

Bringing education to life

Reaching hard-to-reach learners
by creating innovative approaches to
adult and community learning

A UK–Sweden initiative



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creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

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NIACE
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NIACE has a broad remit to advance the interests of adult learners. It works with national and local government, education providers, employers, the voluntary sector and others to promote equal opportunities of access to learning for all adults.

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Susan Hanley-Place, MBE

Geoff Hanley

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Project Leader, The Woodwork Project (ABF)

Christine Chambay and Christina Stattin

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Juno Gyllander

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Maureen Mellor

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Joel O'Loughlin

NorthWest 1

Claes Bertilson

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Joint Ministerial foreword

The UK and Sweden are both committed to helping more people from all backgrounds learn and upgrade their skills throughout their lives. We both recognise the crucial contribution that learning makes to:

- helping people who are at a disadvantage to realise their potential;
- strengthening families and communities; and
- developing the well-educated, adaptable and skilled labour force which the European Union needs.

The British and Swedish Governments set up this joint 'Bringing Education to Life' project to share knowledge and best practice on lifelong learning in our countries. This publication is the result. Its aim is to help share the lessons of this work with the people and organisations whose job it is to promote a fair and prosperous society and to tackle disadvantage. Although the education and training systems in Sweden and the UK do differ, the study has identified many common factors which can contribute to the success of lifelong learning in our countries.

We hope that you find this account of the 'Bringing Education to Life' project interesting and that it will give you ideas and support as you develop your own projects for adult learners. We can all learn from each other.



Margaret Hodge

Minister of State for Adult Education and Lifelong Learning



Lena Hallentren

Deputy Minister for Education (Sweden)



LEAP project/Bristol Community Education Shop: discussing employment issues

Introduction

Project purpose

We are fast approaching a time where information is the most valuable commodity within the developed world. Individuals must be equipped with the tools necessary to enable them to become active citizens within today's society. The population is split into those who can readily access information and those who cannot. To bridge this 'knowledge divide' requires each country to take a proactive approach in engaging those who are currently least well equipped to participate.

The aim of this project is to increase the participation of under-represented groups in lifelong learning, thereby increasing social inclusion and improving the employability of EU citizens within the world economy.

'Hard-to-reach' learners include a very diverse selection of people. These people are at risk of being left outside the knowledge-based society unless we make a concerted effort to engage them. Community-based learning reaches those not traditionally found in formal adult education and training activities.

'The working life in our modern society needs flexibility and fast solutions. You do not have to have all the answers but you need to have the tools for searching for them.'

Roger Källs, Project Leader,
The Woodwork Project

Origins

Since the Lisbon European Council of 2000, attitudes in Europe to adult learning have changed. Rather than being seen as simply a vocational or employment issue, adult learning is now viewed as a tool for inclusion. In this context, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) instigated this joint project with Sweden to contribute to European Community efforts to maximise the potential of all EU citizens, regardless of their background.

Methodology

The project team embarked upon a series of study visits and group discussions, which took place in Sweden and the UK between March and May 2001. The main focus of the visits was sharing innovative and established methods of engaging under-represented groups.

During the visits the project team saw at first hand some impressive examples of effective and innovative provision which has succeeded in attracting those previously wary of education. These projects have not only allowed people to develop their individual skills, but have also enhanced their quality of life and contributed to the social, economic and cultural growth of local communities. Whilst the diverse range of projects was thoroughly grounded in the needs of their different target groups, it was possible to identify some common factors which suggest a set of principles that could have practical application in other countries.

These common factors, critical to the success of each project, were:

- People
- Environment
- Ethos.

The European perspective

The project coincided with the launch of the European Commission's Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, which is intended as the starting point for the Commission to develop a comprehensive strategy for implementing lifelong learning. The Memorandum outlines the rapid change being experienced by Europeans, including technological and digital developments, and recognises 'education and training throughout life' as 'the best way for everyone

to meet the challenge of change'. In the Memorandum, the Commission makes reference to the fact that formal learning, which takes place in universities, training centres, schools and colleges, has until now dominated policy thinking.

The Commission wants to see a gradual osmosis between the structures of provision, which recognises the complementarity of formal, non-formal and informal learning. This guide celebrates the innovative and inspiring good practice in community-based education that is taking place in the UK and Sweden. It is hoped that it will be used to feed into the European-wide consultations on how to improve access to lifelong learning, particularly for those considered 'hardest-to-reach'.

How this guide is organised

Aim of the publication

The aim of this guide is to present factors to be considered when thinking about engaging and structuring learning provision for hard-to-reach learners. It will be supported through examples of comparable practice from the UK and Sweden. The examples given are of the projects that took part in the study visits rather than a representative sample from the UK and Sweden. These are projects that are considered to be good examples of what can be achieved with regards to furthering the cause of lifelong learning, enabling all individuals to become active citizens within a learning society. We have set out to create a user-friendly guide that can be used to make real difference, not only in the UK and Sweden but also in other EU countries. It will illustrate the ways in which adult education is delivered, whilst highlighting recurring themes in areas of both difficulty and good practice.

Audience

This publication is written to be accessible to those who provide opportunities for learning, those involved in the delivery of learning, and those responsible for funding learning to under-represented groups within society.

Outcome

Having read this publication you should be able to understand the commonalities and differences between the UK and Sweden, identify common themes, and have a clear definition of what the learner should expect from their educational institutions or other places in which learning takes place.

How this guide is organised

This guide is organised into 11 sections, covering specific areas of common good practice identified during the project. Each section contains a brief piece of text illuminated by case studies from both the UK and Sweden and comments raised during focus group discussions. Each section concludes with summation of the critical points to take into consideration ('factors for success').

Finally

The guide does not claim to have all the answers – and certainly neither Sweden nor the UK would claim to have the perfect system – but it is hoped that all readers will find within it useful ideas to apply to their own work.

Overview

This study compares best practise in adult education between the UK and Sweden.

The project found that **careful planning is essential to the success of adult and community learning**. The most successful projects have been those developed through a sharing of ideas and aspirations between learners and providers, rather than those based on assumptions about learners' needs.

Local involvement is usually a necessity during the first stage of a learning project, in order to plan and review the provision of learning. It is essential to provide both the learner and the local community with a welcoming and collaborative environment in which consultation and networking can develop.

Recruiting those who are representative of the target learning group is critical to the success of projects. This may be done by conducting market research or networking with other agencies and non-traditional places of learning.

The delivery of learning is the core element of teaching. It is essential to create a suitable learning **environment**, which is easily accessible and welcoming. Additionally, successful projects have often been based on a positive ethos.

It often helps to **tailor learning to individuals**, as this can change learners' opinions on the value of learning itself. It is clearly important to listen to the learner and recognise individual learning styles. Encouraging learners to recognise their prior learning experiences and achievements is vital, as it enables them to develop a sense of value regarding their knowledge, which in turn increases their confidence.

Helping learners to define their own levels of quality and expected outcomes can also help aid progression. It is important not to define outcomes too narrowly or prescriptively. Monitoring and evaluation should be built in to projects from the outset, and could take a variety of forms. Celebrating the learners' success should be an ongoing process.

The project identified the importance of providing the necessary information, encouragement and support structures to assist learners to progress to more formal learning. First step learning may sometimes be an end in itself, and may not be viewed by all learners as a route to more formal education, qualifications or employment. However, it is important to ensure that learners do not become too dependent or reluctant to move on.

Partnerships may help add value to projects through sharing of expertise and resources, but projects may not always have the resources or capacity to meet all of their learners' needs.

In order to be successful over the long term, host organisations will need to **develop their capacity** through, for example, recruiting motivated and experienced staff, offering tailored training, ensuring that provision is made for project and budget management, and developing good working relationships with funding organisations.

1 Identifying the learner

There is no set definition of a 'hard-to-reach' learner. Those considered hard to reach can come from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds. However, research has shown that they are likely to be economically disadvantaged.

The concept of 'hard-to-reach' learners is often simply a way of describing lack of uptake by sections of the community who do not see the content, delivery style or location of provision as having anything to do with them. In many cases these groups have had poor educational experiences, often negative experiences of school, and have characteristically left the education system early with few qualifications. This has resulted in them being 'turned off' and reluctant to return to learning at a later stage.

'Hard-to-reach' learners may, however, also include those who have had some education but who have been unable to put their learning to use. As a result of this, they have become disillusioned by what they perceive as 'the education system'. This can include, for example, immigrants with language difficulties and the long-term unemployed.

'It is natural for human beings to be curious and long for knowledge, otherwise we would still be crawling around on all fours. The illustration is the happy, lively and curious youngster of 5 or 6 years old running to school filled with vigour, but as an 18-year-old returning home with no vision and disinterested in learning. What happened?'

Christine Chambay, Project Individual 2000

'The very fact that he [the learner] is looking for a direction and challenges ought to tell us that he has untapped qualities and abilities. It is our challenge, as the providers of learning opportunities, to engage him in something which is not a waste of his time.'

Susan Hanley-Place MBE,
The Flagship Project

The projects from the UK and Sweden that have been most successful in engaging learners are those that have not made assumptions about what learners want or need. As a result of this, in many instances the development of materials and delivery has become an ongoing process, involving interaction between the learners and providers.

Practitioners from both the UK and Sweden were keen to emphasise the value of non-formal learning. This has traditionally been learning that is perceived, in some quarters at least, as being of little value to the learner or to society. It was agreed that in many cases learning which may be considered to have few practical educational outcomes can have incredibly positive results, and that it is often the first step to more formal provision.

In most cases, activities that learners would not have associated with their previous experiences of education proved to be the most effective initial 'hooks'.

'If getting more women in work is the only thing that counts as a successful project, then perhaps we have not achieved complete success. But if you consider the accomplishments of our project in terms of our contribution to society, then we have succeeded. This is all a matter of how we value people.'

Juno Gyllander – Swedish Christian Education Association

The most successful projects engaged learners in a process through which they were led to discover and understand the relevance of learning to their everyday lives.

'The younger women kept working with the sewing. We had to find another way to get through to them. Their curiosity was strong, but more focused on the sewing machines, a new device for most of them. It became a 'learning by doing' situation because they realised after a time of slight chaos, misunderstandings, distorted curtains and crooked pants, that it might be a good point to learn to read instructions.'

Juno Gyllander – Swedish Christian Education Association

This path was often strewn with 'distorted curtains and crooked pants'. In all of the projects, the first steps towards learning were based upon a well-developed understanding of the learners and their individual needs. There were several common stages within this process.

Swedish Christian Education Association

This project works with immigrant women and focuses on the reasons that they remain unemployed. It began when the project leader, who formerly worked as a teacher, realised that many immigrant mothers were unable to help their children with their schoolwork because they had no real education themselves. Talking to the mothers revealed that many had lost hope of ever learning to read or write or find meaningful employment, and that they had very little self-confidence. The goals of the project therefore became to increase the participation of these women in society, to provide them with a wider social network, and to help them find work. From the beginning, the ideas and initiatives for the project developed from the women themselves.

The project started in autumn 1998 with eight women. Today, 55 women participate. Courses are run every day, based on a three-step system: women can simply drop in and visit, take part in study groups, or, for those with some education, there is a vocational programme on offer in partnership with a local adult education institution.

The project leader cites four key factors necessary for the success of the project:

- Creating a **unique plan** for each woman according to her personal situation.
- Developing **curiosity** and the hunger for learning.
- Maintaining the women's **motivation**.
- Including **joyfulness** in every aspect of the project.

Women are recruited by word of mouth rather than active advertising and there has been no problem with learner attendance.

Factors for success:

- Identifying target individuals.
- Not making assumptions about learners' needs.
- Listening to the learners.
- Starting with something relevant to them.
- Recognising the value of learning which may appear 'useless'.

2 Local involvement

When thinking about identifying and targeting the hardest to reach groups, the projects agreed that community involvement was essential. Consulting with representative community groups, including local employers, for example, allowed projects to raise local awareness and maintain a dialogue with learners.

'We worked through local Job Centres and community organisations to recruit learners – recruiting them into an initiative which was going to achieve a big result for the community rather than onto the usual kind of training scheme.'

Susan Hanley-Place MBE,
The Flagship Project

However, it was also agreed that working with individuals and agencies within the community was most successful and effective when it was an ongoing, two-way process. The projects felt that they had a lot to gain from developing external links, and that consultation should be regarded as more than simply a one-off exercise. Community collaboration not only enabled practitioners to develop appropriate strategies to reach their target groups at the recruitment stage, but allowed them to take account of different needs when planning and developing their curriculum. The value of ongoing community consultations and involvement in projects, through such

methods as having community representatives on management committees, was highlighted by a number of the projects.

From its establishment 18 years ago, Blackburn House has worked with employers to convince them that women can enter jobs at a high level. Local employers are involved in the development of the curriculum, and the equipment and technology that is used is based on the needs of local industry. This has been a constant priority.

Ethos

In order to involve the community successfully, however, it was important for the projects themselves to be clear about their objectives and values. The ability to gain the support and trust of those most in contact with the communities was regarded as crucial in widening participation and to help those hardest to reach into learning. To achieve this, all staff needed to understand and contribute to the ethos of the organisation and to project this image to those outside.

How to involve others in the community

The projects identified a number of methods that they found helpful when seeking to involve community groups in the development of their provision:



Fircroft College, Birmingham. Theatre director Polly Write doing a role play exercise

- Organising consultation meetings in small, welcoming venues.
- Avoiding implementing rigid, institution-led committee structures.
- Encouraging project staff to attend community meetings and events, to develop links and show interest and commitment to work taking place within the community.
- Having effective procedures for feeding back and implementing the views and suggestions received during the consultation process.
- Positive elements can also be drawn from suggestions that cannot be implemented. What is important is that people feel their views are being heard and taken into consideration.

Through working with employers, and demonstrating to them that its women students were capable of entering industry at a high level, Blackburn House has achieved considerable success in student progression to employment in local industry.

- Developing strong partnerships and links.
- Involving representatives from the community in the ongoing development of provision.

By engaging with others in the community, the projects were able to build confidence in their work and develop shared networks. Positive outcomes of this included opening up new opportunities to involve learners and to make provision more accessible to the target groups, as well as increasing opportunities for learners themselves.

Factors for success:

- Involving the community in an ongoing, two-way consultation process to plan and review learning provision.
- Attending community meetings and events.
- Projecting the values of the organisation, both internally and externally.
- Providing a welcoming, collaborative environment in which consultation and networking can develop.



Merseyside Heritage Project, Liverpool: Brigantine ZEBU. Student Ellie Heath up in the rigging

3 Recruiting the learner

Having taken the first step of identifying the learners and their areas of interest, the projects then began to involve them in appropriate programmes, letting them know what was on offer and how they might benefit.

Publicity and marketing

Communicating information about provision and services has traditionally been through written materials. This approach assumes a literate audience, and one that also knows where to find the information. The experience of the projects, however, showed that people from disadvantaged communities might have low literacy levels and often prefer or need verbal forms of communication.

Although each project took a different approach to recruitment, it became apparent that there were methods common to each of them. They were able to identify some practical and innovative publicity and marketing methods:

- Conducting market research.
- Developing links with local communities.
- Outreach. This could mean recruitment by knocking on doors, striking up conversations at the school gates or in social community settings.
- Actively networking with other agencies, individuals and non-traditional places of learning.
- Generating imaginative publicity through different types of media (television, radio, newspapers, and so on).
- Holding open days and taster sessions.

'The Flagship Project recruits about half of its committed learners from people who read the ship's notice-board on the quay. Sometimes they've seen her on TV already and have gone to Albert Dock to size it up for themselves. Once they've come aboard, they can either choose to be a visitor shown round the ship, or to return to join in.'

Susan Hanley-Place MBE,
The Flagship Project

These allow the potential learner to 'have a go' without any commitment in an informal environment.

The following enablers were also found to be a crucial part of the marketing process.

- **Childcare.** The provision of free childcare was a definite incentive when attracting women from disenfranchised groups, without which many of them were unable to participate.
- **Paying the learners' costs.** In the first instance, meeting the learners' expenses – for childcare, travel expenses and sometimes other forms of support like meals – often proved to be the 'hook' the learner needed.
- **Free food.** Healthy living was also found to be an incentive to come to learn. In some instances the individuals were motivated if centres provided free food.

The 'right' people

A recurrent theme in both British and Swedish practice was employing the 'right' people. This was found to be a key strategy in engaging hard-to-reach communities. Overall there were several common factors that defined the 'right' person. Projects agreed that, ideally, the right people were:

- **Representative.** The right people were often found to have a background that reflected the experiences of the target learners, to be positive, engaging and enthusiastic, and to have a good understanding of the issues specific to the target group.

'Communities that we seek to reach must be reflected in the people doing the recruitment and teaching. It is vital to identify and represent them'

Clare Dove, Blackburn House

Botkyrka Council's Project Individual 2000 aims to represent different demographic and occupational groups in its staff, in order to offer those who might be interested in participating the opportunity to talk to someone with whom they can identify.

- **Enthusiastic.** Enthusiasm is contagious.
- **Experienced.** A past learner, or someone with a successful record of recruiting learners, was often found to be the best advocate.
- It was also valuable if the first point of contact within the learning environment

Blackburn House employs approximately 70 staff, of whom around 50 per cent are ex-students. This is college policy. It is important that the women that the college targets as learners are reflected in its personnel at every level.

could feed the potential learner into an effective assessment and advice system.

Taking learning to the learner

In some instances, it was felt that the barriers were so severe that outreach was the only effective method of recruitment. Outreach work involved taking 'tailor-made' courses and services into local communities and removing initial barriers such as lack of childcare and lack of language support. Providing learning in accessible and familiar venues also helped engage people who would not normally think of entering a formal learning environment. The effectiveness of outreach depended not only on the resources available for it, but also on the qualities and skills of the outreach workers and the ability to work within a

During the course of this project it emerged that outreach practices are much more developed in the UK than in Sweden. In the UK, outreach is often rolled out by well-established and equipped voluntary organisations who have significant experience of taking services to hard-to-reach groups. In Sweden, volunteering is a new concept and therefore very rare. Unemployed people who take part in such activities must always be directed to a specific project as a labour market measure by the employment services, otherwise they run the risk of losing their unemployment benefit.

Liverpool Community College recently successfully engaged with a group of travellers that had been isolated for 25 years. This group had severe basic skills needs and social problems. Initially, a tutor from the college visited their caravans and, as a result, two of the students now attend college twice a week to learn basic skills. Attracting members of this target group has been a breakthrough for the college.



Norfolk County Council Reminiscence and Learning project

fairly flexible funding mechanism, which allows a quick response to the needs of the learners.

Environment

A positive, enabling learning environment was seen to be a crucial factor in the learner's decision about whether to take up the opportunities on offer. Many people within groups considered 'hard to reach' had had poor educational experiences and had associated traditional places of learning with these negative feelings. Although each project addressed the issue from a different perspective, there were recurrent themes:

- Classes and initial information sessions were organised in locations accessible to the target group.
- Every effort was made to create a welcoming and enabling learning environment in which all staff had a role in ensuring that positive messages were conveyed to the learners.

'Our organisation is based in a community building instead of an institution, as the individuals that the centre is trying to attract would be put off by the stigma associated with a more formal setting.'

Tony Gordon, Blackburn House

- Creating a safe and enabling environment that does not have any of the stigmata more commonly attached to traditional places of learning involved a degree of management and planning.
- High-quality surroundings created a sense of personal pride amongst the learners. It was observed that making the individual feel valued had a positive impact upon their learning experience.
- However, it was also recognised that for some learners a classroom can be an inhibiting learning environment, and that it can be effective to use other locations imaginatively.

'The drop-in-study centres are equipped with the best furniture and equipment in the college, to make them attractive to learners and to stand as a symbol of excellence. For years, adult basic education received the left-overs from mainstream provision and a statement was needed to show that all students receive the same service and that there is a quality standard throughout the college.'

Maureen Mellor,
Liverpool Community College

'The Flagship Project's learning environment is far removed from the classroom. The main learning environment is on board the historic sailing ship which the learners are rebuilding. A project day might encompass learning from books or videos followed by putting what they have just learned into action 50ft up in the rigging. Then the reflective learning element, where the days achievements are discussed and the next learning objectives set, might equally take place round the ships wood-burning stove, or in the pub on the quayside, as pints mingle with textbooks on the table.'

Geoff Hanley, The Flagship Project

Ethos

It was agreed that it was the responsibility of everyone working within an organisation to ensure that the right messages were conveyed to the learners. This was felt to be especially important when dealing with those likely to be wary about returning to learning and who may have had previous negative experiences. For providers to recruit these learners meant projecting an ethos of 'positive diversity'.

- By listening to the learners, the projects were able to be reflective and responsive to the learners' needs.
- All of the projects sought to recognise and celebrate cultural differences.
- By encouraging a sense of ownership and involvement in the development of the project, learners were more effectively recruited and retained.
- Finally, projects adopted a positive attitude, turning mistakes into experiences that helped them to find out what worked and what did not.

The Flagship Project in Liverpool is rebuilding the historic square-rigged sailing ship *ZEBU* to be a Community Flagship. It has tapped into the local passion for heritage and history (over 70 per cent of local people have seafaring in their recent family history), and used it to involve the learners in recreating their community identity. The Project is now a beacon of good and innovative practice. The "course curriculum" consists of the learners actually rebuilding the Flagship, which had previously circumnavigated the world as the Adventure Flagship of Operation Raleigh during the 1980s.

This setting in the heart of the community has provided learners with respect and wider social support, creating a learning environment within which they share life experiences, adjust social roles and develop an appreciation of diversity.

So far, **Liverpool Community College** has been unable to recruit parents of young offenders. Parents have been referred to the college by the courts on a voluntary basis, which means that they do not have to attend classes. The college is still viewed with suspicion by this group as it has associations with school and authority. The courses, which deal with parenting skills, are also seen to reflect badly on them as parents. In retrospect, the college feels that a more effective way of hooking the parents would have been to approach the topic through other means that would not put into question their ability as parents.

Granby Residents' Association

is one of the organisations supported by NorthWest 1. The Association was set up to stop the demolition of their community and to rebuild and regenerate the local economy.

Granby consists of a mix of private, council owned and housing association properties in community-sized streets and once housed 148 shops by comparison to the 10 trading today, illustrating the poverty within the area.

The proposal to demolish was presented in 1994 and was opposed by the residents who proceeded to set up a campaign, developing ideas about what they wanted from the community, and the Association was born.

The Association has set up a community market, and has further plans to set up a community garden and a centre within the local school with a view to creating jobs and regenerating the area.

The project has had no direct funding and is solely supported by volunteers. From this year the Council will provide money for one full time and two part time workers and they have managed to secure free rooms for accommodation.

People have begun to move back to the area, although the problem remains that many of the residents are highly skilled but are unable to find jobs. NorthWest 1 has paid for tutors to come and train members of the community in IT, helping them to produce newsletters and other literature. Future plans for the association include the development of their market as a co-operative, with a view to helping them to become an independent agency.

Word of mouth

The project participants from both Sweden and the UK agreed that, ultimately, the most effective way of recruiting non-participants was by 'word of mouth'.

'I don't actively seek needy people. The women have to come here by their own free will. Recruiting new women to the programme has been done by proven results rather than through advertising. In other words by word of mouth.'

Juno Gyllander, Swedish Christian Education Association

'If your project doesn't travel via word of mouth, then the likelihood is that it isn't a very good project.'

Susan Hanley-Place MBE,
The Flagship Project

Factors for success:

- Developing an effective publicity and marketing strategy.
- Being aware of crucial enablers, such as childcare, and building these into the strategy.
- Employing the 'right' people.
- Building good partnerships.
- Taking the learning to the learner.
- Creating an appropriate learning environment.
- Being aware of the importance of a positive ethos.



Beat Dis Arts music project, The Tabernacle, Notting Hill, London. Working on turntables in the studio and learning to use mixing desks

4 Access and support

During focus group discussions it became apparent that there were various commonalities to be found across both Sweden and the UK in terms of access and support. Providers agreed that to create an effective and enabling environment went further than merely making provision externally accessible, rather it was an ongoing process that required a sound internal support structure.

Though each project employed varying methods in order to support their learners, they did so with common purpose and shared values:

- To enable all learners to have equal access to their chosen curriculum.
- To provide support for learners with specific learning needs.
- To help learners to progress and achieve.
- To encourage learner progression not only between programmes, but into more formal education and training.

When addressing issues of access and support for learners, one of the most critical enabling factors for groups of this nature is practical support for learning. In other words, making sure that there are practical arrangements and guidance in place to allow learners to attend – and to continue attending. This can come in the guise of:

- Childcare provision. Although overall it was agreed that childcare was crucial in terms of support for the learner, for particular women, cultural issues often affected the way in which it was provided. For example, not all heritages and communities like to leave their children in a crèche.

On 1 July 2001, municipalities will become liable to offer places to pre-school or in a home day-care nursery, to children between one and five years old whose parents are unemployed. Today, this obligation extends to children whose parents are gainfully employed or who are studying.

Childcare in Sweden, Skolverket (National Board of Education) web site

Experience illustrated that supporting learners involved being aware of, and responsive to, not only individual needs but also the wider cultural issues affecting them. In some cases, this could be as simple as people being uncomfortable accepting money with which to fund their childcare. In other instances, the learners' religious or cultural beliefs might not make it possible for them to leave their children in an environment where there might be, for example, a male carer. This could be assisted by:

- Payment of transport costs or contributions.
- Help with books, equipment, lunches or even appropriate clothes.
- Carer support for those who have domestic responsibilities outside of childcare.
- Language support. Language is often a key barrier to participation; interpreters can offer opportunities to groups that would otherwise be overlooked.
- Basic skills support.

'In Sweden, money is provided to cover childcare costs so that women can study. The problem with this system is that women feel that they have to 'beg' for financial assistance once a month. This process could be facilitated if a monthly cheque were sent to them, as the money would feel more like a wage and less like charity. Although this may seem like more of an enlightened approach than that of the UK, in order for the individual to receive welfare money they must first be involved in a project. This leads to low motivation within projects because those participating are there only to secure the money. The result is that it is far more difficult to find out what the learner really wants and needs.'

Juno Gyllander, Swedish Christian Education Association

'Some support for learners was identified as being very obvious such as childcare or transport. Other support was more sensitive to individual circumstances or learning experiences whilst some was more covert but nevertheless vital. This included things such as training front line staff in cultural and disability awareness or providing signage in different languages.'

Jan Eldred, Voices of Practitioners:
Good Practice in Adult and
Community Learning

■ **State support.** State funding, although existing in both the UK and Sweden, was found to be significantly different at both a systemic level and also at the point of delivery. It seemed that Sweden had integrated learner-driven adult education into its educational constitution, whereas the UK approach to financial support was more provider-focused.

'All activities should promote democratic forms of work and should focus on the people taking part and their expectations.'

Swedish Adult Education Ordinance 1998: 973

In Sweden, various forms of study assistance are available for students to finance their studies. The most advantageous study support for most students is the special education grant (UBS), primarily intended for unemployed adults who have not completed a three-year upper secondary education programme and who intend to study at compulsory or upper secondary school level. Adults aged 25 to 55 can apply for the grant, which is equivalent to unemployment benefit and payable for up to one year. Other forms of study support are special adult study assistance for the unemployed (svuxa), special adult study assistance (svux) and study grants. These are primarily intended for students within Higher Education, but also for those studying elementary or upper-secondary level education.

For more information, see Appendix 1.

Focus group discussion highlighted the fact that Sweden has a very favourable system of study assistance available to adults in formal studies, but it seems that there are rather restrictive financial conditions when it comes to taking part in informal learning projects or activities not initiated and approved by the formal school system or the employment service. The system of voluntary work during periods of unemployment does not exist in Sweden and projects stated that it is hard to do something that was not initiated from the employment service or social service, which contrasted to the experiences from the UK.

It was felt that whilst the UK may have a less favourable student grant system for formal studies, it does have a more generous financial system which enables people to continue receiving state benefits during periods in learning projects or voluntary work undertaken while looking for employment, or while out of the labour market. Sweden also provides a form of social benefit until a place within either a project or some form of employment is secured.

Advice and guidance

Focus group discussions also highlighted the importance of personal guidance for 'hard-to-reach' learners who had been out of learning for some time. In many cases, those who returned to learning, and those who successfully moved from an informal to a formal learning programme, had benefited from information, advice and guidance provided locally. All the projects agreed, however, that guidance was important not only at the beginning of the learning programme, but throughout the learning experience.

The projects cited a number of key factors for the provision of advice and guidance:

- The importance of impartial advice and guidance, for giving confidence to the learners and helping them to make the most appropriate choices for them.
- The inclusion of individual study plans, setting goals and raising aspirations, can help to support study.
- Monitoring the quality of guidance that other organisations offer on a project's behalf: those who offer guidance should enthuse potential learners about the opportunities on offer, but some may have other agendas which may not be appropriate.
- Making it clear to the learners from the outset that advice and guidance will always be there for them throughout their learning experience.

'In Sweden there are 'Infoteks', centres with strong links to Job Centres which refer learners on to other institutions.

'Infotek' is the name for the other form of information centre, where people can go to look for jobs. These centres employ five or six impartial employees who offer guidance, counselling and educational advice. These centres have not been as successful as hoped, as people are generally unhappy about having to visit a Job Centre.

In Norrköping there is a special 'knowledge shop' for this purpose. The Union employs these people specifically to give information and advice, and they are not linked to any project.

There are plans to build a larger and co-ordinated support and information centre with the labour market office. These plans include counselling, validation, evaluation and drop-in study opportunities.'

Lars-Åke Edvardsson,
Municipality of Norrköping

In Sweden there is an increased emphasis on the importance of guidance. Under the Adult Education Initiative, qualified guidance before and during studies is intended to ensure that everyone is in an equal position to make well-founded choices. Guidance results in an individual study plan, which specifies what the student aims to achieve and the ways in which they can best achieve them. The plan is drawn up according to previous education and assessments about skills and knowledge and can be revised if necessary. Counselling and vocational guidance is a municipal responsibility regulated in the Act of

Education. Guidance staff have the task of providing all students in formal adult education at basic and upper secondary school level with instruction, information and guidance on various educational and vocational opportunities.

It was agreed that one of the most effective (although perhaps in every case not the most practical) scheme for recruiting learners was one run in Sweden, in which unemployed people were contacted on the telephone by counsellors recruited through local TUCs. This provided the opportunity for the counsellors to discuss options for learning and provide benefits advice.

Norrköping's 'knowledge shop' employed four people who dedicated time to phoning around all of the unemployed people within the area to try to stimulate their interest in adult education. This was well received and effective. These individuals also undertook a supportive role by going out into the community to visit people in their homes, work, libraries and other public places.

In the UK, the Government is taking action to ensure that good quality information, advice and guidance (IAG) is available to adults. Learndirect, the first national helpline to provide information and advice about learning, was established in 1999 and there are plans to extend the service through the University for Industry. In 1999 the IAG for Adults Programme was introduced, which since April 2001 has been the responsibility of the Learning and Skills Council. There are now 75 local IAG

Partnerships in place across England. It is intended that these partnerships will bring together local guidance providers to produce significant improvements in the quality and coverage of local services. Providers will be required to comply with relevant quality standards in the delivery of guidance services, but beyond this there is no desire on the part of the government to impose a uniform model.

Counselling

It was agreed that although work and learning advice and guidance was important, this was not the only means of support. Counselling in support of all areas of life helped many individuals and assisted the development of a more holistic approach to learning. This 'all-round' support, focusing on the learner as a whole individual, is one of the distinctive features of community-based learning.

Mentoring

Several projects found mentors or personal tutors to be an important source of support for the learner, both on a personal and academic level. They were found to be especially effective when the mentor was from a similar background to the learner.

Mentorship is a rather new form of stimulating and motivating support in Sweden. Since the start of the National Adult Initiative it has been practiced with great success in a number of places, especially Botkyrka.

'The mentorship arises from the development of a relationship between the individual and the informer/mentor/study counsellor, the purpose of which is to prevent people dropping out. At the same time this helps the individual to move to the next stage.'

Christine Chambay,
Individual 2000 Project

Factors for success:

- Providing tailored support.
- Providing both practical and personal support. For example, childcare, advice, guidance and counselling.
- Being aware of the individual needs of the learner. Taking into account cultural and language needs.



Community Links, Canning Town, London. Steve Koullapsis and Shelley Carr at work in Canning Town Public Hall

5 Retaining the learner

After the initial stages of recruitment and support, the projects addressed the wider issues of learner involvement and retention. Both the Swedish and UK projects agreed that having recruited learners successfully it was important to retain their interest and to continue to develop and tailor learner support as an ongoing process.

Beyond the initial support used to encourage potential learners to become involved, the projects felt that it was necessary to look at the immediate learning environment and to tailor the project in such a way as to encourage a sense of ownership at every stage of the learners' development. To support this, the projects utilised a variety of methods, ranging from tangible support mechanisms, as mentioned in the previous section, to more targeted individual and societal approaches.

Factors to aid retention included:

- **Location.** Ensuring that the learning location was pleasant and of good quality was an important way of building the learners' confidence and sense of self worth.
- **Safe environment.** Learners were more likely to be at ease if they felt that they were learning in a safe environment
- **Tutors as role models.** The most effective tutors were in touch with the learners, and therefore better able to anticipate any problems and deal with them before they occurred.
- **Support for cultural issues.** Taking into account the cultural needs of the learners.

- **Equal opportunities.** Maintaining an ethos that celebrates diversity.
- **Feedback from students.** This gave providers a greater understanding of their learners, and enabled them to develop the most effective service for them.
- **Sense of self.** Creating a sense of empowerment for the learners was considered very important. This was achieved by providing continued support and guidance.
- **Rising to a challenge and achieving a goal.** This was often found to be the best way of motivating learners. Goals were set to suit individuals and their achievements were recognised.
- **Celebrating success quickly.** When achievements were recognised and celebrated early on, learners gained confidence and were encouraged to stay with their programmes.
- **Sense of community.** A sense of belonging within a community was a key factor in retaining learners. Once people felt a part of something larger they were less likely to abandon their course of study.

By being aware of and understanding the wider needs of their learners, the projects were best able not only to retain learners but to develop their untapped potential.

6 Delivery of learning

The design and development of the curriculum was a further important element in retaining and supporting the progress of the learners.

The projects identified several factors that they considered necessary for the successful delivery of their programmes.

Listen to the learner

The experience from the UK and Sweden showed that learning programmes for ‘hard-to-reach’ groups work best when the content was demand-led and based on what the learners themselves were interested in. For each of the projects, developing an enabling curriculum meant incorporating the life experiences, history, contributions and perspectives of all students in the content and delivery of each subject area. This required an understanding of the learners that could only be gained by listening to them.

Materials

It was felt that the materials used should be sensitive to the learners’ needs. This meant taking into account issues such as language, cultural or literacy needs when planning the development and use of materials. Projects agreed that having teaching materials in the right format for the learners (for example tapes, large lettering or videos) showed understanding of what the individual learners wanted and what they could do, and helped to create a non-threatening environment.

‘We found that children’s Bible was a useful help with the language training. They [immigrant women] were familiar with the well-known stories in their own language and could therefore follow the teaching.’

Juno Gyllander, Swedish Christian Education Association

Be aware of different learning styles

Everyone agreed that ‘hard-to-reach’ does not necessarily mean ‘finds it hard to learn’. Rather, learners may simply need to learn in a different way from the traditional methodology.

Successful responses to the need to develop an effective approach to different learning styles included:

- Breaking away from using ‘written work’ as the medium to demonstrate understanding. It was felt important to recognise that written literacy excludes many ‘hard-to-reach’ learners.
- Focusing on and valuing experiential learning. Many people learn by hands-on practice.
- Dialogue and team learning. Most people who have not consciously engaged in learning for some years need to regain confidence in their ability to learn and contribute. Putting learners in a team context where they can share learning achievements, contribute and share competencies within the team, supports the individual.

The Woodwork Project

The Woodwork Project is one of several projects run by ABF Norrköping, (WEA) Sweden, to help unemployed Swedes and immigrants enter employment or adult education.

Roger Källs, Project Leader:

'When one plans a project the past experiences of the participants have to be considered. Most have had bad school experiences – they feel like failures. They are not interested in the old-fashioned school system where teachers dictated and students sat quietly taking notes. Participants often tell me that they only want to work – 'I may not be very good at the Swedish language but I'm a hell of a carpenter'.

So we work out a project where participants can learn Swedish, computer skills, social skills and job-seeking skills in a joyful way whilst learning how to learn. They discuss learning styles to find out how each individually learns but also work in teams. What is important is that they work with their hands using the theoretical ideas they have worked out.

We have used Problem-Based Learning (PBL), in which the interests of the learners and their questions are used as the basis for the learning, as our method of working and it has been successful. However, some participants often feel more secure if they are told the answers. A combination of both methods helps learners to develop initiative and co-operation whilst retaining a sense of order.

We know that it is not easy to take responsibility for your own education and training if you have not been allowed to earlier. It is important to discuss different learning styles with the learners and explain why we have adopted PBL.'

For many individuals, particularly those who had had bad experiences within the formal education system, experiential learning, through a variety of styles, was often more effective than more structured approaches.

'Mixing theory and practice could be one way of solving the situation. If theory becomes reality and knowledge, that is, knowledge which is usable and beneficial, it will motivate studying. Our method is based upon the participants' own questions and answers. This andragogy is our own version of Problem-Based Learning.'

Roger Källs, The Woodwork Project

Prior learning experiences and achievement

Experiences from the projects demonstrated the value of identifying and reflecting on learners' prior achievements; especially learning which had taken place in non-educational environments. This enabled the learner to develop a sense of value regarding their knowledge, whether it be a recognised qualification or an informal experience. This gave the learner a heightened sense of individual empowerment and motivation and enough confidence to be able to direct their learning.

A man at retirement age spent his working life in traditional manual occupations. He was depressed and becoming disabled. Having always classed himself as an active working man he felt he was 'on the scrapheap'. There is not a word in the archives of examination boards to demonstrate his abilities. Yet he has a range of impressive practical skills... He is a mine of information on all sorts of topics such as horticulture, ornithology and woodworking. He is a resource which the community has not yet learned how to use.

*Case study of a learner from
The Flagship Project*

'After encouraging them [women learners] to apply for all kinds of jobs, we found out that a good education from their home countries didn't help. They never even got answers from their applications.'

Juno Gyllander, Swedish Christian
Education Association

Factors for success:

- Listening to the learner.
- Developing materials sensitive to the learner.
- Recognising individual learning styles.
- Encouraging recognition of prior learning experiences and achievements.



CEDAR/North Tyneside East Howden Community Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne. Members of the local community improve their carpentry skills

7 Measuring and recording achievement

Accreditation has long been the signifier of quality and achievement. In the area of adult community education, however, alternative methods have been employed as indicators of learner progression. It was generally felt by the projects that through the employment of other methods of recording and gauging achievement, individuals who had suffered poor educational experiences were more likely to find the confidence to progress. It was agreed that, generally speaking, people who have had poor experiences do not respond well to formal assessment as it makes them feel that they are being 'tested' in some way. This reinforces negative associations with education.

Helping learners to define their own levels of quality and expected outcomes was seen to aid progression, and the celebration of every successful stage of the learning experience helped to map out not only the distance travelled by the learner but also the path ahead. Even through the simplest methods of recording achievement, the learner was better able to gauge not only how far they

Liverpool Community College has developed 'Learners' Voice' postcards as a way of measuring learning achievement. These simple cards provide learners with checkboxes for recording their learning. It is important not to scare students off with paperwork, and this method has proved highly successful in allowing them to note their achievements in an easy and imaginative way.

wanted their experience to take them, but also to illuminate other possible routes.

Although qualifications were seen to be desirable in terms of employment, the projects agreed that learners needed to be offered the opportunity to define their own learning objectives. However, everyone agreed that ongoing assessment was important in encouraging learners and tutors to see that progress towards learning goals was being achieved.

'Because the ship and her workshop are the learning location, the learner is constantly surrounded by the results of their learning and work, whereas in a classroom a subject is a closed file once it has been dealt with. This means that the learner is in a position to constantly re-appraise their work, update information gained and the skills learned. This achieves significantly better assimilation and levels of competence than conventional learning routes.'

Susan Hanley-Place MBE,
The Flagship Project

In recent years, in both Sweden and the UK, efforts have been made to develop ways to recognise and validate informal learning so that traditional non-participants in further education or training, and those for whom qualifications are not a key objective, are not excluded from the benefits of having their experiences recognised.

'In Sweden, methodologies and systems for validating and accrediting non-formal learning have been introduced through the National Initiative for Adult Education during the last four years. Validation is viewed as a way of shortening studies, but most of all as an effective instrument in making the move to formal studies less dramatic, increasing self-confidence and strengthening motivation.'

Elisabet Loberg, Skolverket

Recording achievement (possible alternatives to accreditation)

Some suggestions from focus group discussions:

- Feedback sheets
- Diaries
- Video, photographs, web pages
- Group newsletters
- Celebration events.

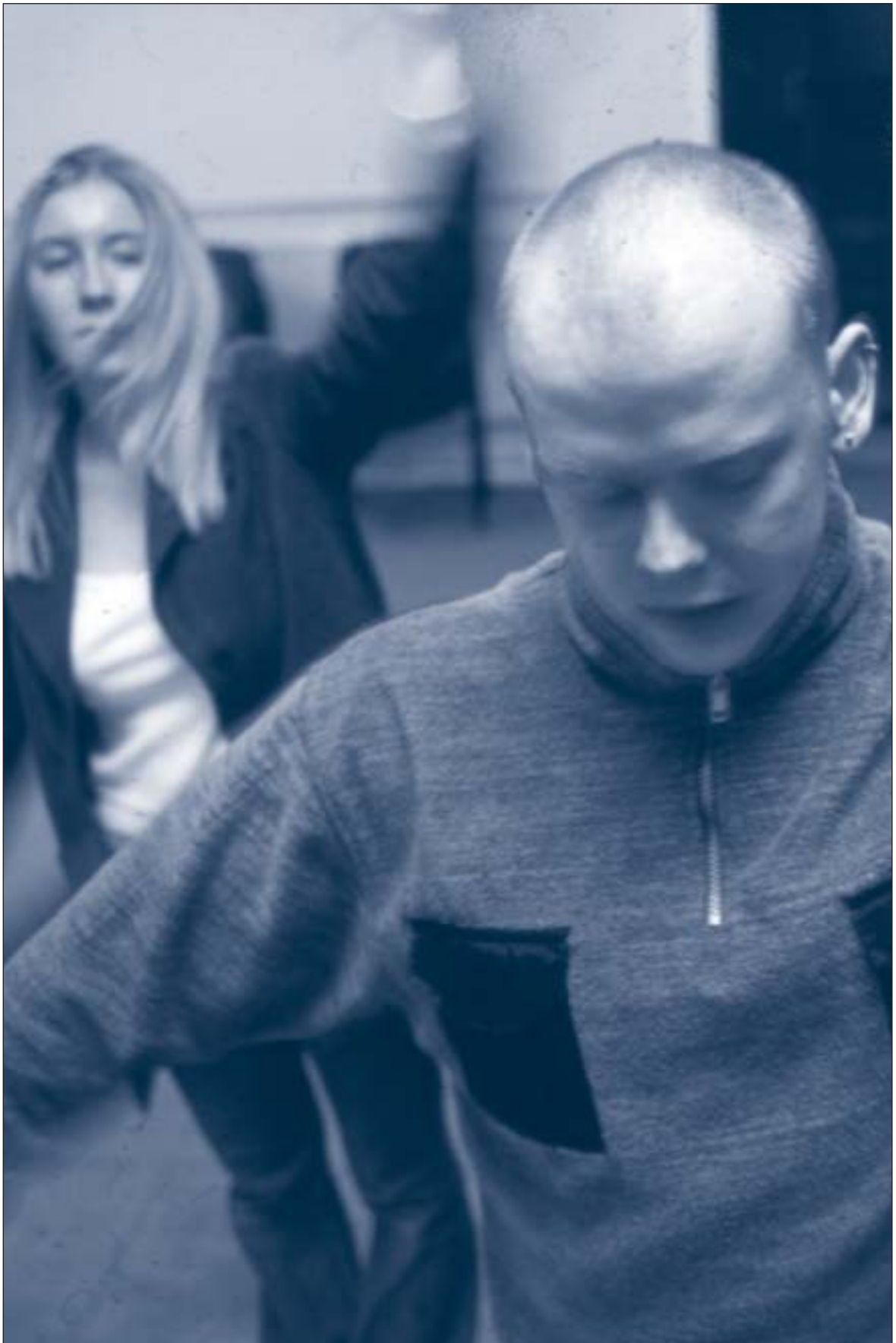
By taking these informal approaches to recognising and recording achievement, learners felt less threatened than had the process been more formal or reminiscent of prior, possibly negative, educational experiences.

There are no certificates or grades in Folk High Schools, as this would force the schools to work according to pre-set curricula and timetables which would not be in harmony with the way they operate.

Sweden 2000: A knowledge society

Factors for success:

- Offering alternatives to accreditation, dependent on the learner's needs and desires.
- Alternative methods of recording achievement. For example, Learners' Voice postcards.
- Celebrating successes, as an ongoing process.
- Not being prescriptive about outcomes.
- Helping learners to define their own levels of quality and expected outcomes.



PROMIS Theatre project, Sheffield. Dancers in a warm-up session

8 Outcomes and progression routes

Each of the projects had their own mechanisms for enabling and aiding learner progression.

In the context of adult learning, progression can mean several things: personal progression, social progression, economic progression and educational progression. These frequently overlap.

*Veronica McGivney,
Informal Learning in the Community*

None of the projects had the same predicted outcomes in mind and all of them steered away from being too prescriptive. The overall consensus was that projects that valued the learners and tailored learning to them were conducive to learner progression. In this context, progression was not seen merely as academic or employment-related, although in some cases this was a desired outcome. There were other indicators of learner progression. The following text illustrates such forms of progression and supports the experience of the projects overall:

Where do learners go?

There is often an assumption that all learners are motivated to progress as a means of securing employment and that all learning is qualification-driven. There is, however, a need not to define outcomes too narrowly. All projects agreed that the most important outcomes for the learner were wider, and that these should be defined by the learners themselves. For learners to be able to recognise their own needs and

'Outcomes of the project have included fewer health problems among participants, women who are now able to handle everyday situations without translators, and more confident and active mothers.'

Juno Gyllander, Swedish Christian Education Association

- Significantly increased knowledge and self-esteem.
- Development of understanding.
- Improved personal and social skills.
- New practical skills.
- Greater personal autonomy.

*Veronica McGivney,
Informal Learning in the Community*

potential is often a long process, during which they may not even recognise themselves as 'learners'. It was felt that it was important for the projects to provide information, encouragement and good support structures, without being prescriptive about outcomes.

The projects identified the following informal outcomes:

- Notable increase in learner confidence.
- Greater awareness of their existing skills.
- Taking steps to gain employment.
- Involvement in the community ('community champions').
- Progression to other learning.

These were felt to be as valid, if not more so, as formal educational outcomes.

'The most important outcome for all learners is a change in attitudes to work, achievement, teamwork, personal responsibility, complex learning skills, and the gaining of personal confidence to tackle new activities and to learn about new things.'

Susan Hanley-Place MBE,
The Flagship Project

However, there was a consensus that although the ultimate objective may be educational progression or employment, this is not to say that the learning experience itself has any less value should this not be the outcome. In many cases, the learner objectives may differ from those of the provider and in all cases the learner should be supported in mapping their own objectives. The projects felt that all learning was valuable, and in some cases the very fact that individuals considered 'hard-to-reach' have chosen to re-involve themselves in learning is a success story in itself.

'The Project did not set out to put learners into jobs, but it achieved significantly in this area by increasing their employability. Most of the learners who went on to take up employment found work in new occupational areas, showing that they had become able to confidently assume a new identity and apply their new confidence in unfamiliar areas.'

Susan Hanley-Place MBE,
The Flagship Project

In some cases, in fact, projects found that placing the onus on qualifications and 'hard' outcomes could have a regressive or even detrimental effect on the progression of the learner. Learner confidence, once undermined, may be irretrievable.

Moving learners on

Focus group discussions also highlighted issues surrounding learner dependency. This was an area that necessitated proactive action on the part of the project managers and tutors, in that the learners should be monitored and encouraged not to become stagnant or reliant on the project, but to continually broaden their horizons.

'Contact with the 'outside world' (the Employment Office, Social Welfare and the politicians) is also my responsibility. Every participant has a 'personal action plan', so as often as possible we try to arrange three-party meetings (the participant, his/her officer and I) where we do everything we can to help the person to find a job or start studying again.'

Roger Källs, The Woodwork Project

It was felt that a crucial factor in projects being able to move their learners on was having adequate support for tutors. Success in encouraging learner progression was often a result of the fact that the staff working with learners had been encouraged and empowered to see themselves as facilitators. This required them to have the support of their managers and organisations. If tutors felt valued and supported in their work they were more likely to feel confident about helping their learners to move on. Equally, learners are increasingly likely to progress if well supported and encouraged. Good support structures were vital in ensuring the learner's motivation and progression.

Moving learners on could also involve progression within the projects.

'Our Project has one funded Project Leader, based on the Flagship, but we have progressed into other areas of activity by enabling learners to become Learning Team Leaders themselves. We are now also looking at a scenario where a core group of Flagship Learners take on the responsibility for crewing the Ship as an Academy at Sea, passing on their experiences, skills and learning team ethos to much larger groups of new learners. We have already funded one of our long-term learners as team leader for a new intake of young learners. We are looking to expand our field of operations to develop our people as a wider community resource, whilst continuing to provide them with team support for their aspirations and achievements.'

Susan Hanley-Place MBE,
The Flagship Project

'Tracking' the learner

Projects were aware of the value of 'tracking' their learners, so as to gather evidence of the impact of their work, in order to show to the local community, potential learners and funders.

However, this activity was underdeveloped, as there are very few formalised methods, and the resulting data is often unreliable. There is an issue surrounding funding routes, as the projects' sustainability is often dependent on being

able to prove that informal community-based learning leads to progression and more formal accreditation. Generally speaking, the projects that had most success in tracking their learners were those who developed and maintained close relationships with them. This is something that lends itself comfortably to a community-based environment, as results were generally achieved through community workers and outreach workers, and delivered in an anecdotal manner rather than via means of quantifiable data.

Botkyra Council's Individual 2000 Project uses reunions and social activities to encourage ex-learners to return and keep in touch, and this helps to track where they had moved on to.

Factors for success:

- Avoiding defining outcomes too narrowly.
- The importance of providing information, encouragement and good support structures in order to enable progression to more formal learning.
- However, equally, recognising the value of first step learning for its own sake, rather than as a route to more formal education, qualifications or employment.
- Being aware of the need to ensure that learners do not become too dependent or reluctant to move on.
- The importance of tracking learner progression.

9 Monitoring and evaluation

The projects continually reinforced the importance of having in place structures for monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes. It was agreed that there was a need to have a set of clear objectives from the start of the project, in order to have a point of reference from which to gauge the distance travelled and achievements made. Overall, it was felt that a process of reflection, and the ability to draw out lessons from both positive and negative experiences, was crucial to the sustainability and development of the projects in addition to providing vital evidence for funders.

The projects identified a number of reasons why monitoring and evaluation were important to them. They discussed the benefits to be gained by both project managers and tutors, as well as for the development of the project as a whole. These included:

- Allowing them to discover which groups were not being attracted by the provision on offer, and which groups were.
- Enabling them to receive feedback from learners about the provision offered and make improvements.
- Providing them with information to help with management decisions. For example, decisions about how provision should be organised, priorities for resourcing provision, and so on.
- Building understanding within partnerships.

However, monitoring and evaluation activities were often also built into funding requirements. Funders generally require

projects to undertake monitoring and evaluation for the following reasons:

- To ensure that funding is being appropriately spent.
- To ensure that promised outcomes are delivered.
- To enable them to provide effective support to the projects.
- To identify issues and themes for the development of future funding streams.

Formative, summative and 'the unexpected'

Monitoring and evaluation can take several forms. The projects employed a number of methods, including:

- Learner forums
- Focus groups
- Surveys and questionnaires
- Observation.

Generally, the projects spoke of a variety of methods of evaluation. These can be divided into two distinct methods. In the first of these, projects addressed evaluation through means of a continuous and ongoing assessment, which was built in at the outset. This can be described as 'formative' evaluation. Another method discussed was the way in which many of the projects reflected upon their progress in a retrospective manner of evaluation, and pinpointed key benchmarks along the way. This can be described as 'summative' evaluation.

A common factor amongst successful projects was the way in which they utilised 'the unexpected'. It was agreed that sometimes goalposts change and the

'What were our results after evaluating our health program? We found that the women are more lively and spirited, and the use of medicine and trips to the doctor have severely decreased.'

Juno Gyllander, Swedish Christian Education Association

outcomes, although unplanned, could be equally, if not more, positive as those intended as long the original objectives were met. This might alter the outcomes and methodologies of future phases of the project.

Involving the learners

The projects felt that learners needed to be involved in the process of monitoring and evaluation, and that it should be part of their overall learning experience. Learner feedback was seen as crucial to ensuring that the provision on offer met their needs and to ensure that efforts were made towards continuous improvement. Methods for involving the learners varied among the projects, and different methods were used at different stages according to the activities undertaken. However, all were keen to reflect on achievements (no matter how small), to celebrate successes, but also change and amend programmes if necessary.

The most effective methods of gathering learners' opinions were those they perceived as 'fun'; for example, by using video, audiotape, or conducting group discussions. Furthermore, asking learners for their ideas of how to monitor and evaluate their experience made them feel a valued part of the process and helped to draw out their feelings and perceptions.

Collecting evidence of impact

By developing structures for monitoring and evaluation, projects were also able to gather evidence of their success. This was useful not only for their own information, but also for informing future provision and potential learners and funders. Being able to illustrate that projects were making a difference increased the confidence of funders and local communities and provided potential learners with examples of the positive outcomes to be gained by participating.

'Evidence' can include a wide range of things. For example:

- 'Learners' voices'. The views and testimonies of the learners themselves.
- Impact on the community. For example, the setting up of interest groups as a result of project work, learners becoming ambassadors for the community etc.
- Physical outcomes. For example, the production of a book or CD-ROM.
- Figures for recruitment, retention and accreditation.
- Information on learner progression.

Factors for success:

- Building-in monitoring and evaluation from the outset.
- Being imaginative with methods of recording evidence.
- Involving the learners (making it fun!).
- Embracing the unexpected.
- Building in flexibility in order to allow for changes in methodology.



Proper Job Theatre Company/Above and Beyond Group, Lawrence Batley Theatre, Huddersfield. Amanda Huxtable, theatre group director

10 Partnership

Successful projects recognised that they did not always have the resources or capacity to meet all of their learners' needs. For this reason it was felt to be important to develop and sustain partnerships in order to be able to provide a tailored approach.

Partnerships can add value to projects in several ways:

- Specialist agencies and organisations in a partnership can increase the support offered to learners.
- Different organisations within a partnership might be able to access certain funds more easily.
- Other organisations might be able to provide partnerships with funding in kind, in the form of venues, equipment, staff time, and so on.
- The resources and expertise of different organisations within the partnerships could be shared.

Publicising alliances

Experience of the projects has shown that it is useful to publicise the alliances within their partnerships, for several reasons:

- To raise the profile of different organisations within the community.
- To facilitate progression routes between organisations.
- To give organisations credibility with a certain target group. For example, a formal provider might be better received if working with voluntary organisations well connected to the target group.

'Partnerships sometimes do not work as envisaged. A project has to carry on sampling potential partnerships to find the right match.

Our best partnership was with the Employment Service – recruiting leaflets were sent to all local job centres and potential participants matched with the project by their staff, resulting in some very effective recruitment. On the other hand, the partnership we thought would be our best source of volunteer recruitment – the local Volunteer Bureau – was of marginal use, specifically because they have a policy of not matching volunteers with suitable projects.'

Susan Hanley-Place MBE,
The Flagship Project

The Woodwork Project displays its partners' logos on the front of the building within which the project is based. In this way, it projects a joined-up approach to the community.

Expanding the range of opportunities offered

It was agreed that partnerships were an excellent method of broadening opportunities for both staff and learners, in terms of allowing the exchange of experiences from a cross-sectoral perspective.

Facilitating progression routes

Projects also found that working in partnership with others helped facilitate learner progression. Learners often felt more comfortable accessing and progressing to provision offered by organisations outside their immediate project environment if they were already familiar with them as a result of partnership arrangements.

The benefits of partnership working for learners included:

- Access to provision offered by all partners.
- Access to services offered by all partners. For example, IT services, libraries.
- Exposure to a wide range of experiences within different, sometimes unfamiliar, environments.
- Opportunities for progression between organisations, often into more formal learning environments.

Factors for success:

- Recognising that all learners' needs might not be met by one project.
- Awareness of the benefits of cross-sectoral working.
- Realising the potential of the partnership, for example, staff development opportunities.
- Continuing to build and strengthen partnerships for project sustainability and possible future projects.
- Recognising the value of advertising alliances.

NorthWest 1 is a hybrid made up of economic development, community development and regeneration initiatives, with the remit of developing opportunities for the wider community. It works with minority ethnic groups, young people and refugees groups working with women, addressing culturally sensitive issues.

NorthWest 1 works in partnership with other voluntary organisations that need support for training and bid writing. It is funded by the National Lottery Charities Board (now called the Community Fund) and has been using lottery staff to help community groups complete applications for funding. There are also plans for representatives of the TSB fund to speak to refugee groups within the community, creating a better understanding between the funders and potential applicants, allowing funders to get to know the target group and bringing a human element to the process.

NorthWest 1 is the mediator and facilitator of the black and ethnic minority groups within the community, by bringing mainstream bodies into Liverpool and working in partnership with them. By speaking to Government ministers and the Social Exclusion Unit, NorthWest 1 allows members of the community to engage in dialogue and ask questions of those in authority. Events are held to disseminate this information.

This has in turn worked well for the mainstream providers, as they are now able to sell the process directly to the community by holding one-to-one sessions for those who do not wish to discuss their issues publicly.

11 Capacity-building for host organisations

One of the key issues that emerged during the course of the study visits was the necessity for learning organisations to develop their capacity in order to be able to sustain their work beyond the funding period. Funding for adult community education is often short term, and practitioners from both the UK and Sweden were keen to stress the importance of being proactive, to ensure that their work could continue when project funding came to an end. However, it was agreed that creating a successful and strong organisation meant more than building up a sound financial infrastructure. It also involved investment in and commitment to the people working within the organisation and its overall ethos.

A number of factors were identified as being critical to capacity-building.

Recruiting the right staff

Employing the ‘right’ people, with the skills and experience identified earlier, was a crucial factor for successful projects. Ideally this meant recruiting those from the target communities, or those able to develop a good rapport with them, who were committed to undertaking the level of development work necessary to reach and retain learners.

Staff development

Training staff – teaching, non-teaching staff and managers – was seen as an important short and long-term objective. All staff who interact with learners represent the organisation and act as its ambassadors in the community. Training that enables staff to

understand and acknowledge learners’ different and diverse needs, contributes to the creation of a positive ethos and learning environment that is reflected both internally and externally.

Liverpool Community College has seen several staff whose background was in community-based provision moving into more senior management positions in the organisation. Although this meant a short-term loss of skilled tutors to this area of learning, it was recognised that it was beneficial in the longer term to have people sympathetic to community-based learning in positions of influence.

Project and budget management

Coping with funding requirements was a problem for some of the projects. All agreed that short-term funding created insecurity for providers, and that bringing about long-term change was very difficult without reliable funding. Reaching ‘hard-to-reach’ groups was, in many cases, a long-term process and the outcomes were not immediately apparent. This created problems when dealing with some funders. It was also felt that it was difficult to build up a strong organisation when reliant on short-term funding.

In different ways, however, several of the projects developed their own methods of coping with the difficulties of funding restrictions.

The importance of working with, and working to influence, policy-makers and funding bodies was highlighted by the projects. It was agreed that it is vital for funders, policy-makers and providers to work together to ensure that future funding mechanisms develop in ways that benefit organisations working in adult community education and the learners themselves.

How funders can help

The projects also discussed ways in which funders could help projects trying to engage 'hard-to-reach' learners.

One way of administering funding to projects that has proved successful, especially in the UK, has been to work through intermediary organisations whose remit is to support providers. In the UK, NIACE and the Basic Skills Agency (BSA) manage the Adult and Community Learning Fund (ACLF) on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The UK projects that had been involved in ACLF were positive about their experiences and this means of funding. It was felt that the advantages of funding being managed by intermediary organisations included:

- Being managed by organisations with expertise in the areas that the projects are working in.
- The opportunity to have specialist support.
- Being given help to network with other projects in a similar position.

The projects also highlighted the importance of having the freedom and

Blackburn House realised early on that it would have to generate its own income and not rely solely on grant aid. Funding for the college is provided through the Learning and Skills Council, the Local Authority and European Union Objective 1 Structural Funds money. However, income is also generated from tenants, holding events and conferences, and from on-site facilities such as the café bar. A decision was taken a few years ago to build up college reserves in order to help overcome the problems of short-term funding.

The college believes that providers need to be proactive about generating their own money and act as businesses. It also believes that it is crucial for organisations to work to influence policy-makers at national and European level in order to influence the debate over the problems of short-term funding.

opportunity to manage their funds themselves. This allowed them to be flexible and responsive, to accommodate the diversity of their learners' needs, and enabled them to effectively support staff working in the community.

Factors for success:

- Employing the 'right' people.
- Stressing of the importance of staff development.
- Recognising the importance of working with, in addition to working to influence, policy makers and funding bodies.
- Working through intermediary organisations to try to develop good working relationships.



Fieldway Local Action Group, New Addington, Surrey. The cookery class

Conclusion

Overall, the process of sharing experiences and knowledge transnationally was well-received and reinforcing for all involved. The similarities and contrasts were mutually enlightening and thought-provoking, and led to some valuable and insightful discussion during focus group sessions.

The resulting points, as outlined in this publication, could well be applied to other European countries, as the themes were concerned less with geographical boundaries and more with the very human issues that result from working with social groups that are considered to be 'hard to reach'.

This publication does not attempt to be a guide in the sense that it has all the answers, but rather a comparison and celebration of good practice between two countries within Europe when tackling issues of integration, participation and active citizenship.

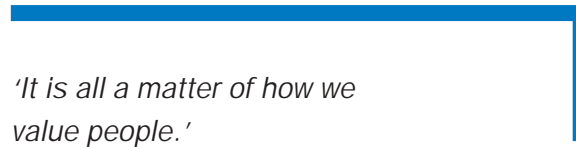
All of the projects that took part were considered to be exemplary, and we hope that those reading this guide will get some sense of the inspiration and commitment that they conveyed to all who took part in the study visits. It is not easy to engage 'hard-to-reach' individuals, and this publication is in no way intended to be prescriptive. The projects involved have achieved success after years of commitment, care and support of their learners. They have often employed people who have either developed through the projects, have had similar life experiences to the learners or have come from a similar background. They have developed good support structures, integrating both personal and practical support and taken the time and

care to listen to the learner through all stages of the process.

It is worth reiterating the recurring common themes to emerge from this publication:

- People
- Environment
- Ethos.

Ultimately, in the words of one of the Swedish participants,



'It is all a matter of how we value people.'

Contacts

Department for Education and Skills

Brian Helsdon
Team Leader
Adult Learning: Policy & Promotion Team
E8d, Moorfoot
Sheffield S1 4PQ
Tel: 0114 259 4211
Email: brian.helsdon@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

The Flagship Project

Susan Hanley-Place MBE
(Chief Executive, Mersey Heritage Trust)
Geoff Hanley (Flagship Project Manager)
11 Greenbank Drive,
Sefton Park,
Liverpool L17 1AN.
Tel: 0151 733 0699.
Email: merseyheritage@btinternet.com.
Website: merseyheritage.com

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office

John Fletcher
Social Employment and Regional Officer
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
European Union Department (Internal)
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH
Tel: +44(0) 207 008 2279
Fax: +44(0) 207 008 2320
Email: john.fletcher@fco.gsi.gov.uk

National Agency for Education

Elisabet Loberg
Adult Education Initiative Section
Kungsgatan 53
106 20 Stockholm
Tel: +46-(0)8-53 73 31 27
Fax: +46-(0)8-24 44 20
Email: elisabet.loberg@skolverket.se

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

Sue Cara
Director for Programmes and Policy
Enkalon House
Regent Road
Leicester LE1 7PE
Tel: 0116 204 4234
Email: sue.cara@niace.org.uk

Ministry for Education and Science

Göran Tevell
Adult Education Unit
103 33 Stockholm
Tel: +46-(0)8-405 4492
Fax: +46-(0)8-723 1192
Email: goran.tevell@education.ministry.se

Resources and websites

On Sweden

(materials in English)

Further reading:

Sweden 2000: a knowledge society

Statistics Sweden. 2000.

ISBN 91-618-1073-8

Lifelong Learning and Lifewide Society

Skolverket. 2000.

ISBN 91-89313-84-4

Education in Sweden 2000

Statistics Sweden. 2000.

ISBN 1104-4381

Websites:

Ministry of Education and Science

www.utbildning.regeringen.se

National Agency for Education

www.skolverket.se

Swedish Board of Student Aid

www.csn.se

Swedish National Council of Adult Education

www.folkbildning.se

Adult Education Initiative Project

www.kunskapslyftet.gov.se

The Swedish Institute

www.si.se

On the UK

Further reading:

Informal Learning in the Community: A Trigger for Change and Development

Veronica McGivney. NIACE 1999. ISBN 1

86201 073 0.

Voices of Practitioners: Good Practice in Adult and Community Learning

Jan Eldred. NIACE 2002.

ISBN 1 86201 137 0

Websites:

Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

www.dfes.gov.uk

National Institute of Adult Continuing

Education (NIACE)

www.niace.org.uk

Basic Skills Agency (BSA)

www.basic-skills.co.uk

Adult and Community Learning Fund

(ACLF)

www.niace.org.uk/funds/aclf/default.htm

Lifelong Learning

www.lifelonglearning.org.uk

Appendix 1

The Swedish system of adult education

The tradition of adult education in Sweden is long-established. Before going into the subject it is important to bear in mind that the formal level of education does not necessarily correspond directly to the actual level of knowledge. People have always acquired knowledge from different quarters – the absence of school knowledge has never prevented people from learning.

Opportunities for obtaining information from all over the world have increased considerably by way of media in various forms. Statistics show that the average Swede reads extensively, follows radio and television news programmes and is generally interested in social questions.

The opportunities to study in different forms of adult education or training have increased, though the tradition of adult education in Sweden is long-established. Adult education first made its breakthrough in the 19th century when large adult education associations started study circles and folk high schools (independent adult education colleges) but it was in the 1960s when the generation differences in education levels really became clear, that the Government started to make regular investments to provide opportunities for supplementary education. The importance of having a well-educated labour force was recognised, both for equality and democracy, as well as for economic reasons.

Many people in Sweden, both young and old, have taken part in educational activities of varying natures in their adult years via folk high schools, adult education associations, municipal adult education or labour market

training (for unemployed people). These forms of education are an important part of learning and have to be acknowledged in any description of the educational attainment of the Swedish population. The scope of formal adult education in Sweden can be observed in the fact that between 1997 and 2000 over 675,000 people participated in municipal education on secondary or upper secondary level out of a total population of over five million between the ages of 20 to 64. During the autumn term of 1998 a total of 44 per cent of the adult population took part in some form of adult education or learning. Staff training was the main form with nearly 80 per cent of the total and municipal adult education just under 11 per cent.

Municipal adult education

Municipal adult education (komvux) includes both adult educations on both basic and upper secondary level. Municipalities are also able to purchase education from other providers – popular education organisations, folk high schools or private educational businesses.

Basic adult education is equivalent to the nine-year compulsory school education. The education is intended to provide the basic knowledge required for social life, professional life and further studies. The previous knowledge of the individual student determines the level at which the studies will be commenced and concluded.

A final certificate provides compulsory school equivalence for adults with a Pass in (at least) the four core subjects: Swedish (or Swedish as a second language), English, Mathematics and Social studies.

The municipality is obliged to offer basic education to adults who have not completed compulsory school. The municipality also are by law obliged to outreaching activities and information.

Upper secondary adult education has the same syllabuses and curriculum as the corresponding school level for young people but the two education forms are not identical. Municipal adult education is made up by courses in different subjects. The students themselves determine the rate of study and the number of subjects. Many simply take individual courses. Students who have completed all core subject courses and other courses equivalent to three years' full-time study are entitled to a final certificate from upper secondary school.

Supplementary education is a form of education in its own right and can provide further education/training within a profession or lead to an entirely new profession. Most of the training courses last between six months and a year and are geared to such areas as economics, computer processing or tourism.

Other forms of municipal adult education are:

Särvux (a special type of education for adult education with learning disabilities which has the same curriculum as adult upper secondary education but with specially adapted syllabuses and time schedules. During recent years there have been around 4,500 students in Särvux.

Swedish for immigrants (Sfi) is intended to provide knowledge in the Swedish language and of the Swedish society.

Municipalities are obliged to offer Sfi to newly-arrived adult immigrants. Studies may be variously organised in different municipalities.

Adult popular education

Adult popular education and culture are traditionally regarded as very important in the work of fostering cultural and educational activity, as providing meeting places for people with different cultures. In addition liberal adult education should strive to reach socially and culturally disadvantaged groups within the society. Folk high schools and adult education associations were built up and maintained in the latter part of the 19th century in close collaboration with the major popular movements who took advantage of the, at that time, neglected political, social and economic interests while at the same time offering an alternative model for the shape of society.

Still a large part of adult education takes place in close collaboration with the major popular movements, for example the labour movement, the temperance movement and the free churches.

There are 147 folk high schools across the country. The folk high schools have courses at different levels from basic school up to post upper-secondary or university level. The long courses last from four months up to a year or several years. The 'general course', which can lead to a qualification to study at university or college, is an important part of the operation and is available at all folk high schools. All tuition is free and financial support may be sought from the government.

Each folk high school decides on its own

activities and can give itself an educational or ideological profile in keeping the interests and needs of the folk high school principal. There are no grades at folk high schools. It is, however, possible to receive a study assessment.

Adult education associations

For over 100 years people in Sweden have gathered on their own terms to study, attend lectures or take part in cultural projects. In this way the adult education associations contribute to increased knowledge and awareness of issues relating to nature, animals, environment, culture and living conditions. The adult education associations play a very important role in the parts of the country where the availability of such activities might otherwise be limited. This gives people in rural areas a chance to become involved in cultural events.

There are 11 adult education associations in the country that are allowed to benefit from the state adult education subsidy. The associations organise study circles, cultural programmes and other learning activities.

The study circle is a small group of people who meet regularly (usually once a week) over a long period of time, plan and organise their studies or promote cultural activities under an approved leader. In 1999 the number of study circle participants was nearly three million.

Labour market training

Labour market training is a part of the labour market policy measures and is geared towards the unemployed (or those at risk of becoming unemployed), work-handicapped and

immigrants and is run by the labour market administration. The role of labour market training is to offer training which leads to work.

The idea is that the job seekers would be offered training in professions where there is a shortage of manpower for the purpose of promoting growth. It also has distribution goals designed to help to broaden women's and men's professional options. Training for labour market reasons has existed since the 1950s.

From the 1990s it has been a prerequisite that applicants to labour market training must already have basic education or experiences from an earlier profession. There are a very large number of vocational courses. The courses are purchased from different education providers like educational companies, municipal adult education, popular adult education and higher education institutions.

The Employment Service is responsible for recruitment to labour market training. Their experience is that it is much easier to recruit well-educated unemployed persons than to persuade adults who are less educated or less accustomed to studying to commit themselves to a training course.

More men than women are taking part. In 1999 a total of 45 percent of those who completed labour market training were women but the part of women answers to their share of the unemployment. The choice of labour market training sources is – despite efforts – very traditional for both men and women. The vocational courses are at upper secondary or post-upper secondary school

level. During labour market training the participants receive a special training allowance from the labour market administration.

Staff training

The present labour market is undergoing a period of strong change characterised by globalisation and technical development. Many workplaces have extensive training programmes for employees at all levels. In-house training of this kind may involve anything from practical vocational training to extensive theoretical studies.

It may be carried out, for example, with universities and colleges, municipal commissioned training or with various commercial-training companies.

The Government has an interest in helping to strengthen the position of individuals on the labour market for the purpose of raising the level of knowledge in society and thereby reducing the risk of unemployment.

Companies can meet the demands for new expertise by recruiting new staff and/or by giving existing staff further training. Employers can receive support from the Government if they organise staff training courses for reasons of labour market policy.

The National Initiative of Adult Education

The Adult Education Initiative is the largest adult education investment initiative ever undertaken in Sweden. All the municipalities in Sweden are taking part in the project, which began on 1 July 1997 and is set to continue up to and including 2002. Its aim is to raise educational levels and to reduce

unemployment. The development and renewal of the form and content of adult education is also one of the initiative's aims.

Aims and Target Groups

The Adult Education Initiative is primarily aimed at adults who are unemployed or who lack full three-year upper secondary qualifications. The idea is that those adults most in need of education should be given a chance to catch up and add to their stock of knowledge. Improved levels of skill and increased self-confidence will help them to strengthen their position in the labour market. As access to qualified labour increases, the opportunities for economic growth increase accordingly. Those currently employed who have only benefited from a short period of education may also be eligible under the scheme.

Evaluation and exchange of knowledge based on experience between municipal authorities will help to highlight good ideas and spread them further. The Initiative also has the aim of preparing for a new, reformed system of adult education, better adapted to the needs of individuals, the labour market and society in general.

The overriding aims of the Adult Education Initiative are to:

- Reduce unemployment
- Develop adult education
- Reduce educational divisions
- Promote growth.

Various forms of education/learning

The Adult Education Initiative encompasses upper secondary adult education. This education can take a number of different

forms: various types of education and training organisers are involved, the aim being to provide flexible solutions wherever possible. In order to offer as wide a variety of courses as possible, municipalities, county authorities, and national schools for adults, adult educational associations, folk high schools and training companies are all working together.

The traditional general courses offered by the municipal adult education organisations (Komvux) have been supplemented by a large number of vocational courses. Part of the education can be spent in work placements, and it is also possible to combine upper secondary. Courses with studies at an elementary level, or with one of the programmes organised by the National Labour Market Board for the unemployed. Special orientation courses are also provided for those who have been away from study for a long time, and for those who feel uncertain as to their level of study.

Focus on the individual

The intention is for all education which takes place under the initiative to be governed in form and content by the needs, wishes and capacity of the individual. The education should help to improve the individual's opportunities in the labour market and provide an option for further studies. It must be demand-led, both in terms of organisation, planning and the actual courses provided. Every individual should have ample scope for personal choice in terms of the type of study they require and the timing and location of that study.

Lifelong learning

The expression 'lifelong learning' refers to people's opportunities for seeking new knowledge throughout their lives. Individual desire for personal development and learning are to be encouraged, and at the same time, the labour market will be able to satisfy its need for new skills and a capacity for change. A good basic education lies at the heart of lifelong learning.

Personal competence is not solely based on academic qualifications. Non-formal knowledge and learning not reflected in school grades or recorded in other documents is also of major importance. Any competence development, which derives from working life, is also significant.

Validation means the assessment and recognition of skills and competence gained through study, participating in the community and working life.

In other words, it is recognition of both formal and non-formal qualifications. Validation may allow students to shorten the time they spend in study.

Guidance and study plans

There is an emphasis on the importance of guidance. Qualified guidance both before and during studies is intended to ensure that everyone is in an equal position to make well-founded choices.

Guidance results in an individual study plan, which specifies what students aim to achieve in their studies and the ways in which their aims can be achieved. The plan is drawn up according to students' previous education and on the assessments which have been made

regarding their other skills and knowledge. The study plan should be revised if necessary.

Study finance

Various forms of study assistance are available to those studying under the Adult Education Initiative as described in the box below.

The special grant for education and training (UBS) is for adults who are unemployed or in work who have a short education. The grant is available on condition that the person in question is aged 25–55, is studying at elementary or upper secondary level and fulfils the criteria for receipt of unemployment benefit. The grant is equivalent to this benefit and is payable for a maximum of one year. In the case of a person in work, the employer must fill the vacancy created with an unemployed person. Other forms are special adult assistance and special adult study assistance for the unemployed. These types of assistance take the form of grant and loan.

Study funding in the form of loans and grants is primarily intended for students in higher education, but also for those adults who are studying at elementary or upper secondary level.

Responsibility of municipalities

The municipalities and the state are jointly responsible for the Adult Education Initiative. Financing takes the form of state grants, yet each municipality is individually responsible for organisation, planning and implementation. The exchange of ideas and knowledge gained through experience

between the municipalities is encouraged in various ways.

Each municipality may opt to organise the education and training by themselves or in conjunction with other municipalities. It is also possible for them to purchase the services of other providers of education and training and to work together with them.

The Adult Education Initiative has provided municipalities with increased responsibility for creating infrastructure for adult education. New forms of co-operation are developing between municipalities, job centres and employers. Similar effects can be noticed within the municipalities themselves, for example between libraries, social services, immigration administrators and the business community. The same curricula and grades criteria apply to the Adult Education Initiative as to other elements of upper secondary education. The municipalities are also responsible for admissions under the initiative.

The Adult Education Initiative is intended to make things easy in every way for those who are unaccustomed to study. This requires effective efforts to interest potential students in the scheme, often by working closely with trade union organisations. It also requires an efficient use of channels of information, and the provision of thorough guidance and a sound introduction to studies. Flexibility and unconventional solutions are encouraged, together with an approach to education based clearly on the needs of adult students.

Responsibility of the state

The state contributes some SEK 3.5 billion every year to the Adult Education Initiative, equivalent to 100,000 annual study places. The folk high schools also receive assistance for 10,000 places within the initiative. Since 1 July 1998 the National Agency for Education has been responsible for contacts between the state and the municipalities.

For the Agency this involves administration of the municipalities' applications for grants, and distribution of places and funds based on the following criteria:

- The level of unemployment and education in each municipality.
- The aims and scope of the municipality's programme in orientation courses, general courses and vocational courses.
- The municipality's initiatives for the renewal and development of adult education.
- The state grant should be used by the municipality to achieve its aims in terms of the orientation, scope and quality of the education provided.

Responsibility of the National Agency for Education

The general duties of the National Agency for Education include development, follow-ups, evaluation and supervision in pre-schools, schools and adult education. In addition to these duties, the National Agency for Education has been commissioned to manage and monitor the Adult Education Initiative in the municipalities. The Agency is to support and encourage efforts to develop the initiative and to distribute state funding on an annual basis. This work within the National Agency for Education takes the form of a special project, comprising a central project group and representatives in various fields who have direct contact with the municipalities. The Agency is running a three-year evaluation project to provide deeper insights into the development of adult education.

Appendix 2

The UK system of adult education and training

Developing a culture of lifelong learning where adults can access education and training at any stage of their lives is a UK Government priority. Education and training should be available at work, at home, part-time or full-time; at times and places which suit individual needs.

Developments in the UK include:

- Open and distance learning.
- Accessible and flexible modes of study.
There are over 500,000 part-time students in the UK of all ages, with significant growth in short post-degree vocational courses to update skills, mainly in business, science and education.
- Modular courses.

The role of the Government is to provide guidance and to fund an institutional framework at national, sector and local level in which training decisions can be taken. It also funds work-related training for particular groups who struggle to participate effectively in the labour market, such as the long-term unemployed, lone parents and people with disabilities or special needs.

Key elements of the Government's adult education strategy include:

- National Learning Targets (defined in terms of attainment and participation levels).
- Career Development Loans: deferred repayment bank loans that help individuals invest in their vocational education and training (the loans are not available in Northern Ireland).
- Training for the unemployed.

Lifelong education and training

Training in the UK is available from a range of private and public sector providers. Access to training is generally available irrespective of age, while developments in open access and distance learning enable employers and individuals to meet their training needs in a wide variety of settings.

Individuals are encouraged to develop their skills in a culture of lifelong learning. Competence-based qualifications (National Vocational Qualifications and Scottish Vocational Qualifications) show an individual's ability to meet the skills standards required for competence performance at work.

Training is usually aimed at providing skills and knowledge applicable to a particular job or occupation. Most work-related training is provided or paid for by employers for the employees.

There is a wide range of learning opportunities in the further and higher education sectors. Adults can study, on a full-time or part-time basis, courses that lead to formal qualifications, or that are vocational in content.

Residential training for disabled adults

Residential training for unemployed disabled adults, particularly those at risk of exclusion from the job market, is available from the Government to help them secure and sustain employment or self-employment. They are offered an individually tailored combination of guidance, training and approved qualifications.

The Open University

Established in 1969, the Open University has

pioneered open and distance learning at university level in the UK and has become the country's largest single teaching institution. More than 200,000 people study its courses, 45,000 of whom are postgraduates.

Course modules are available on television, and its courses are available in other European countries. No formal academic qualifications are required to enrol on undergraduate courses, but the standard of its degrees and other qualifications is as high as that of other universities. *For further information please visit the Open University website www.open.ac.uk*

The Learning and Skills Council

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) provides informal or leisure courses for adults which do not lead to formal qualifications. Courses are usually part-time and are held in a variety of locations including schools, community centres and libraries. *More details can be found at www.lsc.gov.uk*

Basic Skills

Basic skills are literacy, numeracy and language skills. The main learning provision is in colleges of further education and in adult education institutes, although new approaches to learning in the community are being initiated. Provision is free to the learner, no matter where or when learning takes place. A Skills for Life Strategy for improving adult basic skills was published in November 2000. *For further information see www.basic-skills.co.uk*

National Skills Agenda

The Government has a National Skills Agenda, with four key areas for action:

- strengthening links between what people learn and the jobs they will have in the future;
- creating excellence in vocational learning for all to achieve their potential;
- reaching out with basic skills training and beyond to adults whom the system failed the first time;
- engaging employers in the skills agenda and in workforce development.

Funding

In England, the 47 local offices of the LSC fund work-based training provided by thousands of large and small employers, by the public and voluntary sector training providers, and by about 2,000 private training providers. The LSC is responsible for making sure that provision is driven by demand and local needs rather than by providers, and that up-to-date and relevant courses are available to meet employer needs.

In Northern Ireland the Training and Employment Agency (T&EA) is responsible for the training opportunities and employment services. It helps to support both inward investors and local companies through the provision of training and development and a job brokerage service provided by its network of job centres. For the long-term unemployed the T&EA delivers the New Deal programme (*see 'Labour market training' below*) and WorkTrack, and a range of initiatives to help to get people back to work.

Individual employability

There are a number of initiatives to improve individual employability. These range from

improving basic skills in literacy and numeracy to setting up a national online learning network that both individuals and businesses can use. The Government will use responses to its 1998 Green Paper *The Learning Age*, which consulted on policies for lifelong learning, to further developments in this field. *For more details see www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/response*

Union Learning Fund

The Union Learning Fund (ULF) is a source of Government funding to help trade unions use their influence with employers, employees and others to encourage greater take-up of learning and improve skills at work, and boost their capacity as learning organisations. *For more information see www.dfes.gov.uk/ulf*

Learndirect

The UK Government has taken action to ensure that good quality information, advice and guidance (IAG) on learning and work is available to all adults (19+). Learndirect, the first national helpline to provide information and advice about learning opportunities, was established in 1999 and has since expanded considerably. Also in 1999 the IAG for Adults programme was introduced, which since April 2001 has been the responsibility of the Learning & Skills Council. There are now 67 local IAG Partnerships in place across England.

These partnerships bring together local IAG providers to produce significant improvements in the quality and coverage of local services. Publicly funded providers are required to comply with the matrix Standard for IAG services, but beyond this there is no

desire on the part of the Government to impose a uniform model. *For more details, visit www.learndirect.co.uk*

UK online centres

UK online centres support the Government's strategy to provide access to information and communications technologies (ICT) and the Internet to all who want it by 2005. They aim to bridge the gap between those in society who have access to ICT and those who do not, and to bring access to ICT and learning into disadvantaged communities, including:

- the 2,000 most deprived local authority wards
- rural areas with significant transport and deprivation problems
- small areas of deprivation within more prosperous areas.

For further information, visit www.dfes.gov.uk/ukonlinecentres, or call 0800 771234

Staff training

Most work-related training is provided or paid for by employers for their employees. The role of the Government is to provide a framework of recognised qualifications, and an effective system for identifying and meeting training needs.

Small Firm Training Loans

Small Firm Training Loans are deferred repayment bank loans from the Government, which help small firms with up to 50 employees to pay for training or training-related consultancy advice.

Investors in People

British business recognises that training and developing people is critical to business success. The Investors in People Standard was developed to improve business performance by linking training and development of employees to business objectives. The Standard is externally accredited and quality controlled.

For more information, see www.iipuk.co.uk

Labour market training

The Government wants everyone in the UK to have the opportunity to improve their employability and contribute to society, including those unemployed or inactive and those reliant on the welfare state.

Jobcentre Plus is the Government executive agency that helps unemployed people into work and pays benefit to those who are entitled to it. It runs a network of over 1,000 job centres throughout the UK.

Jobcentre Plus provides a range of assistance to help unemployed people to find work, including access to a variety of training programmes to improve their job search and work-related skills. In Northern Ireland, the Training and Employment Agency provides employment and training opportunities through its own network of job centres.

The New Deal

The main element of the Government's Welfare to Work strategy is the New Deal initiatives. These give job seekers a chance to develop their potential, gain skills and experience, explore work options and find work.

The New Deal helps to close the gap

between the skills employers want and the skills people have to offer. It provides an opportunity for businesses to benefit from untapped energies and talents in the prospective workforce. Effective partnership between Jobcentre Plus and a wide range of organisations has led to the success of the New Deal.

The New Deal targets groups that might otherwise have difficulty in getting a job, including the young unemployed (age 18–24), long-term unemployed people aged 25 plus, the partners of unemployed people, lone (single) parents, and disabled people. *For more details, see www.newdeal.gov.uk*

Work Based Learning for Adults

The Work Based Learning for Adults programme helps long-term unemployed people aged over 25, and others at risk of exclusion from the job market, to get jobs. The programme offers an individually tailored mix of guidance, structured work experience, training, and approved qualifications.

Employment Zones

Employment Zones are run in 15 areas of concentrated long-term unemployment in England, Scotland and Wales. The Zones are testing a new way of helping long-term unemployed people aged 25 or over to get and keep work. They pool funds for training, Employment Service support and the equivalent of benefit to maximise flexibility and give individuals more say in the choices which affect them. The aim is to get people into jobs and keep them in work. *For further information, visit www.dfesgov.uk/employmentzones*

Notes

