fully formalised. During that time, different VECs began to appoint paid organisers, later known as Adult Literacy Organisers (ALOs) but these were not always full-time positions: sometimes, a part-time tutor who was already paid to work for a certain number of hours in a Vocational Education Committee (VEC) night school would be allocated duties to organise the adult literacy tuition and paid for a few hours each week. Gradually, as the number of people coming forward for literacy support increased, the role of the organiser expanded and over a period of time all of the VECs appointed ALOs to run the schemes, several in some of the larger counties. Since 1998 the position of ALO has been a full-time, permanent post although in smaller schemes the ALO also carries out some tuition.

Establishment of National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

2.2.4 By the late 1970s there was enough of a groundswell of activity in literacy tuition at local volunteer level to create the impetus for a representative organisation to be set up.

²⁰ Department of Education (1973) Adult Education in Ireland: A Report of a Committee appointed by the Minister for Education (the Murphy Report), Dublin: Stationery Office

²¹ Kenny, I. (1983) Lifelong Learning: Report of the Commission on Adult Education. Dublin, Stationary Offices, p. 57.

This was the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) which came into being in 1977 and whose first constitution was written in 1980. In 1984 the Department of Education made an allocation of £45,000 to enable NALA to establish a national office and a year later, took the significant step of establishing the Adult Literacy and Community Education (ALCE) Budget. Through this budget line, £1m was channelled to the VECs over a three-year period for literacy and community education activities. Over the next decade and a half leading up to the IALS, the ALCE budget increased steadily, from £1m in 1991 to £4m in 1998. This facilitated a substantial increase in adult literacy activity, for example, by enabling the VECs to appoint more paid tutors. Under the 1930 Vocational Education Act, the VECs are charged with the provision of adult education and accordingly, the VECs were the first formal providers of an adult literacy service in Ireland. They still provide over 90% of the adult literacy service in Ireland.

White Paper on Education, 1995

2.2.5 By 1995, when the White Paper on Education was published, awareness of the existence of a problem with literacy had increased to the extent that a short section in the White Paper addressed “Literacy Programmes.”²² Also significant was the fact that literacy support was by then available in a range of educational settings, through various initiatives and programmes which had been developed in the preceding years: in Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Youthreach, in FÁS Community Training Workshops and in the network of Centres for the Unemployed run by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU).

After IALS: Green Paper and White Paper on Adult Education

2.2.6 Following the publication of the IALS, many responses from stakeholders in different sectors called for action to be taken. The Green Paper on Adult Education, which was published the year after IALS,²³ identified literacy and numeracy as the number one priority in adult education in Ireland, because of the impact of this problem on individuals, and also on economic and social progress in an increasingly technological society.

2.2.7 In 2000 the DES published the White Paper on Adult Education.²⁴ This highlighted adult literacy as a top priority for government educational policy and focused attention on second chance and further education and on the barriers facing learners. Provision for second chance and further education was founded on a framework of four pillars, of which a national adult literacy programme was identified as being the most important.²⁵

²² Department of Education (1995) Charting Our Education Future - White Paper on Education, Dublin: Stationery Office, page 76 - 77

²³ DES (1998) Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning, Dublin: Stationery Office, pages 68 – 70.

²⁴ DES (2000), Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education, Dublin: Stationery Office.

²⁵ The others were: Back to Education Initiative, ICT programme and new organisational structures for adult education *ibid*, page 86.

2.2.8 The White Paper noted that annual funding for the adult literacy had increased from £0.85 to £7.825 between 1997 and 2000 and that the number of people accessing the adult literacy service had increased from 5,000 to 13,000 in the same period. This had been supported by investment in staff development, the creation of referral networks and the development of radio and TV programmes by RTÉ. An Inter-Departmental Group on Literacy for the Unemployed had also been established, to report back to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion.

National Adult Literacy Programme

2.2.9 The White Paper formulated a National Adult Literacy Programme (NALP). The priorities set out therein may be summarised as follows²⁶: Expansion of the client base to circa 113,000 by the end of the NDP period (2006), prioritising in particular those with the lowest literacy levels and developing initiatives to encourage the participation of particular sections of the population including unemployed people, refugees and asylum-seekers, people with disabilities and men;

- Implementation of quality assurance measures;
- Improvements in referral between different agencies and coordination of resources of agencies such as FÁS and the VECs, in order to reach clients;
- Development or expansion of literacy initiatives in particular settings such as the workplace, in targeted programmes such as Community Employment (CE) and in other training initiatives run by FÁS, Teagasc and other relevant agencies;
- Improvement of links with agencies such as the libraries and other agencies with the potential to reach literacy clients;
- Development of innovative approaches, including ICT, broadcasting and others to support literacy work;
- Exploration and reduction of barriers to adults' participation in literary and numeracy work, including barriers in the social welfare and supplementary benefit system;

2.2.10 Also included in the White Paper is a section highlighting the importance of co-ordinating efforts with the school sector, where up to one in ten of all fifth class pupils have difficulty in literacy.²⁷

2.2.11 The White Paper also recommended that another National Adult Literacy Survey should be conducted “three years hence and at regular intervals thereafter”²⁸ preferably on an international basis like the 1997 OECD study, but failing that, on a national basis.

Taskforce on Lifelong Learning

2.2.12 Two years later, the Report from the Taskforce Report on Lifelong Learning,²⁹ which was established by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE)

²⁶ DES (2000), op. cit., pages 84 – 93.

²⁷ *ibid*, pages 91-92.

²⁸ *ibid.*, page 93..

in collaboration with the Department of Education and Science, reviewed progress on the actions recommended under the NALP, reaffirmed the importance of addressing the literacy problem through the NALP and recommended:

that the initiatives now underway should be built upon and strengthened to achieve the aim that all adults have access to basic skills³⁰.

SECTION 2.3 Expansion of the Adult Literacy Service and Current Position

2.3.1 It is clear from the foregoing that since the publication of the IALS in 1997 there has been a substantial increase in the scale of the resources committed to adult literacy and an extension in the range of initiatives and institutions involved. As things stand, the adult literacy service is mainly provided by the VECs in the form of literacy tuition for two hours per week in small groups. Some programmes, such as the Return to Education programme which is designed for Community Employment (CE) participants, provide more than two hours of literacy training per week. Since one-to-one tuition is not supported by the DES, this form of teaching is delivered by voluntary tutors and voluntary effort remains important. There are over 4,000 of these working in adult literacy, that is, three times more than the number of paid tutors.

2.3.2 Tables 2 and 3 below give some figures on the expansion of the literacy services in terms of funding, numbers employed and students. In less than a decade the budget has risen from €1.1m to €23 m and the number of students from 5,000 to about 35,000. Figures on staffing, whether voluntary or paid, are not yet available for 2004 and 2005 but rapid growth is reflected in the available data for 2000 to 2003. It should be noted that since 2005, the DETE has provided FÁS with €2 m per annum for literacy training. These figures are not included in the table. In total therefore the national budget for literacy training for 2006 is in the region of €25 m.

Table 2: Expansion of service: funding, students

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006 *
Budget €m	1.10	5.15	7.19	10.60	13.56	16.49	17.90	19.20	22.79	22.94
Students (000s)	5.00	9.00	13.00	17.15	22.73	28.36	31.58	33.87	33.87	35.00

Source: Department of Education and Science. * Provisional

Table 3: Expansion of service: students, tutors, resource workers

	2000	2001	2002	2003
Paid Tutors	800	1,200	1,400	1,450
Volunteer Tutors	3,400	4,000	4,200	4,200
Resource Workers				50
Total	4,200	5,200	5,600	5,700

²⁹ Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (2002) Report from the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, Dublin: Stationery Office.

³⁰ *ibid*, page 27.

Source: Department of Education and Science

2.3.3 To put this funding increase in the context of the overall education budget, Table 4 below gives a breakdown of government spending on education for one year, 2004, by sector. Clearly, funding to adult literacy is still a very small fraction of the total education budget and the per capita spending is very low by comparison with the other sectors. It is also very important to note that since 2000, the provision of services to immigrants has also come out of the adult literacy budget.

Table 4: Spending on Education, 2004

Sector	Funding Allocated (€ m)	Per Capita Funding (€)
First level	2,416	5,000
Second level	2,465	6,788
Third level	1,504	8,914
Total on 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd level	6,385	6,290
Other including adult lit.	255	n/a
Adult Literacy	19.2	601
Source: Department of Education and Science Annual Report 2004		

SECTION 3: PLANNING

Aims of the National Adult Literacy Programme

3.1 The preceding section has indicated the extent of the problem of literacy in Ireland and the consequences for the individuals who experience it and for society as a whole. The view of the Joint Committee is that such a low standard of literacy in Ireland is a major failing in society and that a national implementation strategy must be initiated with the aim of eliminating the problem within a definite period of time. The Joint Committee proposes that the long-term goal of the National Adult Literacy Programme should be to reduce by half the number of people at the lowest level of literacy within half a generation, say fifteen years. This would bring the Irish rate down to about 12%, which is slightly better than the average of 15%, which was recorded in the IALS in 1995.

Recommendation 1

The Joint Committee proposes that the National Adult Literacy Programme should aim to reduce the proportion of the population at the lowest level of literacy by at least half within the next fifteen years.

3.2_These recommendations are based on the assumption that the number of adults with literacy problems is 500,000 – the number reported by the IALS in 1997. It may be that the number has increased since then due to e.g. higher population, migrants, the number of early school leavers and other factors. It may also have declined due to, inter alia, demographic factors and the NALP. But with respect to the latter, it must be remembered that it is only in very recent years that the resources and the number of students in literacy training have been significant. In the absence of any more up to date information, the 500,000 figure is therefore adopted as the basis for this Recommendation. When the national literacy survey, referred to in Recommendation 7 is taken up, a revision of the above objective may be required. In the mean time, the Joint Committee believes that it is prudent to plan on the basis that the literacy problem in Ireland remains a major one.

3.3 Translating this objective into annual numbers of students and resources involves assumptions, most notably about the speed at which students progress in response to literacy training. There is some international experience on this which suggests that with 200 hours tuition a student could progress through the equivalent of one of the three NQF Levels that cover people with literacy problems. The implication of this, and keeping the assumption that about 500,000 persons are affected, is that a doubling in the number of students and in the average hours per year, a four fold increase on the present level of provision is an approximate measure of the resources needed to meet the objective in Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 2

The Joint Committee proposes that during the term of the next National Development Plan 2007-2013, annual funding for literacy tuition should be increased from approximately €25 million per annum in 2006 to €100 million per annum by 2013 with an additional €25 million per annum by 2013 for improved ancillary services, supports and capital spending. This is an annual average increase of about 25%.

The Joint Committee recommends that this should be devoted to doubling the numbers taking literacy classes, doubling the intensity of training (i.e. the number of hours per student) and improving ancillary and support services.

3.4 If the literacy surveys referred to in Recommendation 7 prove that the current problem is less severe than assumed, then a faster implementation of the overall objective in Recommendation 1 can be visualised. On the other hand if the problem is worse, or if the periodic surveys show slower progress than anticipated in paragraph 3.3 above, then the Recommendation 2 about resources should be revisited.

3.5 These increased costs should be borne and the full implementation of the National Adult Literacy Programme should become a major priority, not only for the education sector, but for the Programme of Government, equal in importance to the maintenance of employment, the promotion of economic growth and the elimination of poverty. Indeed, raising standards of literacy and numeracy is an essential element in all important social and economic measures. This will require a concerted effort on the part of all government departments and services, working in support of the efforts of the DES and the DETE in particular.

3.6 The development of a new National Development Plan to succeed the NDP 2000-2006 provides an appropriate seven-year framework within which the objectives of a new national implementation strategy for the National Adult Literacy Programme can be formulated as an intermediate step towards this long-term goal.

National Adult Literacy Programme, 2000-2006: Evaluation

3.7 In order to plan the steps needed to achieve the goal, it is essential to review the extent to which the aims set for the National Adult Literacy Programme 2000-2006 were actually met. A recent progress report from the DES defined the overall aim of the National Adult Literacy Programme 2000-2006 as follows:

*The object of the National Adult Literacy Strategy is to promote **system development** to ensure **increased access** to literacy, numeracy and basic education for adults whose skills are inadequate for participation in society.³¹ [our emphasis]*

3.8 The actions proposed in the White Paper, as well as the targets set and the many initiatives which have been accomplished since the inception of NALP³², are almost all described in terms of inputs and activities such as levels of expenditure, number of students accessing the service and programmes, rather than in terms of outputs, such as the expected impact on people's literacy skills. The most explicit focus of the NALP for the period 2000 – 2006 was therefore to improve **access** to the adult literacy service for a greatly increased number of learners; and to set up **a range of structures and provision options** which would facilitate this. Considering the very low base, in terms of funding, staffing and general provision at which the adult literacy service was operating prior to 1997, it was appropriate that the first stage should concentrate on ensuring that systems were in place to allow for the participation of greater numbers of people in diverse circumstances.

3.9 Given that the aims of NALP were expressed in terms of increased inputs rather than outcomes on learning, in the absence of a repeat study of IALS, it would be difficult to evaluate the precise impact of the National Adult Literacy Programme, 2000 – 2006 in terms of improvements in literacy levels. In fact, the Joint Committee is recommending a repeat national or international adult literacy survey (see Recommendation 7 below) and this should provide a general indication of any changes in the literacy and numeracy skills in the Irish population since 1997. That said, it is important that NALP 2000 - 2006 should be formally evaluated in terms of the aims and priorities which were actually set for it, as outlined in sections 2.2.9 and 3.7 above. The findings should inform the development of a new strategy for the full implementation of the National Adult Literacy Programme in the period 2007-2013.

3.10 During the last six years, a great deal of information has emerged from the implementation of NALP. Much of this has been evaluated and documented at local level. The main programmes have been piloted and some have been evaluated on a larger scale. Before moving into a new phase of implementation, it is important to review this recent experience and identify the key messages and lessons which have emerged from it.

Recommendation 3

Carry out an over-arching evaluation of the National Adult Literacy Programme, 2000 – 2006, in relation to the policy objectives and targets which were set for the Programme during that period.

³¹ Department of Education and Science (2005), "Adaptability Pillar Lifelong Learning - National Adult Literacy Strategy Progress Report, January – December 2004," Dublin: Department of Education and Science.

³² See para 2.2.9 above.

3.11 Rather than duplicating methodologies and actions which formed part of the smaller-scale evaluations of individual projects and programmes, the NALP evaluation could include, among other things:

- An audit of the full range of policy recommendations included in White Paper, Task Force Report on Lifelong Learning and National Development Plan and also of the recommendations made in the 1998 report on adult literacy from the predecessor to this Joint Committee: and a review of the extent to which each recommendation has been acted on, advanced or fully achieved;
- An overview of levels of participation in different parts of the service, different programmes and different target groups;
- Analysis of funding levels across the service;
- Identify any gaps in the evaluation of individual programmes or projects and take steps to remedy such gaps;
- Evaluation to be completed by December 31st, 2006.

National Adult Literacy Programme 2007-2013: Implementation Strategy

3.12 Strategic planning is now one of the most important dimensions of educational management. The future implementation of the National Adult Literacy Programme must ensure coordination between all stakeholders involved in the adult literacy service and its partners and collaborators, whether they operate in a capacity of providing tuition, referring people to the service, supporting the service by funding, staffing, research, guidance or by liaising with other education sectors and levels.

Recommendation 4

Draw up an implementation strategy for the National Adult Literacy Programme for the period 2007-13, which

- **Is agreed through a process of consultation with the key stakeholders;**
- **Clarifies how coordination and linkages between agencies, education sectors and government departments, will be created and maintained;**
- **Includes agreed definitions of literacy and numeracy, which reflect the holistic, multi-dimensional nature of those skills and supports a learner-centred approach to practice;**
- **Sets out, on a national basis, the range of target groups to be addressed, the actions and initiatives planned to support them, and the agencies responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring those actions;**
- **Includes both qualitative and quantitative indicators of success, appropriate to aims and objectives;**
- **Commits a level of funding to implement the Strategy;**
- **Draws on the Implementation Plan which has already been developed by the National Adult Literacy Advisory Group. (see 3.13 below).**

3.13 A substantial amount of work has already been carried out in relation to the development of an Implementation Strategy. Many of the submissions which contributed to this report contained specific suggestions which could support the full implementation of the next stage of the NALP. Most significantly, a consortium of stakeholders, the National Adult Literacy Advisory Group, was established in 2002 in order to advance this task. Following a two-year period of consultation involving the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA), NALA, adult literacy practitioners, representatives of the Library Council, the DES and the Department of Social and Family Affairs, this Group produced an Implementation Plan.³³ The purpose of the consultation process and the Implementation Plan it produced was:

*to address the need to consolidate systems in order to build further capacity, as well as to continue the integration of adult literacy services into other VEC adult education provision. It aims to build pathways for progression both within the VEC and in other adult education and training services and to address employment and career opportunities for staff in the sector.*³⁴

3.14 This Implementation Plan addresses many of the key issues referred to in Recommendation 4, and also contains detailed proposals for actions, some of which have been accomplished already, whilst others are in progress. That document should therefore be adopted and used as a starting point in the planning for the full implementation of the National Adult Literacy Programme, 2007 – 2013.

Evaluation of National Adult Literacy Programme 2007-2013

3.15 If the next stage of the National Adult Literacy Programme explicitly foregrounds the aim of having a positive impact on people's lives by enabling them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills, then it is essential to ensure from the outset that systems are in place which make it possible to judge in the future whether NALP is achieving its goals. In order to know if learners are making progress, signposts, or levels of achievement, need to be used. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) describes ten levels of achievement for learning experiences which relate directly to qualifications. The first three levels, Levels 1 – 3, provide a framework which may be used to gauge aspects of the progress and achievements of adult literacy students.

Recommendation 5

Complete specifications for adult literacy levels which harmonise with the NQF Levels 1, 2 and 3, ensuring that the adult literacy specifications are based on a holistic, multi-dimensional definition of literacy and numeracy.

³³ National Adult Literacy Advisory Group (October, 2004), National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Programme Implementation Plan, Dublin: National Adult Literacy Agency.

³⁴ Ibid., page 5.

Assessment of Students' Progress

3.16 In order to know if learners are making progress, there needs to be a way of finding out what their strengths and weaknesses are, in relation to the levels specified, when they start working on their literacy and numeracy and then when they have been in the adult literacy service for a while. Assessment is a way of finding out this information and it can take many forms. People who have difficulties with reading and writing may have experienced failure in traditional assessment situations, such as tests.³⁵ It is therefore important to devise ways of assessing learners' initial level and progress which are supportive and non-threatening, as well as being valid and reliable³⁶.

Recommendation 6

Develop a multi-faceted assessment strategy suitable for identifying the initial and progressing levels of skills of adult literacy learners, which includes a wide range of assessment modes, and captures the multi-dimensional nature of adult literacy and numeracy skills.

National Adult Literacy Survey

3.17 The White Paper on Adult Education proposed that the literacy and numeracy levels of Ireland's adult population should be explored again in another International Adult Literacy Survey, by 2003. This survey never took place. In order to monitor the ongoing efficiency and impact of the adult literacy service over a period of time, it is necessary to gather information periodically about the key indicators of success.

Recommendation 7

Carry out a national adult literacy survey within the next twelve months and again after every three years, in order to provide a means of assessing progress of the National Adult Literacy Programme 2007-13.

³⁵ McDonagh, O. (1999) NALA-Socrates Project Consultation Dublin: NALA.

³⁶ Merrifield, J., Coleman, U., McDonagh, O. (2001) Issues and Opportunities in Assessment Dublin: NALA.

SECTION 4: STRUCTURES AND ORGANISATION

4.1 This Committee believes that the availability of a wide range of services and programmes, delivered in many different contexts, facilitates access to the adult literacy service for many people who would not otherwise be in a position to address their literacy and numeracy needs. At the same time, it is important to ensure that the potential for duplication of service is avoided and that these different initiatives are accessed by the individuals who can make best use of them. The Joint Committee therefore wishes to emphasise the need for a structure for careful planning and co-ordination, at both national and local level, of the diverse range of literacy support options which have been designed to meet the needs of different target groups. This should include a clear statement of the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder in the development, implementation, management and evaluation of each initiative.

4.2 The DES stands at the apex of the institutions involved in the provision of literacy services in Ireland. Literacy services are administered as part of adult education services within the further education section of the DES. The majority of literacy services are provided by the VECs, funded by the DES. Within each VEC, an ALO, reporting to the Adult Education Officer, coordinates literacy services.

4.3 Other government Departments and agencies have a role in literacy, at both national and local level. These include the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (DETE) which funds basic education and training initiatives through FÁS which are aimed at target groups including people with literacy needs. Other involved Departments include Justice, Health, and Social and Family Affairs. At local level the Area Partnerships under Pobail (formerly Area Development Management (ADM)) facilitate activities with a strong community education focus, including initiatives which support literacy. Finally, there are a large number of charitable and voluntary organisations working with Travellers, immigrants and people with special needs, which play a role in the national literacy effort.

4.4 The thrust of the Joint Committee's proposals in the preceding section is that the elimination of literacy problems in the Irish population should be promoted to the top of the national agenda. Although the current remit of this report is to make recommendations in relation to adult literacy, the Joint Committee is concerned to note worrying findings on literacy levels in schools. The DES refers to earlier research into literacy levels in primary schools which suggests

*that about 10 per cent of children in our schools have serious reading difficulties. However, this research shows that the number of children in disadvantaged schools with serious reading difficulties is between 25 and 30 per cent.*³⁷

These children are, potentially, the adult literacy students of the future.

4.5 It is also important to note that adult literacy is at least in part, a manifestation of educational disadvantage. This is not only a problem for the education system, but needs

³⁷ Department of Education and Science (December, 2005), op. cit., page 21.

to be addressed at a policy level from the perspective of tackling poverty and the resulting educational and social inequalities. The Joint Committee therefore believes that in order to address the problem of low levels of literacy and numeracy amongst Irish adults in the long-term, resources alone are not enough. It is essential that concerted action be taken which mobilises the effort of the adult literacy sector, in co-ordination with all other adult education and training providers, and with the school sector at both primary and post-primary levels. It is equally important that such actions be co-ordinated with policies external to the education system, but which have a bearing on addressing poverty and eliminating educational disadvantage.

4.6 The Joint Committee has therefore concluded that the most effective way of addressing literacy and numeracy problems in Ireland is in the context of

*an integrated national strategy for achieving educational equality that will result in an inclusive, diverse and dynamic learning society without barriers.*³⁸

as described by the Educational Disadvantage Committee. This coordinated approach is underpinned by the rationale that

*Everyone stands to gain when educational inclusion is achieved as part of a bigger social and economic change agenda.*³⁹

4.7 The National Adult Learning Council (NALC) will be an important resource in accomplishing this change and specifically, in achieving the goal of tackling problems of adult literacy and numeracy. Its remit extends to all of the stakeholders involved in adult education and this could facilitate the integration of adult literacy with other adult education sectors. However, NALC, which was proposed in the 2000 White Paper, and actually established in 2002, has not yet been activated, presumably due to issues concerning its membership, structure, authority and financing. These are currently under review and have been for some considerable time. The literacy issue requires urgent attention and cannot wait any longer for these questions to be resolved. The review of the National Adult Learning Council must be completed as a matter of urgency, to enable the Council to become fully operational and thus facilitate the actions needed for the national literacy effort.

Recommendation 8

The Joint Committee proposes that the review of the National Adult Learning Council be completed as a matter of urgency; and that NALC become fully operational within three months of the publication of this report, its remit being to include the promotion and support of adult literacy and numeracy and to oversee the implementation of the National Adult Literacy Plan

³⁸ Educational Disadvantage Committee (2005) Moving Beyond Educational Disadvantage, Dublin: Stationery Office, page 26.

³⁹ Ibid, page 26.

4.8 Whilst the national structure of NALC should provide leadership and co-ordination at national level, there is also a need for coordinating structures for literacy at local level.⁴⁰ Such local organisations help to establish needs, promote awareness, integrate cross-referencing between public and private organisations, and advise on the deployment of resources.

4.9 The membership of local organisations should include a core drawn from adult literacy stakeholders in the area notably the VECs, FÁS, local branches of the Departments of Health, Family and Social Affairs Pobail, Travellers, employers and trade unions, and other relevant stakeholders. The core members should have the power to co-opt additional members, representative of other interests active in the area. This would impart an important element of flexibility to cater for the different needs of each local area.

Recommendation 9

The Joint Committee recommends that each city and county should have a local board representative of the local interests.

4.10 In relation to the overall national adult literacy and numeracy strategy, the Joint Committee endorses the view that this is one aspect of a broader effort to achieve educational and social equality, which should be underpinned by the following principles⁴¹:

- The right to access to literacy for all Irish adults;
- The integration of strategies, structures and systems in support of literacy;
- Coherence of provision of literacy support;
- Realistic goal-setting and sensitive and appropriate assessment strategies for adult literacy students;
- Appropriate monitoring and evaluation strategies of literacy programmes and initiatives.

⁴⁰ See DES (2000), op. cit., pages 192 – 196.

⁴¹ Based on the principles expressed by the Educational Disadvantage Sub-Committee (2005), op. cit., page 27.

SECTION 5: STAFFING

Paid tutors

5.1 The adult literacy service for the most part is organised on a VEC-wide basis by Adult Literacy Organisers (ALOs) reporting to the Adult Education Organiser (AEO) in each VEC. Tutors are employed on a temporary, part-time basis and all literacy tutors undergo an initial 20-hour tutor training programme. Optional professional qualifications in the teaching of literacy are available from third level institutions and some VECs require staff to work towards these. However, there is no statutory requirement. Tutors come from a variety of background: former volunteer tutors, former teachers in the mainstream system and increasingly, people from different professional backgrounds.

5.2 As of 2003, there were 1,450 paid tutors in the service and 4,200 volunteer tutors. Although volunteer tutors are far more numerous than paid tutors, they almost always work with just one student, which means that the great majority of adult literacy students are now taught by the paid tutors, who work with groups of learners rather than one-to-one.

5.3 An expanded adult literacy service, which provides more tuition time to more students, clearly requires more teaching hours. Many of the paid tutors are currently employed for a very small number of hours each week, some for as little as just one two-hour class. The increased teaching required by the proposed expansion of the service could be accomplished, to a large extent, by increasing the number of hours for which the existing paid tutors are employed.

5.4 The terms under which staff is employed within the adult literacy service also have a profound effect on its structure and stability. As things stand, the ALOs are now employed on a permanent basis. However, none of the 1,450 adult literacy tutors in the country is in a permanent, full-time position. All are employed on a temporary, part-time basis and many have no contracts, no job security and no career structure.

5.5 Practically speaking, it is not possible for an educational service which is delivered almost wholly by temporary, part-time workers to achieve the level of stability which is necessary for long-term planning, management and evaluation. The lack of job security and the absence of contracts and a career structure create difficulties for individual tutors who are increasingly required to commit to a range of educational support activities, including all of the training requirements of new quality assurance, assessment and evaluation processes, which are essential to maintain a quality service over a sustained period of time. An effective adult literacy service needs a stable core of members who have the benefits, rights and responsibilities which job security and a professional career structure provide.

Recommendation 10

Establish a systematic structure of staffing for the adult literacy service, with clear guidelines on roles, responsibilities, pay, conditions and contracts for all practitioners.

Professional Development and Qualifications for Staff

5.6 A professional career structure requires professionally-trained and qualified staff. At the moment the basic initial training for adult literacy tutors consists of a twenty hour programme. As the demands made on staff working in the adult literacy service expand to include assessment, evaluation and quality assurances processes, the need for training in these and other functions emerges also. There is therefore a strong case to be made for including participation in top-up training in the job description of adult literacy tutors, to be completed after a specified period of service.

5.7 Access to a profession is usually regulated, at least in part, by the achievement of professional qualifications. There is therefore a need to identify appropriate third level qualifications which are recognised as professional accreditation for adult literacy practitioners.

Recommendation 11

Identify third level qualifications to be formally recognised as professional accreditation for adult literacy practitioners.

Staffing: Volunteers

5.8 The adult literacy service in Ireland has its roots in the efforts and commitment of volunteer tutors, who continue to make an invaluable contribution to the delivery of a quality service. The expanded service and the demands of accountability, assessment and accreditation put new demands on all practitioners working with adult students, including volunteers. It is important that those donating their time to the adult literacy effort should be properly supported and should be fully aware of any new requirements and demands, as these emerge.

Recommendation 12

Draw up a volunteers' charter to clarify the rights and responsibilities of volunteers, their role in the changing landscape of an expanded adult literacy service and the range of supports available to them.

SECTION 6: LITERACY INITIATIVES

Range of Provision Options

6.1 Submissions to the consultation process which contributed to this report described a wide variety of programmes, services and strategies which were funded under the National Development Plan, as part of the NALP 2000 – 2006. These diverse options are tailored to the needs of particular target groups in specific contexts and include:

- The core adult literacy and numeracy service, which consists of free one-to-one or group tuition for two hours per week, per person, provided by the VECs;
- Family Literacy programmes, which involve literacy support in a family context, often through partnerships between the adult literacy service and the schools;
- Workplace programmes, which provide literacy support in work contexts, through partnership between key stakeholders including the VECs, FÁS, ICTU and NALA;
- Intensive programmes of literacy tuition consisting of 6 or more hours per person, per week, such as the Return to Education programme for participants on the FÁS Community Education programme who need support in reading, writing or numeracy.

6.2 On-going programmes which are delivered as services aimed at particular groups and include literacy support include:

- Youthreach, which provides social, personal and vocational training, including literacy support, for early school leavers, run by the VECs;
- Community Training Centres, which provide social, personal and vocational training, including literacy support, for early school leavers, run by FÁS. The VECs usually supply tutors for literacy support;
- Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), which is sometimes accessed through the
- Back to Education Initiative (BTEI).

6.3 Innovative strategies designed to maximise access and raise awareness of literacy issues include

- Read Write Now, a suite of five TV series developed in partnership with NALA, AV Edge and RTE and broadcast on RTÉ 1 and 2 over the last five years;
- Time 4 Learning, a numeracy series broadcast on RTÉ Radio 1
- The development of e-learning support strategies

6.4 Many of these innovations have been developed and implemented by two or more stakeholders co-operating or working in partnership. Adult literacy is a complex problem with many causes and needs to be addressed through a multi-dimensional strategy, which links the adult literacy service with other parts of the education system and also, with relevant agencies and organisations outside the education system. The national and local planning structures proposed in recommendations 8 and 9 above, should be used to

support the clarification of roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in implementing, managing, monitoring and evaluating each individual initiative; and in co-ordinating each within the National Adult Literacy Programme.

Level and Intensity of Provision

6.5 The overall aim of addressing the low levels of reading, writing and numeracy amongst a substantial section of the adult population, involves two inter-related processes: firstly, to make the adult literacy service accessible to those who need literacy support, which in turn requires an increase in the number of people participating in the service; secondly, to ensure that those who do access the service make meaningful progress in working towards their goals. In 1997, the adult literacy service provided tuition for 5,000 people per year and this increased to 33,873 in 2005. While some of these people were participants in the family, workplace and high-intensity programmes described above, the great majority were students in the core adult literacy service. This consists of either one-to-one or group tuition of a maximum of two hours actual tuition per week, which for the most part runs during the academic year and excludes holiday time.

One to One with Voluntary Tutor	17.0
Standard 2 hour group class with up to about 8 students	74.0
Both	9.0
Total	100.0
Source: Department of Education and Science	

6.6 Gaining proficiency in any skill requires a considerable and sustained input of teaching and learning and international research⁴² estimates that literacy learners need about 550 hours' input to reach a degree of independence in reading, writing and numeracy. According to that estimate, it would take over nine years for an individual literacy student following two hours' tuition over thirty weeks of the year, to achieve independent literacy. It is true that this is a very blunt measure, as different learners start with different degrees of existing proficiency. Furthermore, literacy input need not be solely face-to-face tuition but should also include private study. However, this estimate does serve to illustrate the main point, which holds for effective learning of any skill, not only reading and writing, that many of the individuals whose literacy work is confined to a two -hour class each week will make very slow progress. During the long summer breaks some people may even regress on the gains they made during the academic year.

6.7 At present the DES is funding a pilot study of the effectiveness of 6-hour literacy classes. Final decisions on the intensity of future literacy courses will have to await the

⁴² Department of Education and Skill (1999). A Fresh Start: - Improving Literacy and Numeracy (the Moser Report), London, HMSO, para 4.29.

outcome of the evaluation of this pilot. However, the Joint Committee is confident that there is a demand for more intensive courses and that they will prove effective.

Recommendation 13

That the VECs be funded to provide options for 4-hour and 6-hour literacy classes and that literacy classes should be available for more than the standard 30 week duration so as to help ensure continuity.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

6.8 Providing support for the English language needs of immigrants is an important task. According to the DES Annual Report 2004,

The adult literacy service has also responded to the English language needs of immigrants. In 2004 nearly 8,000 people attended literacy classes.⁴³

This means that approximately one in four participants in the adult literacy service is an ESOL student. However, it is important to recognise that the provision of ESOL and the provision of adult literacy and numeracy support, are different, if related, processes.

6.9 Furthermore, the ESOL service has come out of the adult literacy budget, which puts an added strain on the resources of the agencies concerned, mostly the VECs... A number of submissions recommended that a separate budget should be established for ESOL. However the Joint Committee does not believe that merely establishing a separate budget would address the main problems, which are: a lack of resources and the absence of a coherent strategy for this important area. In relation to the resource issue, the Joint Committee has recommended a substantial increase in funding for adult literacy in whatever groups it is manifest. It will be a matter for the stakeholders responsible to decide how this should be distributed among the various needs as these are manifest in the different groups in any particular area.

6.10 However, there is a question about the eligibility of non-English speakers who are fully literate in their own language and possibly in full-time employment. The Joint Committee recommends that their needs should be met by training and education services other than the adult literacy sector. The details of this needs to be worked out at national level and in consultation with organisations outside the scope of the adult literacy services.

⁴³ DES (2004) Annual Report 2004 Dublin: Stationery Office, page 23.

Recommendation 14

Draw up a national strategy, in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, for the design, delivery, assessment and evaluation of initiatives providing English tuition for Speakers of Other Languages, such initiatives to be funded from sources other than the budget for adult literacy.

Workplace Literacy Programmes

6.11 The workplace is one of the areas where the multiplying complexities of modern life are increasing requirements for literacy and numeracy in all ranks of the workforce. If an adequate response to this need is not elaborated there is a significant risk that affected workers will lose their employment or at least fail to progress in the face of demands by the labour market for progressively more skilled workers. An additional dimension of the problem is that many of the workers needing training are non-English speakers whose problems need a tailored approach. In 2002 NALA proposed a number of models for the implementation of workplace learning. Recently, a pilot project in basic adult education, including literacy, was launched in five local authorities and was evaluated positively (Return to Learning). FÁS is also working on the design and piloting of workplace literacy schemes in the private sector.

6.12 As a first priority, an awareness raising campaign is needed which will target at employers and trade unions to increase their sensitivity to the problem which is often more prevalent than they imagine, and secondly, the development of programmes which can be promoted amongst employers and employees. The work of NALA and the Return to Learning Programme and the work in FÁS are valuable resources in this regard. It is also important that individual workers who may already be in a marginal situation should not be further disadvantaged by any loss of pay they might incur as a result of attending workplace literacy classes or as a result of any extra cost that may be imposed on their employers. Reimbursement of some, or all of these costs, can be justified by reference to the priority which needs to be given to combating literacy problems in the workplace.

Recommendation 15

The Joint Committee recommends the development, as a matter of urgency, of a national policy on workplace literacy in consultation with the DETE, employers and trade unions which includes an awareness raising campaign and the preparation of training programmes to cater for the particular needs of individual sectors and of non-national workers.

Recommendation 16

Pay allowances to employers and employees, as appropriate, to compensate for any loss of income or increased costs incurred as a result of employees' attendance at workplace literacy programmes.

Other Initiatives

6.13 A number of other important recommendations have been submitted to the Joint Committee for programmes aimed at groups with particular needs. The most important of these is Family Literacy. Family literacy is one strategy which facilitates families and children working together and recognises the parent as the primary educator of their children. Family literacy has the potential to provide an important intervention into the cycle of educational disadvantage. It can also help to create links between different services and sectors.

Recommendation 17

The Joint Committee recommends the provision of a dedicated family literacy budget countrywide, to fund programmes, staff training, research and other necessary supports.

6.14 Other important recommendations received by the Joint Committee are:

- **Travellers:** This group is an important priority with particular needs. Various suggestions have been submitted which could be helpful in meeting these, including, outreach from Travellers' Centres, specific measures to encourage continuity of service, a national budget and specific targeting.

Recommendation 18

The Joint Committee recommends the development of a literacy strategy specifically for Travellers.

- **People with Dyslexia or other Specific Learning Difficulties.** Submissions to the Joint Committee emphasised the importance of expanding the scope of existing interventions, the importance of expanding the pool of specially trained individuals to deal with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties, and the necessity of one-to-one interventions when working with people with these needs.

Recommendation 19

Increase resources for assessment, training and materials for personnel involved in literacy services for persons with Specific Learning Difficulties.

- **Teaching Methods:** A variety of other recommendations have been made in submissions concerning, for example distance learning, thematic teaching, curriculum development, teaching materials, use of broadcast media and ICT. The development and use of many of these has been pioneered by individual VECs and NGOs, often with the collaboration and leadership of NALA.

Recommendation 20

The exploitation of IT, broadcast media, distance learning and other innovative methods of literacy teaching should be researched and piloted with a view to mainstreaming the most promising techniques during the NALP 2007-13.

SECTION 7: SUPPORTING ACCESS TO THE ADULT LITERACY AND NUMERACY SERVICE

7.1 The Joint Committee received a large number of submissions which expressed concern about the various obstacles faced by adults who would benefit from work on reading, writing or numeracy but who for various reasons are not in a position to do so. Some people do not address their literacy needs because they do not know that the adult literacy service exists; or because they do not perceive that they have literacy needs; or because they would like to address the issue but are prevented from doing so by practical life circumstances.

Referral

7.2 Referral is the process by which potential students are put in contact with the adult literacy service, for example by the staff of an institution or workplace who think that an individual may benefit from support in reading, writing or numeracy which that agency is not in a position to supply *in situ*. People have been referred to the adult literacy service by employers and trade unions, by staff in the health service, in social welfare and probation systems and by local community groups, among others.

7.3 Effective referral depends on a number of connected processes. Firstly, staff in the referring agency needs to be aware of the nature of literacy and numeracy difficulties, how these present, what services are available to support individuals and how to contact them. They also need to have an understanding of the difficulties which people with reading and writing difficulties can face in addressing the problem, and be able to broach the subject in a sensitive and confidential manner. Because of the stigma associated with literacy problems and the low self-esteem of many people who need help with reading and writing, this can be a difficult process. Secondly, the adult literacy service needs to have the staffing, the capacity and the infrastructure to take up such referrals within a reasonable time.

7.4 Referral sometimes takes place when an individual has found that they have difficulty in carrying out specific tasks which they need to complete in certain situations. This is potentially a highly motivating strategy, as the individual may not previously have been aware of the gaps in their skills, or, if they were, did not know what to do about them. Effective referral can link the literacy or numeracy work to the activity which gave rise to the initial identification of the problem, whether in the workplace, in training or elsewhere and this can be a starting point for the learner to clarify broader learning goals. However, referrals need to be monitored and tracked to ensure that potential adult literacy students are receiving the help they need.

Recommendation 21

Implement a national promotional strategy through the mass media which raises public awareness and fosters understanding of adult literacy and numeracy issues in a sensitive and constructive manner.

Recommendation 22

Include literacy awareness training in the induction training of staff in all state services dealing with the general public and provide top-up literacy awareness training for current staff who come into contact with the public.

Recommendation 23

Increase the resources available to partnership initiatives which facilitate access to literacy support through a variety of routes including the workplace, training, the health service and others, ensuring that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined within the national implementation framework.

Guidance

7.5 One of the most important dimensions of learning for people who decide to improve their literacy skills, is the availability of accurate and up-to-date information about the range of tuition options, activities and programmes available and the options for progression into higher or more specialised areas of learning.

Recommendation 24

Ensure that learners in the adult literacy sector have access to guidance and support structures which can assist them in making decisions about their own learning and progression routes.

Assessment of Specific Needs

7.6 Many practitioners within the adult literacy service report meeting people who have literacy problems which they suspect may be due to a specific learning need, such as

dyslexia. People with these specific learning needs can make progress, provided that they are following suitable programmes or activities. The first step in accomplishing this is to identify the need correctly and for this, a professional assessment is needed, usually carried out by an educational psychologist.

7.7 A large number of the submissions to this Committee emphasised the importance of having access to specialist assessments and also highlighted the difficulty of doing so. As things stand, there is no state psychological assessment which is readily available to the adult literacy service. The National Educational Psychological Service, (NEPS) which supports the school sector, is not available to the adult education sector and submissions to the Committee reveal that privately-funded assessments which are needed to determine whether an individual has a specific learning difficulty can cost between €350 and €500; and that people can wait for up to one year to obtain an assessment. Until learners' needs are clarified, it is not possible to ensure that the programmes and activities they are following really support their learning. Clearly, these factors can present serious obstacles to the progress of people who do have specific learning difficulties.

Recommendation 25

Ensure access to specialist educational assessments for learners in the adult literacy sector, and for programmes and activities which support the needs of those with specific learning difficulties.

Additional Costs to the Learner: Transport, Child and Elder Care

7.8 For adults on a limited budget, taking part in education can be an expensive business. The cost of bus fares and, in sometimes in rural areas, taxis, can prevent individuals from travelling to their place of learning on a regular basis. In some cases, this can be dealt with by outreach strategies which bring the learning closer to the person's home. However, many adult students prefer to maintain their privacy and work on their reading, writing and numeracy in a different locality. Service providers need to have the facility and the funds to assist learners with these incidental, but often substantial, costs.

7.9 Another very significant barrier which adults face is the responsibility which many have for the care of children and elderly relatives, which can make it difficult to get the free time to spend on their own learning. Service providers need to have the facility and the funds to provide crèches and/or funds to cover the cost of child and elder care, as appropriate.

Recommendation 26

Ensure that all programme budgets include an allocation of funds to support learners who need help with costs of transport, child and elder care.

7.10 Throughout this report, the Joint Committee has emphasised the view that it is a major duty of Government to ensure that all citizens are equipped with the basic skills which are essential to participate fully and actively in a democratic society; and that whatever resources and structures are needed to accomplish this in the medium-to-long term, should be made available. In support of this, the Joint Committee believes that serious consideration should be given to providing financial incentives to people who do decide to embark on improving their literacy and numeracy skills.

Recommendation 27

As part of the development of the Implementation Strategy for the NALP 2007 – 2013, NALC should research a range of proposals, including costings, to provide financial incentives, including increases in social welfare payments, training allowances and tax credits, for adults who take part in adult literacy and numeracy tuition.

7.11 Achieving a society in which all adults are equipped with the skills widely used in daily life and in the workplace, and in exercising their democratic rights in their community and in the wider society, will not be accomplished by the actions of any single government department, or agency or institution. It will be essential to clarify the roles which all government departments and agencies can play in improving the literacy of adults in Ireland during the coming years, and to establish processes for coordinating communications and actions.

Recommendation 28

As part of the development of the Implementation Strategy for the NALP 2007 – 2013, NALC should research and propose a range of formal structures whereby contact between government departments, statutory and non-statutory agencies having a role in literacy services may be created and maintained.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: ANALYSIS OF SUBMISSIONS

Introduction

In its public invitation inviting submissions on adult literacy from organisations and members of the public, the Joint Committee highlighted the following issues as being of particular interest:

1. Prioritisation of those with the lowest literacy levels;
2. Innovative ways to reach out to those in need of the services;
3. Expanding and strengthening referral services;
4. Development of specific initiatives for disadvantage groups;
5. Workplace literacy;
6. Support services.

A total of 38 submissions were received from national and local agencies, NGOs, professional educationalists and other individuals. In responding to the invitation most respondents organised at least some of their comments under the six headings proposed by the Joint Committee. However, not all of them followed that structure and most included some other points. Therefore, in the interests of doing justice to the range of views submitted in the presentation which follows, some headings are added to the six proposed by the Joint Committee. While submissions under the six headings proposed by the Joint Committee are summarised in Part A, the additional topics are presented in Part B.

It should be noted that the way in which the different points made by the respondents is summarised, varies according to the manner in which it was presented. There was a considerable degree of overlap in how respondents interpreted the six categories: for example, certain recommendations were made under the ‘referral heading’ by some respondents, (issue 3 in the Joint Committee’s framework), whereas others included it as part of ‘innovative strategies’. In fact referral, reaching target groups and initiatives (issue 4) are often different aspects of the same activity. Because of the potential for overlap between the different categories, a certain amount of simplification has therefore been necessary in this Section in order to group the recommendations into the Joint Committee’s framework.

Finally, it should be emphasised that the analysis focuses on proposals for solutions to the problems experienced in the promotion of adult literacy. Descriptive or background material is excluded.

PART A: Responses to the Joint Committee’s Six Issues⁴⁴

Issue 1: Prioritisation

⁴⁴ References are given to individual and organisational submissions associated with each point. As the same points were made in many submissions, references are usually to a selection of the more important submissions relating to each point.

1. Most contributors proposed that those with the lowest levels of literacy should be the priority. However, the identity of the groups making up those with the lowest level varied depending, to some extent, on the respondent. Those which specialised in particular areas naturally proposed that their area of concern should attract priority (e.g. unemployed, Travellers, prisoners). More broadly-based organisations listed these and others (immigrants, early school leavers, people with disabilities, lone parents, long term unemployed, multiple deprived). Altogether the result of this question was the proposal of a comprehensive list of priority targets.

2. However, one frequent response under this heading urged an increase in programmes involving intensive and continuous tuition. This proposal emerged in part from the identification of those with the lowest literacy levels a key priority. It was contended that people starting from a low skill base could not progress adequately on the basis of the standard literacy support of about 2 hours per week, either in a group or one-to-one. For these respondents, therefore the priority was to increase the number of hours in group tuition, and/or the volume of one-to-one tuition. One-to-one tuition is not funded by the DES and is accordingly undertaken by volunteers. It was stressed by many of these contributors that the need for one-to-one tutoring, which is very important in working effectively with those on the lowest levels of literacy, should not be met exclusively by volunteers.

Issue 2: Innovative Approaches

3. **Thematic Courses.** A number of workers have found it necessary to improve their literacy in order comply with health and safety regulations in the workplace. This has led to the development of literacy courses in the context of specific employments. These employments include transport, (e.g. obtaining HGV licenses), construction, factory operations and IT. Such courses are relatively easy to promote to persons with literacy problems since their practicality is evident. Moreover the literacy element is blended with the vocational, thus easing the stigma which is often an obstacle for male students. The same principle applies when literacy is blended with courses on home-making (cookery), sports, or arts and crafts.

4. **Family Learning.** This is one of the most commonly-cited methods of reaching those in need. It was submitted that a special budget should be provided for this type of approach and more personnel, such as Home School Liaison Officers and Rural Coordinators, should be recruited to support the programmes. Family learning is a very significant strategy because it assists in creating links between the school and the adult literacy sectors, thereby intervening in the cycle of educational disadvantage at key points of need.

5. **Intensity.** The most frequently-expressed point in the submissions was the need for intensive training (see 2 above). At present standard literacy intervention comprises 2 hours per week in small groups or one-to-one with a volunteer tutor. The frequent recommendation in these submissions is that this should be raised to as much as 12 hours per week. As noted above, at present one to one training is carried out voluntarily and is

reserved for those in greatest need. A corollary recommendation is that tutors engaged in one to one training need to be fully trained and remunerated.

6. **Continuity** An important factor in improving the effectiveness of literacy work is continuity. There are a number of dimensions to this. One is that the academic year of September to April is too short and has too long a break so that by the time clients return – if they return - a good deal has been forgotten. Continuity also means following up individuals who drop in and out of courses over a period of years. The client data base referred to in 3.22 would be helpful in mitigating the disruption caused by this. Finally, continuity also means progression. There needs to be a range of pathways from basic literacy work to more advanced learning of different kinds.

7. **Integration.** A number of submissions emphasise the importance of integrating literacy as part of basic education. This helps to alleviate some of the stigma of literacy work, thus removing barriers to participation. It also enhances the effectiveness of the basic education. It was proposed that this approach should also be adopted in FAS courses, VTOS, Youthreach, BTEI courses and others. One submission recommends that the literacy element of these courses should remain under the control of the local literacy service to ensure quality.

Issue 3: Referral

The term 'referral' was interpreted very broadly, to include a variety of activities ranging from general publicity aimed at raising public awareness of the issues, to the services of psychologists assessing the needs of an individual.

8. **General Public Awareness:** At the most general level, a number of submissions proposed that national or local publicity campaigns should be undertaken aimed at raising the general awareness of the community about the problem and reducing the stigma attaching to reading and writing difficulties.

9. **Public Service Awareness:** A very common recommendation was that awareness of those in the public service particularly likely to meet individuals affected by literacy problems should be given literacy awareness training. This was proposed for personnel in the health services, including GPs, and for staff in FAS, social welfare, and other state agencies. It was suggested that the DES should take a lead in promoting this type of training.

10. **Formal Referral to Specialist Support Services:** In addition to awareness training in schools, it was recommended that the availability of educational psychology services and of Home School Liaison Officers needs to be greatly expanded, in order to identify problems at an early stage and to refer individuals to suitable interventions. This also applies to Irish speakers for whom assessments in Irish are hard to obtain.

11 **Referral Networks:** It was proposed that local networks of state agencies and NGOs should be set up to cooperate in identifying persons with problems. The creation of posts for literacy outreach workers was proposed as a means of promoting these networks. .

12 **Standards:** It is urged that there is a need for nationally accepted standards of literacy and numeracy and a uniform approach to the specification of levels.

13 **Student data-base:** A number of proposals were made for the creation of a student record database so that the progress of individuals, many of whom may access the service on an irregular basis, can be tracked and some degree of continuity can be provided.

Issue 4: Target Groups

Submissions did not make consistent distinctions between innovative programmes and specific initiatives for disadvantaged groups. Since the major expansion in literacy training in Ireland is of fairly recent origin, many of the interventions have an innovative dimension. The principal types proposed under this heading were:

14 **ESOL:** A large number of submissions focused on the needs of non-nationals. Evidently, dealing with the needs of this rather different, and far from homogenous

group, has been making substantial additional demands on the adult literacy service. One proposal was that the adult literacy budgets should include a specific amount dedicated to ESOL courses. Another stressed that the literacy and the language issues needed to be separated: not all those with problems in English have literacy difficulties. A related point is that for a many non-nationals, the most appropriate learning environment may be the workplace (see Issue 5 below).

15 **Travellers:** This group is an important priority with particular needs. Various suggestions have been submitted which could be helpful in meeting these, including the development of a dedicated national literacy strategy for Travellers, outreach from Travellers' Centres, specific measures to encourage continuity of service, a national budget and specific targeting.

16 **People with Dyslexia or other Specific Learning Difficulties.** As noted above, it is important that adequate screening and assessment services are available to identify persons with dyslexia. Submissions note the importance of expanding the scope of existing interventions, the importance of expanding the pool of specially trained individuals to deal with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties, and the necessity of one-to-one interventions when working with people with these needs.

17. **Men.** Many men who would benefit from working on their reading, writing or numeracy are reluctant to come forward. There is therefore a need for interventions designed to encourage their participation. Suggestions submitted included the provision of programmes targeted fathers and sons. Thematic courses (see below) which build literacy training around work or leisure pursuits are also considered likely to be effective for this group.

Issue 5: Workplace Literacy

18 There was a large response to the Joint Committee's request for submissions concerning this aspect of literacy training. Several submissions identified it as an important priority. It was also noted that literacy training in the workplace is needed by supervisors and other categories of promoted employees whose further progress may be barred by literacy difficulties. Overall, the need for workplace literacy was regarded as urgent by contributors. Furthermore, many of the potential workplace clients are non-nationals and literacy training for them requires special approaches. It was recommended that the DES should coordinate with the DETE to produce a national policy; that trade unions and employer groups need to be made aware of the problem; and that appropriate publicity needs to be directed at both groups. It was proposed that the Return to Learning project in five local authorities should be generalised to all local and health authorities and to private companies too. It was also suggested that financial support for employers and employees would be needed to motivate people working in the private sector. (See Supports Issue 6, also).

Issue 6: Supports

A very wide variety of recommendations were made concerning supports or ancillary services required to increase the effectiveness of literacy training.

19 **Childcare, Eldercare and Transport** Childcare and ‘eldercare’ services were the most frequently-cited recommendations. It is clear that for parents or carers, some form of practical assistance is necessary if they are to avail of literacy training. A related support recommended was assistance with transport to and from the training centres.

20 **Financial assistance.** A number of respondents recommended that financial incentives be given to persons attending literacy courses.

21 **Buildings.** A number of recommendations were made about the need to improve the physical facilities within which literacy training is given. In many cases the facilities are run down, in other cases they take place near or actually in schools, an environment which may have negative associations for many clients of adult literacy students. In other cases the facilities were available only if not required by some other educational or training activity. Another problem was that school buildings are only available during the school year, which contributes to closure of the service during the summer vacation.

22 **Educational Psychology, Counselling and Guidance.** A number of submissions emphasised the need to extend educational psychological services to the participants in adult literacy courses. In some cases the availability of counselling was also recommended. It was also submitted that there was a need for guidance for participants to inform them about the education and training choices open to them.

23 **Research:** A number of suggestions were made for research in the area of literacy. For example, one contributor proposed that 3% of the budget for literacy training should be allocated to research into, inter alia, evaluation of the effectiveness of the service. Another recommended the establishment of a national research centre dedicated to adult literacy. One contribution urged a repeat study of the IALS. Another recommended that research be undertaken into the relationship between literacy and health promotion.

24 **Curriculum/Materials:** Numerous recommendations were made about the need to improve the quality and volume of teaching materials and the content of courses. The most frequent were recommendations to improve the availability of IT based materials and curricula. It was also suggested that TV, radio and audio visual materials should be developed to complement adult literacy work. The RTE “Read Write Now” TV series were commended as an example of what could be done by the broadcast media. An increased role for local groups was envisaged when local TV becomes general. Specific recommendations were made for development of materials for Irish literacy, SLDs and numeracy

PART B: Priorities Additional to those Invited by the Joint Committee

Planning

1. A number of organisations recommended the adoption of a national literacy plan. A National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Plan has been drafted by a range of stakeholders and one contributor recommended that this should be adopted by all parties. This should be coterminous with the next National Development Plan to follow the NDP 2000-2006 now approaching its conclusion.

Funding

2. All of the recommendations implied the need to increase resources in order to support the recommended adult literacy and numeracy interventions. A number of specific points were raised in support of this:

- It was pointed out that the £74/€90 million allocate under the NDP worked out at about €10 per person per annum. (on the basis that about 25% of the population have literacy problems). One specific recommendation was that funding should be increased from 0.15% of GDP to 0.2%.
- It was suggested that the level of funding for adult literacy provided to the different VECs is based on historical distribution reflecting different levels of development of adult literacy courses throughout the country. This has led to considerable differences between VECs on the per capita funding. A major revision of funding allocation based on need was recommended.
- Some contributors thought that funding should be provided at the start of the year in order to provide time for planning the year's activities; and that for the same reason, funding should be provided on a multi annual (3 to 5 years) basis.
- Some contributors want funding to be divided into budgets for pay and non-pay, on the grounds that this would improve transparency, which would make it easier to manage different budgetary requirements. This is particularly important when costs such as pay, are subject to change.

Structures

3. A number of proposals were made for restructuring of organisations involved in literacy training. Some of these are designed to support specific programmes and are dealt with below. Others have general application. All of these proposals need further elaboration, especially as some are mutually exclusive. Recommendations from contributors on the issue of structures included the following:

- Interdepartmental Committee to be set up between the DES and the Department of Health to ensure integration of literacy training and health promotion ;
- Coordination between DES and DETE to ensure promotion of workplace literacy training;
- Establishment of a State Literacy Agency;
- Clarification of role of all of the stakeholders in the field, including the National Adult Literacy Agency, the IVEA, the individual VECs and others;

- Establishment of local networks between VECs and other agencies working with disadvantaged to increase effectiveness of referral, raise awareness, improve effectiveness of referral and improve delivery of services;
- The creation of an adult literacy service separate from the VECs ;
- Development of Library Service to collaborate with adult literacy service;
- The formal identification of the VECs as major providers of the adult literacy service in Ireland.

Staffing: Tutors

4. Most of the specific recommendations imply the need for an increase in the number of personnel or improvements in their training and support. Recommendations are for increased numbers, more full time personnel, improvements in pay, settled conditions of employment, coherent personnel structures, training and clarification of qualifications.

- General improvement in pay and condition with secure contracts for teaching personnel;
- Introduction of career structure;
- Staffing norms to be determined;
- Greater professionalisation of literacy teachers and less reliance on voluntarism;
- Identification of professional qualifications in order to place literacy personnel on a par with second level teachers;
- More full time teachers and some paid tutors for one-to-one training;
- Additional training for tutors in general and in particular, for those dealing with specific problems (SLDs).

Staffing: Management and Non-Teaching Staff

5. Several recommendations concerned management and support staff:

- Review of roles of the Adult Education Officers and the Adult Literacy Officers in light of evolving activities;
- Strengthening of the Home School Learning Service;
- Increase in administrative and support staff for adult literacy service;
- Increase in staffing of IVEA to enable it to play appropriate role in development of literacy training;

ANNEX II INTERNATIONAL ADULT LITERACY SURVEY: SUMMARY RESULTS

Comparison of Ireland's Performance in IALS With Other Countries in IALS Proportion of the adult population with Level 1 (lowest) literacy

	Prose	Document	Quantitative
Canada	16.6	18.2	16.9
Germany	14.4	9.0	6.7
Netherlands	10.5	10.1	10.3
Sweden	7.5	6.2	6.6
Switzerland (French)	17.6	16.2	12.9
Switzerland (German)	19.3	18.1	14.2
USA	20.7	23.7	21.0
Belgium (Flemish)	18.4	15.3	16.7
UK	21.8	23.3	23.2
Australia	17.0	17.0	16.8
New Zealand	18.4	21.4	20.4
Average	16.6	16.2	15.0
Poland	42.6	45.4	39.1
Ireland	22.6	25.3	25.0

In the International Adult Literacy Survey, for which the Irish results were published in 1997, Ireland had the second largest proportion of adult who scored at the lowest level on the five-level scale.

Since then, the OECD has carried out another international survey⁴⁵, the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS) which addresses all three dimensions covered in the earlier IALS and includes problem-solving as well. Ireland was not represented in this survey and in fact, only four of the countries surveyed for IALS were also surveyed for ALLS: Canada, French-speaking and German-speaking Switzerland; and the USA and therefore only in these countries can changes in the literacy levels of the population be identified. Nevertheless, some of the conclusions supplied by the experience of the other countries are interesting:

- There were small reductions in the proportion of people scoring at the lowest level of literacy;
- There were also reductions in the proportion of people scoring at the highest levels;⁴⁶

⁴⁵ OECD (2005) Learning a Living: First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Programme, Paris, Ottawa: Statistics Canada/OECD.

⁴⁶ Ibid, page 48.

- Only in German-speaking Switzerland was there a general upward shift (albeit a small one) in the levels at which people scored; in the other countries, the proportions scoring at levels 2 and 3 increased;
- Age and level of education contribute to literacy levels but the relationship is imperfect.⁴⁷ other factors have an impact;
- There are still large portions of the adult populations with poor foundation skills who are not being reached by the services; yet there are variations between countries, which suggest that lifelong learning policies do make a difference.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ibid, page 58, 59

⁴⁸ OECD (2005) op. cit., page 80.

**ANNEXE III (a): ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO MADE
WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE**

1. City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee.
2. WITH.
3. Exchange House Travellers Service.
4. Church of Scientology Mission of Dublin.
5. Mr. John McGinley.
6. Ms. Carmel Scott.
7. Ms. Anne Bohan.
8. Mallow Return to Education and ETEI.
9. Ms. Margaret A. O'Brien.
10. Bray Adult Learning Centre.
11. Soilse Henrietta Place.
12. Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group (LANPAG).
13. Dublin Community Television Adult Education Thematic Content Group.
14. Co. Wicklow VEC Adult Basic Education.
15. Dublin Adult Learning Centre.
16. Department of Psychiatry of Old Age.
17. National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA).
18. Ms. Nuala Glanton.
19. Co. Clare VEC and Clare Youth Service.
20. Co. Dublin Vocational Education Committee.
21. Return to Learning – Dublin City Council.
22. Neuron Learning Ltd.
23. Ms. Katherine O'Sullivan.
24. Mr. Kevin Hurley.
25. Adult Literacy Organisers Association (ALOA).
26. Breacadh.
27. Adult Education Officers Association.
28. Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA).
29. City of Limerick VEC Adult Literacy Service.
30. Local Development Social Inclusion Programme.
31. Co. Galway VEC West Galway Adult Literacy Service.
32. Co. Donegal VEC.
33. Co. Louth VEC.
34. Ms. Angela King, Health Promotion Service of the HSE, Northern Area.
35. Ms. Anne Hughes, Dyslexia Association of Ireland.
36. Ms. Margaret Doyle, The Career Path Centre for Dyslexia.
37. Ms. Lorna Lafferty, The Bray Adult Education Network.
38. Ms. Sile Ní Mhuimhneachain, Learning Support Teacher

ANNEXE III (b): ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO MADE ORAL SUBMISSIONS TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

1. City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee.
2. WITH.
3. Exchange House Travellers Service.
4. Church of Scientology Mission of Dublin.
5. Bray Adult Learning Centre.
6. Soilse Henrietta Place.
7. Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group (LANPAG).
8. Dublin Community Television Adult Education Thematic Content Group.
9. Co. Wicklow VEC Adult Basic Education.
10. Dublin Adult Learning Centre.
11. Department of Psychiatry of Old Age.
12. National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA).
13. Co. Clare VEC and Clare Youth Service.
14. Co. Dublin Vocational Education Committee.
15. Neuron Learning Ltd.
16. Adult Literacy Organisers Association (ALOA).
17. Breacadh.
18. Adult Education Officers Association.
19. Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA).
20. City of Limerick VEC Adult Literacy Service.
21. Local Development Social Inclusion Programme.
22. Co. Galway VEC West Galway Adult Literacy Service.
23. Co. Donegal VEC.
24. Co. Louth VEC.
25. Health Promotion Service of the HSE, Northern Area.
26. Dyslexia Association of Ireland.
27. The Career Path Centre for Dyslexia.
28. ADM

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Appendix 1

JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

List of Members

Deputies

Barry Andrews (FF)
Seán Crowe (SF)(Tech Group)
John Curran (FF)
Damien English (FG) (*Convenor*)
Olwyn Enright (FG)
Paul Gogarty (GP)(Tech Group)
Séan Haughey (FF)
Máire Hóctor (FF)
Michael Moynihan (FF)(**Chairman**)
Thomas McEllistrim (FF) (*Convenor*)
Jan O'Sullivan (Lab)(*Vice-Chair*)

Senators:

Ulick Burke (FG)
Liam Fitzgerald (FF)
John Minihan (PD)
Joanna Tuffy (Lab)

Appendix 2

Orders of Reference

Dáil Éireann on 16 October 2002 ordered:

- “(1) (a) That a Select Committee, which shall be called the Select Committee on Education and Science consisting of 11 members of Dáil Éireann (of whom 4 shall constitute a quorum), be appointed to consider -
- (i) such Bills the statute law in respect of which is dealt with by the Department of Education and Science;
 - (ii) such Estimates for Public Services within the aegis of the Department of Education and Science; and
 - (iii) such proposals contained in any motion, including any motion within the meaning of Standing Order 157 concerning the approval by the Dáil of international agreements involving a charge on public funds,
- as shall be referred to it by Dáil Éireann from time to time.
- (b) For the purpose of its consideration of Bills and proposals under paragraphs (1)(a)(i) and (iii), the Select Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 81(1), (2) and (3).
- (c) For the avoidance of doubt, by virtue of his or her *ex officio* membership of the Select Committee in accordance with Standing Order 90(1), the Minister for Education and Science (or a Minister or Minister of State nominated in his or her stead) shall be entitled to vote.
- (2) (a) The Select Committee shall be joined with a Select Committee to be appointed by Seanad Éireann to form the Joint Committee on Education and Science to consider -
- (i) such public affairs administered by the Department of Education and Science as it may select, including, in respect of Government policy, bodies under the aegis of that Department;
 - (ii) such matters of policy for which the Minister for Education and Science is officially responsible as it may select;

- (iii) such related policy issues as it may select concerning bodies which are partly or wholly funded by the State or which are established or appointed by Members of the Government or by the Oireachtas;
- (iv) such Statutory Instruments made by the Minister for Education and Science and laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas as it may select;
- (v) such proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues as may be referred to it from time to time, in accordance with Standing Order 81(4);
- (vi) the strategy statement laid before each House of the Oireachtas by the Minister for Education and Science pursuant to section 5(2) of the Public Service Management Act, 1997, and the Joint Committee shall be so authorised for the purposes of section 10 of that Act;
- (vi) such annual reports or annual reports and accounts, required by law and laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas, of bodies specified in paragraphs 2(a)(i) and (iii), and the overall operational results, statements of strategy and corporate plans of these bodies, as it may select;

Provided that the Joint Committee shall not, at any time, consider any matter relating to such a body which is, which has been, or which is, at that time, proposed to be considered by the Committee of Public Accounts pursuant to the Orders of Reference of that Committee and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993;

Provided further that the Joint Committee shall refrain from inquiring into in public session, or publishing confidential information regarding, any such matter if so requested either by the body concerned or by the Minister for Education and Science; and

- (viii) such other matters as may be jointly referred to it from time to time by both Houses of the Oireachtas,

and shall report thereon to both Houses of the Oireachtas.

- (b) The quorum of the Joint Committee shall be five, of whom at least one shall be a member of Dáil Éireann and one a member of Seanad Éireann.
- (c) The Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 81(1) to (9) inclusive.

- (3) The Chairman of the Joint Committee, who shall be a member of Dáil Éireann, shall also be Chairman of the Select Committee.”.

Seanad Éireann on 17 October 2002 ordered:

- “(1) (a) That a Select Committee consisting of 4 members of Seanad Éireann shall be appointed to be joined with a Select Committee of Dáil Éireann to form the Joint Committee on Education and Science to consider –
- (i) such public affairs administered by the Department of Education and Science as it may select, including, in respect of Government policy, bodies under the aegis of that Department;
 - (ii) such matters of policy for which the Minister for Education and Science is officially responsible as it may select;
 - (iii) such related policy issues as it may select concerning bodies which are partly or wholly funded by the State or which are established or appointed by Members of the Government or by the Oireachtas;
 - (iv) such Statutory Instruments made by the Minister for Education and Science and laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas as it may select;
 - (v) such proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues as may be referred to it from time to time, in accordance with Standing Order 65(4);
 - (vi) the strategy statement laid before each House of the Oireachtas by the Minister for Education and Science pursuant to section 5(2) of the Public Service Management Act, 1997, and the Joint Committee shall be so authorised for the purposes of section 10 of that Act;
 - (vi) such annual reports or annual reports and accounts, required by law and laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas, of bodies specified in paragraphs 1(a)(i) and (iii), and the overall operational results, statements of strategy and corporate plans of these bodies, as it may select;

Provided that the Joint Committee shall not, at any time, consider any matter relating to such a body which is, which has been, or which is, at that time, proposed to be considered by the Committee of Public Accounts

pursuant to the Orders of Reference of that Committee and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993;

Provided further that the Joint Committee shall refrain from inquiring into in public session, or publishing confidential information regarding, any such matter if so requested either by the body concerned or by the Minister for Education and Science;

and

(viii) such other matters as may be jointly referred to it from time to time by both Houses of the Oireachtas,

and shall report thereon to both Houses of the Oireachtas.

- (b) The quorum of the Joint Committee shall be five, of whom at least one shall be a member of Dáil Éireann and one a member of Seanad Éireann.
 - (c) The Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 65(1) to (9) inclusive.
- (2) The Chairman of the Joint Committee shall be a member of Dáil Éireann.”.

Appendix 3

Joint Committee on Education and Science

Extract from the Minutes of the Joint Committee

Wednesday 31 May 2006

1. The Joint Committee met at 11:40 a.m. in Committee Room 2 LH2000.

2. Attendance

The following members were present:-

Deputies: Michael Moynihan (in the Chair), Seán Crowe, Damien English, Olwyn Enright, Paul Gogarty, Thomas McEllistrim and Jan O'Sullivan

Senators: Ulick Burke and Liam Fitzgerald.

7 Draft Report on Adult Literacy in Ireland

The Chairman brought forward the Draft Report.

Section 1: Introduction.

Paragraph 1.1 to 1.7 agreed to.

Paragraph 1.7 renumber to 1.8 and re-number the following paragraphs accordingly agreed to

Paragraph 1.8 agreed to

Section 2: Adult Literacy in Ireland

Section 2.1 The Nature of the Problem

Paragraph 2.1.1 to 2.1.17 agreed to.

Section 2.2 Early Issues and Policy Development

Paragraph 2.2.1 to 2.2.12 agreed to.

Section 2.3 Expansion of the Adult Literacy Service and Current Position

Paragraph 2.3.1 to 2.3.3 - agreed to.

Section 3: Planning

Paragraph 3.1 agreed to.

Recommendation 1 agreed to.

Paragraph 3.2 to 3.3 agreed to.

Recommendation 2 agreed to.

Paragraph 3.4 to 3.10 agreed to.

Recommendation 3 agreed to.

Paragraphs 3.11 to 3.12 agreed to.

Recommendation 4 agreed to.

Paragraphs 3.13 to 3.15 agreed to.

Recommendation 5 agreed to.

Paragraph 3.16 agreed to.

Recommendation 6 agreed to.

Paragraph 3.17 agreed to.

Recommendation 7 agreed to.

Section 4: Structures and Organisations

Paragraph 4.1 to 4.7 agreed to.

Recommendation 8 agreed to.

Paragraph 4.8 to 4.9 agreed to.

Recommendation 9 agreed to.

Paragraph 4.10 agreed to.

Section 4: Staffing

Paragraph 5.1 to 5.5 agreed to.

Recommendation 10 agreed to.

Paragraph 5.6 to 5.7 agreed to.

Recommendation 11 agreed to.

Paragraph 5.8 agreed to.

Recommendation 12 agreed to.

Section 6: Literacy Initiatives

Paragraph 6.1 to 6.7 agreed to.

Recommendation 13 agreed to.

Paragraph 6.8 to 6.10 agreed to.

Recommendation 14 agreed to.

Paragraph 6.11 to 6.12 agreed to.

Recommendation 15 agreed to.

Recommendation 16 agreed to.

Paragraphs *Other Initiatives* and *Family Literacy* amalgamate and rename paragraph 6.13 agreed to.

Recommendation 17 agreed to.

New Paragraph 6.14 to read 'Other important recommendations received by the Joint Committee are:' agreed to.

Paragraphs *Travellers* agreed to.

Recommendation 18 agreed to.
Paragraph *People with Dyslexia or Other Specific Learning Difficulties*
agreed to.
Recommendation 19 agreed to.
Paragraph *Teaching Methods* agreed to.
Recommendation 20 agreed to.

Section 7: Supporting Access to the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Service

Paragraph 7.1 to 7.4 agreed to.
Recommendation 21 agreed to.
Recommendation 22 agreed to.
Recommendation 23 agreed to.
Paragraph 7.5 agreed to.
Recommendation 24 agreed to.
Paragraph 7.6 to 7.7 agreed to.
Recommendation 25 agreed to.
Paragraph 7.8 to 7.9 agreed to.

Recommendation 26 agreed to.
Paragraph 7.10 agreed to.
Recommendation 27 agreed to.
Paragraph 7.11 agreed to.
Recommendation 28 agreed to.

Annex I: Analysis of Submissions

Introduction agreed to.

Part A: responses to the Joint Committee's Six Issues

Issue 1: Prioritisation
Paragraph 1 to 2 agreed to.
Issue 2: Innovative Approaches
Paragraph 3 to 7 agreed to.
Issue 3: Referral
Paragraph 8 to 13 agreed to.
Issue 4: Target Groups
Paragraph 14 to 17 agreed to.
Issue 5: Workplace Literacy
Paragraph 18 agreed to.
Issue 6: Supports
Paragraph 19 to 24 agreed to.

PART B: Priorities Additional to Those Invited by the Joint Committee

Paragraph 1 to 5 agreed to.

Annex II International Adult Literacy Survey: Summary Results

agreed to.

Annex III(a) Organisations and Individuals who made Written Submissions to the Joint Committee

agreed to.

Annex III(b): Organisations and Individuals who made oral submissions to the Joint Committee.

agreed to.

References

agreed to.

Executive Summary

Paragraph 1 to 13 agreed to.

New Paragraph 14 to read ‘ The Joint Committee also recommends emphasis and resources be given to a dedicated family literacy budget for the country’ and re-number following paragraphs accordingly.

agreed to.

Paragraph 14 Delete from ‘the Joint Committee ... to ‘for the country’ and include ‘Resources are also needed for the’

agreed to.

Paragraph 15 to 21

agreed to.

Replacement of paragraph entitled Acknowledgements by the following paragraph entitled Foreword

‘In accordance with its Orders of Reference, the Joint Committee on Education and Science agreed to seek submissions regarding Adult Literacy with a view to the preparation of a Report. The Committee invited submissions from the public and also heard oral presentations on the matter. This report also builds on the report produced by the Joint Committee on Education and Science of the 28th Dáil. The Committee hopes that this report, which contains twenty-eight recommendations for the future development of this important sector of the Irish educational system, will contribute to the continuing debate on Adult Literacy in Ireland.

The Joint Committee would like to acknowledge the contribution to this report made by the many individuals and organisations who responded to the public advertisement placed by the Joint Committee. The contribution of those who subsequently made oral submissions is also acknowledged. In the course of their work, the consultants who assisted the Joint Committee in the preparation of the report, conducted several interviews and received information from a number of other sources. The Joint Committee would also like to thank those individuals and organisations.

The Committee is indebted to the two consultants on this project, Mr. Jim Dorgan, of Curtin Dorgan Associates and Ms Elizabeth McSkeane , who assisted the committee in the production of this report and would like to put on the record its appreciation of the professional and efficient work done by them on this report.

The Joint Committee requests that its recommendations in relation to this issue are taken on board and recommends that it would invite the Minister for Education and Science or the Secretary-General of the Department of Education and Science to attend a meeting of the committee, in six months time, to report to the Committee on the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Committee in this report.’

agreed to.

The following appendices were agreed to :

- Membership of the Committee,
- Orders of Reference of the Committee
- Extract from the proceedings of the committee

Inclusion of four additional references to the references page and references included on relevant pages. agreed to.

Ordered : To report accordingly.

Ordered : That the report be printed and published.

9. Adjournment

There being no other business, the Joint Committee adjourned at 12:10p.m. until 28 June 2006 at 10:15 a.m.