Euracademy

THEMATIC GUIDE FIVE

The Role of Education and Lifelong Learning in Sustainable Rural Development

EURACADEMY THEMATIC GUIDE SERIES

EURACADEMY ASSOCIATION

European Academy
for Sustainable Rural Development

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edited by Rhys Evans and Fouli Papageorgiou

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PREFACE

Euracademy Association is a pan-European, non-profit membership organisation devoted to capacity-building of rural communities in Europe. The Association brings together planners, researchers and practitioners of rural development from a host of European countries. A Summer Academy on a theme pertinent to sustainable rural development is organised every year in a different location; also, a Thematic Guide is published every year and a distance learning course is run, on the same theme as the Summer Academy. In addition, the Association organises conferences, undertakes research and coordinates EC-funded projects with a view of building up a body of knowledge on sustainable rural development. These activities aim to prompt lifelong learning opportunities amongst members of rural communities, by using a variety of educational means.

This is the Fifth Thematic Guide in the Euracademy series. It has been used as a reference tool in the Fifth Summer Academy, held in Gyor, Hungary from 1 to 9 July 2006. This Thematic Guide has been revised in the light of the discussions in the summer academy and enriched with examples brought in by participants. It aims to provoke the reader's thinking on such key questions as:

- How can education and training help the process of sustainable development?
- What is the role of education and lifelong learning in stimulating change in rural areas?
- What are the new models for delivering education that are available today, especially with the advent of ICT technology?
- What is the experience of distance learning, and its benefits for rural areas?
- How can one offer education **for** sustainable rural development?
- Where do validation and accreditation stand in the new scene of education and lifelong learning?
- How does education and lifelong learning affect the quality of life in rural areas?
- What are the rural skills that are necessary for rural development and how can they be acquired?
- What is the role of guidance in the uptake of education and lifelong learning opportunities by rural people?

For Euracademy Association, this issue is part of the broader challenge of **sustainable rural development**. It inevitably cross-relates to, or overlaps with, themes of previous Summer Academies, e.g.:

- **Information Society and Sustainable Rural Development**.
- **Social Capital and Sustainable Rural Development**
- **Diversification of Rural Economies and Sustainable Rural Development in the Enlarged Europe**

This Guide has two parts:

- **Part I: The challenge**, discusses education and lifelong learning as agents of change in rural areas and introduces the new ICT-based 'tools' that are available to rural residents, helping to increase their access to all grades and aspects of education throughout life.
- **Part II: New models for providing education and training**, describes the new methods of delivering primary, secondary, vocational and tertiary education, that make such education accessible to rural residents in particular; presents examples of how education and lifelong learning can improve the quality of life in rural areas and combat social exclusion; and discusses the role of guidance in making education and lifelong learning opportunities more relevant to people's as well as to the labour market's needs.

Good reading!

The Euracademy Association

Part I: The Challenge

CHAPTER 1.

Education as an agent of change in rural areas

Introduction - Change, learning and rural development

1.1. Everywhere one looks, rural Europe has been buffeted by change. Political, economic, environmental, and lifestyle changes have been a constant in the last few decades. Different agents of change have hit different areas differently, but all have witnessed great changes. Against this background of change, how can rural communities respond to the loss of former advantages and the opportunities presented by the new regimes?

1.2. One change which is key to building successful rural communities and rural economies is a new focus upon sustainability. Within Europe and its member States, a growing understanding has evolved that sustainable development must be the long term goal of all initiatives. A good discussion of EU policy on sustainability is contained in the Thematic Guide Two from the Summer Academy of 2003 and it is well worth exploring further.

1.3. But what is sustainability? Many definitions exist, and not all agree with each other. It is increasingly becoming clear, however, that sustainability is something which cuts across fields, disciplines and policies. A consensus is building that complete sustainability requires a sustainable environment, a sustainable economy and sustainable society. All of Europe, after all, is a product of the interaction between human beings, their activities and the physical environments they live in. Therefore it is impossible to think of a sustainable environment without sustainable societies or economies, and vice versa.

1.4. Central to sustainability is the encounter between an existing 'Present' built out of a historic 'Past' and the 'Future' possibilities that this implies. Existing peoples, existing practices, existing landscapes form the foundation, or the launching pad, for sustainable development. Heritage landscapes, heritage knowledges, and heritage practices are not important solely for nostalgic reasons. These assets are the components of local identity and distinctiveness and form part of the assets that communities bring to the development process. And, through the role they play in building local identities, they bring community support and buy-in to development, making it inherently more sustainable and more bottom-up.

1.5. In this encounter between the existing and the new, education is the key factor in bridging the gap between the traditional and the innovative. A good metaphor is to see rural economies like an ecological niche - when the environment changes, existing dominant species are challenged. Some respond, others cannot. A diverse ecosystem, however, has many other species, some of which will thrive in the new conditions. As a system, the biological community can respond to change by presenting existing species able to take advantage of new opportunities.

1.6. Education can fulfill a similar function in rural societies. It can fulfill two important functions in supporting the sustainability of development. The first is that it can identify existing knowledges, practices and cultural capitals. Further, it can prevent these knowledges from disappearing by incorporating them in local place-based education. Not only are these 'old' knowledges important for generating local identity and pride of place, but they also can contain unique knowledges which can underpin development in the new rural consumer economy.

1.7. The second important role for education in rural society is that it can prepare citizens for the encounter with change and the incorporation of new people, new ideas, and new practices into the local place. Education enables the adoption of new technologies - whether of communication or of scientific nature - and can empower the local rural citizen in his or her encounter with the wider global economy.

1.8. It is clear from the above that the term 'education' means many things. Importantly, the inclusion of heritage knowledges (language, cultural artifacts, performance, husbandry, etc.) and realms which exist beyond what is traditionally considered the 'classroom', points to the fact that learning is something which is not just the remit of the school. Lifelong learning is not a cliche, but rather something we all practice, throughout our lives. By presenting opportunities to gain knowledge not otherwise available, lifelong learning is a key sustainer of response to change, whether in the rural economy, environment or society.

1.9. What follows is a more detailed discussion of this vision and why learning is a key component of sustainable development. It first examines the state of play in

rural Europe in terms of the progress of the vision of sustainability, new models of rural development and the changing economic fortunes and shapes of earning a living from the land. It then looks at some of the relationships between community and sustainable development, both as a source of knowledge and learning, through to a discussion of these knowledges as assets which are brought to the development process by communities. From sustainable development itself, we then look to changes in education, looking in particular at place-based education as a model of a type of education for sustainable development. The Case Studies link development and education directly through an examination of existing projects and models and a discussion of issues such as validation and qualification.

Changing rural development

1.10. This section looks at key features of rural development in Europe at the current time. The new models it discusses are reflected in regulation and legislation from the EU and within member states, but we will leave a detailed discussion of those regulations to one of the many excellent reviews of EU rural development policy (see Thematic Guide Two). Here we will focus upon the basic ideas behind these changes and the opportunities they present.

1.11. Sustainable development has become almost a mainstream idea within Europe in the last decade. It sits at the heart of the development paradigm at the EU, and most Member States acknowledge it within some, if not all of their policies. Some of the first multilateral European agreements were built around cross-border concerns about the pollution. Concern for a sustainable environment has become a priority and this is reflected in -among other- the EU Rural Development Strate-gies.

1.12. However, the environment is not the only component of sustainability. True sustainability must include a sustainable economy where economic activity does not penalize the opportunities of future generations, and where it sustains the quality of the local environment. And sustainability applies as well to societies - social sustainability implies that local populations have local identities they are proud of, and which forms the basis of a confident encounter with the outside world. So sustainability must have an environmental facet, an economic facet and a social and cultural facet.

1.13. Each facet of sustainability has its own unique configuration. Environmental sustainability implies environmental stewardship - passing a usable and un-degraded environment to future generations. Social and cultural sustainability implies that the benefits of belonging to a society apply to all its members across the social spectrum. Economic sustainability implies that economic gains are not confined to just a few members of a society, and that current economic gains do not negatively affect future opportunities. All facets feature a strong principle of equity - that gains made in one endeavour do not compromise the gains of future endeavours.

1.14. Education for sustainable development develops and strengthens the capacity of individuals, groups, communities, organisations and countries to make judgments and choices in favour of sustainable development and underpins that confident encounter with the wider world.

Economic change in rural Europe

1.15. A key agent of change in rural Europe has been changing regimes of economic activity. The foremost influence has been the economic transition from production to information and services as the dominant form of wealth generation. At first an urban and industrial phenomenon, it also has affected the rural hinterlands which served those economies. European rural economies are also making a transition from primary economic sector activities (agriculture, forestry, etc) to tertiary, or broadly, service sector activities. This transition has not seen a replacement of one sector by the other, but rather a change in the primary ways of wealth generation. Typically in these 'developed' rural economies, the service sector employs the vast majority of the rural population and brings in far more actual income, even if the ongoing primary sector activities occupy the majority of the land use.

1.16. This has been driven in part by price competition due to opening up to a Global economy where other regions have competitive advantage in terms of scale and environment. And it has been driven in part by the increasing costs to the EU of subsidizing agricultural and other primary sector activity in order to keep it competitive, which has resulted in a move away from production and towards stewardship of the rural landscape. Either way, gains in agricultural productivity has meant that increasingly smaller proportions of the rural workforce become employed in agricultural activity and increasingly larger proportions in other activity.

1.17. A key driver in the rise of this 'other activity' has been the rise of the consumer economy in Europe and America. With increased wealth and increased access to credit and goods, a mass economy has sprung up to supply uniform fashions and goods across countries and indeed, across the world. In this market of global mass commodification, higher-value goods are those which are unique and which stand out from the mass. One aspect of the consumer economy is that this search for 'distinction' has spread throughout the market, meaning that people are more and more willing to pay to experience new goods, new services and new places.

1.18. In this consumption economy, the qualities of rural places which were once seen as disadvantages - isolation, local 'quaint' practices, indigenous languages and obscure dialects can now be marks of distinction in the global mass market-place. Thus, these aspects of locality - local landscapes, local food, local custom, local language, etc., have become legitimate assets in the development of what has been called the 'experience economy', or 'culture economies', or even 'eco-tourism'.

1.19. A second beneficial aspect of this socio-economic

transition is that rural isolation can also mean an environment which is green compared to urban places, and generally cleaner. In the consumption-of-place market, products can also be associated to places, and that association can extend to the environmental qualities of a place, yielding a higher-value added component to locally produced goods.

1.20. In order for local people to take advantage of this opportunity to develop local products and services to sell to the wider national and international market, however, the two must be directly linked. Enabling technologies such as the internet and mobile phones offer key opportunities to do this, and with education, can offer the opportunity to the smallest of operators and smallest of communities.

Unique rural environments attract people's interest more and more

1.21. An important aspect of this transition from primary to tertiary sector activity is that primary sector activity tends to produce landscapes which, once harvested, need to lie fallow for an extended period of time before they can be economically harvested again. And in so doing, they produce landscapes of degraded environmental and aesthetic quality. Direct consumption of the landscape through the experience economy - nature pursuits such as hiking, camping and trekking; 'extreme' sports such as rafting, kayaking, mountain biking etc.; and the use of landscape as therapeutic and aesthetic resources does not produce a markedly different landscape. Thus, consumption activities, by their nature, seek to sustain the very landscapes which are their key asset; and they offer the opportunity to generate wealth from sustained environments.

Development and community

1.22. One of the key aspects of these new modes of rural development in Europe has been the growing importance of Communities as Partners in development. This has a political policy dimension in that public-private partnerships, community planning partnerships, development companies, QUANGOS and other partnerships are a favoured way of incorporating local stakeholders in local governance and local development. Communities often are the key pivot around which development and other partnerships are constructed.

1.23. More generally, development is increasingly seen as being most sustainable when it comes from within a community, when it is endogenous or bottom-up. Within Europe, thus, we increasingly see communities participating in the development of their region.

1.24. A good way to look at development is to see it as an exchange between the local community and the outside world. The community brings certain things to the exchange ideas; knowledge; networks of suppliers, workers and facilitators; and local produce and products (whether material as in foods, or intangible as in language, music, or cultural products). They also bring financial resources such as local capital, local land assets, lower wages and flexible work structures to the engagement. Plus they bring a willingness to engage and work hard to improve their lot. The outside world brings other assets, including capital, market-access, new business practices and knowledges to the endeavour. Thus, development can be seen as a process whereby local assets are developed with the assistance of outside assets to produce new wealth-generating activities.

1.25. This approach is known as Asset-based Rural Community Development (ABRCD) and is rapidly becoming a key way both of seeing the rural development process, and of providing a way to operationalize and materialize the need for sustainable development in a way that rural communities can gain benefit (Evans, 2006). Its key principle is that communities are not passive clients or passengers on some development trajectory, but actually are key players in development and key to its success and sustainability.

1.26. What assets can communities bring to development? A good metric for thinking about this is the Five Capitals approach to sustainable development which was developed by the UK Sustainable Development Commission, and which has been adopted by the UK Department for International Development (DfID) and the United Nations Development Commission. This model posits that there are five types of Capital which can be seen as resources for development. They are: Natural Capital, Human Capital, Social Capital, Manufactured Capital and Financial Capital. The Table below lists the types of assets for development which fall into each category.

Fig 1. The Five Capitals Model

Natural	Biodiversity Landscape character Soils Water Air and climate Minerals and other non-renewables
Human	Employment and skills base Education and training Health and well-being
Social	Leadership and trust Community cohesion and sense of place Stakeholder networks and processes
Manufactured	Archaeology Buildings and built heritage Transport infrastructure, traffic and access networks Processes and waste products Energy production and Consumption IT and telecommunications
Financial	Public funding eg for CAP or rural regeneration Local authority expenditure Conservation funding Local and extra-local business investment Other (such as match funding)

(source Evans 2006)

1.27. Within this model, it is clear that some resources are within the ownership of local communities whilst others clearly come from outside the local. The key to the sustainability of the development process comes from an equitable balance between the two, and asset-based approaches increasingly recognize and operationalize this.

1.28. Given the changes from production to consumption as the source of primary wealth generation in Europe and the transition from isolation to distinction which is described in the previous section, it is clear that local assets are in many cases the pivot around which revolves local rural economies' participation in the wider global consumption economy. Whether as eco or cultural tourism (both in terms of traditional tourism or new recreation and leisure activities such as mountain biking, surfing, golfing and winter sports), production of higher-value consumption products (local foods, music, language products, styles and fashion), or as producer inputs into the new consumption economy (film locations, backdrops or symbols for national identity campaigns, advertising, etc.), local assets such as local landscapes and their attendant knowledges, products and practices are key inputs into the development process. Their contribution to higher value-added economic activity offers local benefit and at the same time, supports local participation in the global culture and economy which can become a source of local pride and identity.

Changing education

1.29. Sustainability is an idea which cuts across the customary range of society, economy and environment. That crosscutting propensity can also be seen in education. The relationship between Education and Sustainability has been under development for some time and is receiving increased attention. It is clear that a well educated populace is as important for sustainable rural development as it is for sustainable urban and industrial development. Building the capacity to learn is equivalent to building a capacity to adapt. Given the rate and range of changes challenging rural Europe, that ability to study and learn from new situations is the best guarantee a rural region can have, so that its citizens can move from declining economic activity to new ways of generating value.

A monument for agriculture in the grounds of the Agricultural Vocational Re-training and Advisory Institute, Hungary

1.30. This principle applies, of course, to formal education of young people. What they learn in formal schooling forms a great part of their later ability to participate in the dominant economy, to engage as active and informed citizens and to respond to new challenges. But this ability to learn cannot be confined to formal schooling. Given the pace of change, rural residents need to be prepared to keep learning all their lives. Lifelong learning, therefore, is one of the keys to building sustainability into local development.

1.31. It has been demonstrated earlier that learning is key to sustainable development both in terms of preserving and passing on local culture, practices and knowledges and in terms of empowering local people to take advantage of new knowledge, new trends and new opportunities coming into the area from the outside. It is the combination of these two which most strongly connects education and sustainability. This implies that the learning does not end when formal schooling ends. Lifelong learning is the response to this challenge. Whether learning to use local knowledges in new ways, or new knowledges in local ways, lifelong learning is the key activity which ensures local resilience in the face of external change.

1.32. Lifelong learning is an umbrella term covering practically every aspect of finding knowledge and passing it on. It encompasses formal learning in schools, learning via distance-learning media, and any other learning medium which produces formal qualifications, whether academic, professional, vocational or cultural. But lifelong learning also encompasses non-formal

learning. Non-formal learning, or the passing-on of information, practices, narratives or norms, is and has been a constant in human society. Family professions are passed between generations, precious trade knowledges are passed within networks of practitioners, local practices are passed from one practitioner to another. All of this occurs on an individual to individual basis, although some of these learning situations have been historically formalized as apprenticeships of one form or another.

1.33. Given the new opportunities presented by asset-based approaches to rural development, and the new economic opportunities inherent in the growth of the consumption sector, these non-formal learning opportunities have increased importance. It is individual knowledge of the locality - local practices in the landscape, local food, local habitation, local cultures and cultural practices which are a key part of rural economic development now, and not only is it important that these local distinctive knowledges are not lost with the declining numbers of remaining practitioners, but also that they become more widely known, forming an asset base that the entire community can use in development. Thus non-formal lifelong learning is increasingly important in rural development.

Fire Artists at Memory Garden gathering in Wick Scotland, form part of a project promoting community bonding through informal learning.

1.34. If local knowledges are to be an asset for community development, then there must be a vehicle for the involvement of the community in the learning process. Some knowledges belong to individuals, some are collectively known and owned. Historically there has been a decline in the take-up of traditional knowledges of building, agriculture and forestry practices, something demonstrated by current shortages of skilled workers in these trades in many developed economies. The benefits enjoyed by the community from having individuals with these skilled knowledges are at risk. This is the point at which a community might step in to assure those individual knowledges are not lost, but instead form part of the heritage assets with which they can develop local identity and local opportunities. Thus, education for sustainability has both implicit and explicit outcomes for communities and thus it is natural for community development projects, regeneration projects and other development initiatives to have a strong relationship with lifelong learning and to incorporate aspects of it into their structure.

Learning: formal, non-formal?

1.35. As always, there is a divide between formal and non-formal learning in terms of qualifications, which has traditionally been the remit of the former. Increasingly however, non-formal learning is being redesigned to deliver qualifications. This is driven by, in the main, two influences. The first derives from the recognition that lifelong learning is important to local development intersecting with the wish to support it with funding and other en-couragements. This inevitably leads to the creation of a standard set of knowledges against which competence can be measured and qualifications of one sort or another can be awarded. The form these take can vary significantly, in part due to the specific knowledges required by the qualification (which may emphasize other skills than academic performance) and in part due to where the qualification sits in terms of traditional educational insti-tutions (schools, colleges, universities, etc.). Another key driver towards the formalization of lifelong learning comes from a need to capture whole bodies of disappearing knowledges and render them learnable by a wider population.

1.36. Lifelong learning can take place almost completely outside the education system (such things as night-courses offered by local authorities, training delivered by professional and other associative bodies, and within community regeneration initiatives) or it can be incorporated into it. This diversity is one of the strengths of lifelong learning and the foundation of one of its strongest contributions towards social and economic development.

Place-based Education

1.37. One emergent model linking education, lifelong learning and sustainability is Place-based Education. Initially developed as a formal model by educators working with rural education in North America and Australia, it has been used as an integral part of efforts to regenerate deprived or isolated communities, rural and urban. By the nature of its local focus, Place-based education will vary across a range of factors - from formal/non-formal to environmentally-based/economically-based. This diversity is one of the model's strengths. It is able to reflect local conditions, local situations and important local knowledges.

1.38. Eric Romero claims that Place-based Education "can be characterized as structured learning in issues of local history, culture, language, environment, and economy. This approach to teaching and learning represents a general orientation which focuses on local resources" (Romero, ENLACE). Lieberman claims that Place-based Education has many forms. The most critical characteristic is the use of the local environment, on and/or near the school site, "*as a comprehensive framework for learning in all areas*" (Lieberman, 2000). Gregory Smith

claims that "*place-based education serves both individuals and communities, helping individuals to experience the value they hold for others and allowing communities to benefit from the commitment and contributions of their members*" (Smith, 2002).

1.39. Most importantly, Place-based education contains within it the ability to research, collect and disseminate local heritage knowledge, and to do the same bringing new knowledges, technologies and practices into the community. As these two poles form the basis of education for sustainability, Place-based education itself is a model directly supporting sustainable development, incorporating knowledges which range from local language and culture, through business development and entrepreneurial skills, to skills and knowledge for integrated management of local environments.

Conclusion - Learning as a resource for sustainable development

1.40. We have seen how sustainable development arises from the encounter between the local and the global, and how the changing economic circumstances has opened a window of opportunity for rural places to transform what were once seen as negative features, into assets. Given the pace of social, economic and environmental change across Europe, lifelong learning is one of the most important assets a community can possess in the face of those challenges. Capitalizing on local assets involves learning what they are, learning how to develop them, and learning how to use new technologies to access new markets. All of this falls under the rubric of lifelong learning, which, with a place-based orientation, supports sustainability through adding new value to heritage knowledges by understanding change and responding positively to it.

1.41. Against a backdrop of mass consumption of standardized goods and services, local food, clothing, housing and domestic practices offer distinction and in some cases may become resources or assets that can be developed. In other cases local language, music and culture not only can support higher order tourism, but can actively be exported to a wider market. Local landscape

Rural heritage has been recognized as a source of lifelong learning

practices produce distinctive landscapes which often feature distinctive activities in transport, husbandry, settlement patterns and leisure activities. Economic development based upon these features not only offers the opportunity of higher-value wealth generation but also points to local distinctiveness and identity and promotes Pride in Place. What is needed is to create an environment in which those who possess these important knowledges are offered respect, and these knowledges are disseminated more widely so they can become assets for development.

1.42. At the same time, these opportunities can only be developed if local people can take advantage of the wider innovations which make the new markets accessible. Knowledge of, in particular, the digital communication technologies, which include not just marketing but also financial transactions and standards of service provision, are essential commitments the learning communities must undertake if they are to develop themselves sustainably.

1.43. Lifelong learning is the key to turning knowledge into an asset for sustainable development. It is the essential connector between the local and the global. It supports local heritage knowledges and brings them in contact with new information, new practices and new opportunities.

Exercises arising from Chapter 1 to reflect on:

1. Look at your own region/place and briefly list up to four rural knowledges and practices which risk being lost. Consider their contribution to the conservation of the local environment, economy and sense of place. Briefly think how they might be both 'preserved' and made relevant to the con-temporary reality.
2. Most rural economies are in transition from full production (farming, forestry, etc) towards a mixed economy featuring a strong service sector. Think about your local area and reflect on how environmental stewardship could be combined with economic activity targeted at consumers - i.e. tourism, value-added food production sector, home-building, etc. Propose ways in which local ac-tivity can both serve existing local markets and wider markets outside the local area.
3. Thinking about your local area, and using the Five Capitals model, identify some key local Knowl-edges which could sustain social and economic development.
4. Identify key local knowledges which are at risk of becoming lost in your local region. Suggest ways in which these knowledges could be passed on both within the local formal education sector and within the community.

Case Study 1.1

Community asset building: Community mural project in Invergordon in Easter Ross, Scotland

Invergordon is a small town on the east coast of Scotland, on the Cromarty Firth. Over the centuries it has hosted, and lost, a large Navy Base and early Port, an Aluminium Smelter, and a large oilrig fabrication yard. The only stable enterprise left is a whisky distillery, which offers limited employment. At the same time, growth in Inverness 40 miles away has pulled other small businesses away and torn the retail heart out of the town.

A group of community members got together to decide 'to do' something about the negative trends they were facing. They applied for a small grant from the Scottish Executive's Rural Voices: Action Research programme to begin to research a town mural project. Invergordon is a deep water port with a good docking facility and was receiving in the range of 20 cruise ships a year. Their passengers were, however, climbing right onto buses and travelling off to visit Loch Ness and other tourist features. The proposal was to revitalise the town centre with murals and newly decorated facades, along with attracting new businesses into the area which could service the new market. In essence, their first study proposed to:

1. Explore the lack of cultural focus in the town.
2. Determine whether the community perceived a need for project
3. Agree the fundamentals of the project
4. Identify the subject matter preferred by the com munity.
5. Collect narrative stories from their elderly population to be depicted in the murals.
6. Estimate the impact that the proposed murals might have on existing visiting cruise liner passengers.

The results of their research were initially controversial, with opposition coming from unexpected sources.

They persevered, however, and brought the opposition into their camp. Having successfully engaged in their first study they were able to attract funding for their first mural. They identified the following benefits to their project:

- Accessibility and promotion of the heritage of Invergordon.
- Tourism - building on the cruise liner trade.
- Raising civic pride.
- Sustainable economic regeneration of the town centre.
- Creating new businesses, increasing employment.

They recognized that the local stories and practices were assets they could collect and develop. They did this in their early study, soliciting stories and pictures from the public, having competitions to identify anonymous photos, and collecting news media resources from the past. These stories became the starting point for subsequent murals. Funding was raised to complete another two murals. In addition, they identified that their working together within the community helped develop social capital assets including:

- Passion arising from clearly illustrated needs.
- Good group dynamics.
- Ability to source missing skills and advice.
- Knowing own community's strengths and weak nesses.
- Optimism.

Eventually, the number of cruise ships stopping at Invergordon increased by fifty per cent, including the new Queen Elizabeth 2. Further, the cruise ship companies are now including the town as part of the touring opportunities they present to their passengers.

Contact: http://www.invergordonoffthewall.co.uk

The mural is finished!

Case Study 1.2

South Soria: Intelligent territory, Spain

The Development Association of Almazan (ADEMA) includes 49 municipalities in the southeast of Soria, the least populated province of Spain (5 inhab/km2). This territory has three key assets for the potential tourism development: a rich cultural and natural heritage; a strategic position in the corridors that connect the centre of the Peninsula with the Valley of the Ebro and the North of Spain, as well as the design of a 'Virtual Territory'.

ADEMA, as a Local Action Group, structures its initiative around the 'Plan for the Integration of South Soria in the Information Society', searching for a space that creates a competitive advantage based on knowledge creation and the development of a Venture-friendly Territory. The 'Virtual Territory' must interact with its real environment, so it is necessary to facilitate the technological infrastructure as well as changing the attitudes of the inhabitants towards new technologies. The activities of ADEMA's initiative focus on the following:

- Tourism. A portal offering information and on-line promotion of reservations of tourist lodgings (www.soriasurturismo.net).
- Economic Activities. Managerial Telecottage, offering integrated services for management development, legal and administrative services, e-learning), forum and specialised chats, sector information, messaging service (www.adema.es/telecentros).
- Social Promotion. A portal aiming to combat social exclusion and reduce the digital gap among third age people and unemployed women. www.soriasur.net).
- Education and Training. A thematic portal for education that includes a public access section (non formal education, technological literacy, e-learning) and an intranet that informs about available educational resources, professionals, personal pages for students, specific page for centres, documentation and virtual library.
- Environmental Services. Offers digital cartographic information and a portal relevant to environmental issues.

  (www.soriasur.net/cartografia ; www.myas.info).
- NTIC Training. Provides training in technologies with the help of trainers and support staff.

For information, contact Raul Abeledo:
rabeledo@gmail.com

Students involved in training

Case Study 1.3

The Hegypasztor Kor initiative, Hungary

Situated in the City of Oszko in Hungary, exists the Hegypasztor Kor Scheme which started as a community initiative and in the last 20 years has developed into a multipurpose, non-profit local development company.

Its main goal is to secure funds and mechanisms to make tourism a means of protection of natural and cultural heritage and sustainable development. To achieve this, a combination of learning, social and business activities were promoted, aiming to make the local community an integral component of sustainable development. For example, an inventory of the cultural history of the community has been produced and published for wider circulation. Further, a tele-cottage was established in 2001. This is mainly used by young people in the community to access the internet and as a social centre (playing online games) but also acts as a business facility centre for local people (sending faxes and using internet services). The Hegypasztor Kor Scheme also runs various social projects, including clubs for elderly people, and a media club for young people (how to use ICT and publish a local newspaper).

Its biggest project has been the reconstruction of the local pub in the centre of the village as a multi-purpose community centre, including administrative offices, a wine-tasting centre, shop, and cycle rent facilities.

Income is generated mainly from the following activities:

- Producing straw for roofing activities;
- Providing hostel accommodation for tourists, youth, and forest school camps; and
- Organising wine-related activities, including a wine-lovers club, wine tasting and marketing, and training courses related to wine production.

By training the wine producers, the quality of local wine has improved and last year, for the first time in ten years, three vineyards were re-planted. This initiative enjoys a high level of local commitment and enthusiasm, while it has inspired other projects in other parts of the country.

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The success of this initiative has inspired other regions

Case Study 1.4

A Folk Academy in the Grundtvigian tradition from the 19th Century to the 21st, Finland

There are currently 91 Folk Academies in Finland both in rural and urban areas. The first was established in the late 19th century following the principle of 'School for Life' of N.F.S. Grundtvig. Grundtvig believed that education should be available to all people and that a 'Living Word' was the best means of education. According to the Finnish Folk High School Association, a folk high school is an educational institution offering a broad range of education for adults. As residential schools, folk high schools foster a sense of community, which forms part of the all-round learning experience and functions as a cornerstone of the education process.

In the Finnish educational system, the role of the folk high schools is to provide adult education and liberal adult education. The courses offered are mainly general or non-formal but initial and further vocational training is also offered for both young and adult students. Most of the study programmes tend to concentrate on social and humanistic subjects, art subjects, languages and ICT.

The studies provided vary from short courses (2-6 days) to longer programmes (from 6 months to a full academic year). There are about 200 different programmes in the Folk Academies every year and about 3000 short courses. 10.500 students participate in the study programmes and up to 110.000 students in the short courses.

Of the 91 Folk Academies 33 are independent, 44 Christian, 11 social and 3 are specialised. Most of the Folk Academies are privately owned; they receive state support and are supervised by the education authorities. Nevertheless, legislation has granted them far-reaching autonomy and freedom.

The South Ostrobothnia College provides an excellent example of a Folk Academy with a long history that has successfully kept up with contemporary educational needs. The College is located in the small rural town of Ilmajoki in the South Ostrobothnia region of Western Finland and was founded in 1892. Its mission is to "become an international adult education centre offering students the highest level of education with which they can be successful in the global market. Some important principles in the learning process include promoting international and cultural awareness, equal rights awareness, self-guided development, open interaction and a healthy lifestyle. The aim is to create an environment of flexibility, effective communication, high motivation, networking and co-operation. All these encourage personal development, which is an important part of the institution's philosophy".

The College provides 11 study programmes for both general and vocationally oriented education. Among these it offers a Vocational Qualification in Youth and Leisure Instruction, as well as preparatory training in Vocational Qualifications through a competence-based qualifications system. There are about 350 students every year participating in the longer programmes, and approximately 2500 persons participating in short evening, weekend, summer or weekday courses throughout the year. Open University studies are also organised in conjunction with the Universities of Turku, Jyvaskyla, Helsinki and Oulu for about 700 students per year. Finally, there are 100-200 students participating in specialised professional training.

Contact: http://www.kansanopistot.fi

The neo-renaissance style Main Building of the College was built in 1895 and designed by architect Josef Stenback. It has been defined by the Museum Society of Finland as a historically significant cultural landmark

Case Study 1.5

Changing education and training systems in rural areas at the national and local level in Ljubljana, Slovenia

Most training activity in rural areas in Slovenia is focused on farmers. Traditionally there has been little training for non farming people in rural areas. It is still considered that the term 'rural' is equivalent to 'agriculture', even though the demographic and economic features of rural inhabitants are changing rapidly: Slovenia is considered to be 60% rural and 40% urban.

The training of farmers consists of technical knowledge (for primary production and complementary activities) and of subjects focused on the family and women (health, recreation, etc.). Training was, until recently, the remit of the Agricultural Advisory Service - a well organised structure which operates under the Chamber for Agriculture (under the Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, and Food) and its employees tended to be agronomists and more rarely, economists.

Until 2001, the training of farmers in the Municipality of Ljubljana depended entirely on the Advisory Service and some other educational organisations (Institute for Sustainable Development - organic production, Faculty for Agriculture - strategies, experiments on the field of new plants and Slovenian Institute For Agriculture.). Because of the vision of the office for Agriculture, in the Department of Economy and Tourism, the structure of employees was changed - for example, an ethnologist and cultural anthropologist was hired as an adviser for Rural Development, who took responsibility for the training system.

The training programme currently in operation includes units on agricultural production and management, complementary activities, cultural heritage, social issues, entrepreneurship, marketing and promotion, and creation of new market products.

This training is now targeted directly at local rural needs. The focus is on the group but the programme deals with individual's learning needs as well. Every group has a different focus and is closely observed and supported from the start of the training programme, throughout the whole process. When the group develops and creates its own structure, identifying and filling different roles, the programme steps aside to let the group get on with its own priorities. The programme offers them support for their work and for any other educational needs they have.

A special emphasis is given to the cultural heritage. The programme has developed a model for ethnological field research, in the form of research camps where students come to the field, stay there with local inhabitants for 10 days, talk to them, and the results are presented to all the inhabitants in the form of an exhibition, a report, or suggestions for new products. In one of those research camps students have learnt the skill of making paper flowers. After the camp they managed, with the help of a local school teacher, to have this course included in the curriculum of the local school. Now this skill is also brought into the tourism studies package which was developed recently for schoolchildren.

The project also researched Grinding Mills, and the traditional foods and rituals connected to them. The result is a Cook Book and cooperation with a group of local tourist farms so that they include traditional food in their menus.

Another training programme developed by the Ministry is focused on entrepreneurship more squarely. Farmers are introduced to entrepreneurship from the basics to the level where they can design their own project, develop their business objectives, goals and vision, as well as their requirements for staff and marketing. The process lasts 3 years and after that they are prepared for the market: they know what target groups to contact, how to advertise, and how narrow or wide their offer should be. Importantly, they are encouraged to think about values as well, in order to start to change the way they think of themselves as active members of society.

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The training takes place in modern facilities

Case Study 1.6

Pulteneytown People's Project, Wick, Scottish Highlands, UK

Pulteneytown is recognised as the second most deprived area in the Highlands. The current rate of unemployment is 5.7% which is the highest in the Highlands. This is an area of multiple deprivation and disadvantage, which experiences a mixture of poverty-related issues.

Pulteneytown People's Project (PPP) is a community regeneration initiative based on the town of Wick. It was established in 2002 by the residents after they felt that they had to take some action in order to improve the opportunities for everyone in the community. PPP aims to create conditions that would support and enable local people to participate fully in regeneration by empowering them to become involved in local policy and decision making. It aims to improve the quality of life for local residents, encourage training and therefore maximise employment opportunities, provide affordable childcare and generally enhance the aspirations of the community. The services provided include:

Childcare: The community wanted affordable childcare for before and after school, as there was none available. During the school holidays full day provision is offered. This MAASC (Morning And After School Club) project employs five members of staff with a bank of volunteer-led care provision in Pulteney. The availability of child-care provision has had the effect of five families being able to get back into employment and claim Working Tax Credit. The project also operates bus transport for children to and from school. This creates further access to provision for those out of the local area, usually on a referral basis from agencies such as social services. The summer playschemes are organised in partnership with local Community Learning and Development Services of the local authority who provide staff and associated costs.

Hobby Group-non formal learning: The local residents have developed a hobby group that meets four times per week to have coffee, a chat and join in various craft activities. They felt that there was a need for this as many people who had retired but were in good health felt that there was a gap in what services were available. At present there are over 50 ladies attending this group and there is a waiting list.

Drop-in advice services: People in the community see the project office as a place where they can drop in and get advice or assistance on various matters. This may be helping them fill in forms, deal with a neighbourhood problems, or just sign-posting them to the relevant agency for help.

Community-based Learning: Through working with the North Highland College, it has been possible to offer basic computing courses for over 60 people who would have never considered college to be for them. This has led to some people then deciding to attend further courses.

Progression to employment: In the three years since Pulteneytown People's Project has been op-erating it has been successful in securing funding to develop projects that the community needs; employ 17 staff; offer work placements through New Deal to 4 people: through Homelink, 6 people have been helped to gain employment.

Learning House: The project is in the process of seeking funding to develop a Learning House. This will be a learning base where people can drop in to gain skills before considering taking the step of moving on to college. Literacy and numeracy skills, C.Vs, confidence building and computer skills are amongst the topics that will be offered. The aim is to build on the trust and credibility achieved in the local community and to provide a One-Stop access to learning in a non-threatening environment and support progression opportunities to other learning providers. It is intended to work in partnership with other agencies such as Careers Scotland, Community Learning, Youth Services and Further Education Colleges to arrange delivery of their services as part of the Learning House provision.
By developing these projects, Pulteneytown People's Project is moving towards long term sustainability.

Contact: www.caithness.org

People get together to renovate a derelict site of Memory Garden, Wick Scotland.

CHAPTER 2.

New tools for education and training: ICT-supported distance learning

Introducing ICT-supported distance learning

2.1. The pace of change in education is increasingly fast and skills must be constantly adjusted to meet the changing needs of the work place. New information and communication technologies and new ways of learning have already been integrated into education and training programmes and many are in the process of being revised so that learning institutions are more responsive to the needs of the emerging industries. Education in the information society can be said to be moving away from a system centred solely on teachers to a much stronger focus on learners.

2.2. We define ICT-supported distance learning' as:

> *learning in which information and communications technology (ICT) is used to promote connections: between one learner and other learners; between learners and tutors; and between a learning commu-nity and its learning resources.*

2.3. New information technology is transforming distance learning. In the past, distance learning was conducted by post, with students receiving learning materials and assignments, completing them and posting them back to their tutor, who would mark them and return, again by post. Television has also played a role, delivering lectures and learning materials, whilst students listened and watched. Now the internet has created the possibility of distant interaction, and this has changed the way that learning materials are being delivered. This can be simply through the use of email for sending and receiving the materials, through to totally interactive courses, with sophisticated methods of creating and delivering learning materials, assessing students' knowledge and communication with and between students. Materials are now available for all sorts of topics, through colleges and universities and some commercial training organisations.

2.4. It is clear, however, that today's ICT-supported learning challenge involves more than simply moving existing courses online. Many materials are simply not available or appropriate and many tutors are not able (or willing) to develop course materials suitable for this technology. There is still a resistance to using online facilities, although this is decreasing over time. This resistance comes from both teachers and students. To overcome this resistance, learning materials need to be developed which utilise the medium to its full extent. Terminology also continues to change, and online learning is now generally called 'e-learning'. A key component of the whole system, however, is access to the Internet at broadband speeds, not always available in rural areas.

Technology for e-learning: the VLE

2.5. Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) are relatively new, but already they are having a significant impact on pedagogical practices. VLEs are an increasingly important part of strategies for delivering online and flexible learning. Many are already in place in colleges and universities, and they are spreading to primary and secondary level education too. What is a VLE? The components of a VLE consist of structures for online interactions of various kinds, usually in a managed environment. Online learning, assessment, collaboration, tracking and communication are all part of the environment.

2.6. A VLE should be designed to make the learner experience engaging and more flexible in terms of time and distance. In order to be truly a 'virtual classroom' they must offer opportunities for communication among students and between students and tutors. Email, discussion groups and notice boards form an important part of VLEs. Many institutions are just beginning to use VLEs and have not yet developed a cohesive approach to the use of communication tools. Effective use of online communication tools requires tutors to be able to instigate, steer and moderate contributions, which has an impact on how well the course is delivered. The discussion should be guided without restricting debate. The debate will often stagnate due to a lack of contribution and the tutor will need to stimulate and encourage further discussions.

2.7. In a VLE, learners can access their course materials at any time and from any place. The discussions which would be encouraged in a classroom are encouraged also in a 'virtual classroom'. The VLE can be used to pose questions, share information and allow learners to take part in discussions. Any students missing lessons have a chance to catch up, as the learning materials are available at all times. Learners who find it hard to discipline themselves to participate at a certain time find the flexibility of e-learning suits them. Learners who find it hard to participate in virtual discussions in a classroom can find it easier to participate in a discussion group. Bulletin boards allow messages, instructions regarding learning materials, and assignments to be posted and accessed at the students' convenience. Chat uses text-based messages to allow real-time conversations and can be used to debate subjects in a less formal manner than in a classroom. Confidence in the use of communication tools takes time to build, and often there is a general reluctance to participate. As a result, exercises which

empower the students in their use and familiarity with the technology should be included within the module.

2.8. Following installation, ongoing administration is necessary - this should be considered as part of the overall plan when determining whether or not to use a VLE. The same person who installs and administers the technical environment will not necessarily have the same skill-set as the person who creates the content, and in this case these should be viewed as two separate tasks. Paper based course work may be converted to online course work, but this is not necessarily the optimum use of the new environment. The online learning module structure must be designed as part of the overall course (the overall course might not be entirely delivered online - a partially online course, part using traditional methods is called 'blended learning'). Assignments and multiple-choice tests may have to be created. Existing documents may need to be converted to digital formats. Accessibility by disabled students is also a prime consideration, although there are very useful technical tools to enable this in VLEs. The upfront time taken for all of this design may not be appreciated by the commissioner of a VLE, nor by the lecturing staff who will need to do the actual preparation.

2.9. Some of the richest examples of distance learning involve interaction with on-line materials and with other people. But we cannot accept the use of on-line materials (such as World Wide Web resources) as a sufficient characteristic to define distance learning. Only when there is active interaction between students, tutors and the material can the potential of VLEs for distance learning be realized.

2.10 The interactions between people in distance learning environments can be synchronous, asynchronous or both. The interactions can be through text, voice, graphics, video, shared workspaces or combinations of these forms. The table below is one way of depicting this 'space' of distance learning possibilities as well as identifying some of the strengths and weaknesses which can - in principle - be associated with each of the main sub-areas of the space.

Strengths and limitations of e-learning

2.11. It is rather dangerous to make any strong claims about the strengths and limitations of distance learning. This is due to the fact that the term e-learning covers such a variety of technologies and ways of using them. So, what follows has to be read as 'claims in principle' rather than 'verdicts'.

Strengths

2.12. The strengths of distance learning form a long list, the items of which can be assessed on the basis of different needs, styles of learners and objectives of learning.

- **Interactive, but flexible**. E-learning supports relatively high degrees of interaction between the learner and other learners, between the learner and tutor, and with on-line learning resources. In conventional forms of higher education, interaction with peers and tutors usually requires co-presence. Distance learning supports interactivity and flexibility over the time and place of learning.
- **Promotes active engagement.** The possibility of inter action can be exploited by the teacher, through well-designed tasks or through careful on-line tutoring. In particular, it can be used to encourage more active forms of engagement in the learning process and with the material to be learnt.
- **Reflective, aiding 'deeper' processing**. In asynchronous learning, the learner has time to consider what others have been 'saying', to reflect, to consult books and other sources, in preparing their own contributions. This contrasts with 'real-time' interactions, such as in face-to-face seminars - where there is much less opportunity to consider and prepare one's argument. This opportunity for reflection can allow deeper processing of information, though this is not a guaranteed consequence.

Figure 2. Synchronous and asynchronous, multimedia and text-based environments for distance learning

	Synchronous	**Asynchronous**	Strengths	Weaknesses
Text-based	e.g. IRC (Internet relay chat), MOOs and MUDs	e.g. email, CMC	encourages clarity of expression, formalisation of knowledge etc.; indexable, searchable; small data files	time-consuming to produce; hard to capture real world working practices or tacit knowledge
Multi-media	e.g. live video-conference; shared workspace	e.g. video-on-demand; video-mail	vivid; rich; allows 'showing' as well as 'telling'; can be quick to produce and 'read'	hard to index & search; large data files
Strengths	supports interactive communication; timely; sense of event & audience	time to reflect; flexible use of time		
Weaknesses	inflexible use of time; may not scale up to large numbers	Interaction can be slow or cumbersome		

- **Permanent record.** What gets said in a seminar or tutorial disappears into the ether. There will be some kind of trace in memory, but much of what was said - good and bad - won't be available to the learner for subsequent reflection. In contrast, the discussions in distance learning environments do leave a permanent trace.
- **New opportunities for group working.** Opportunities for group working are seriously constrained in conventional teaching. These constraints are at their weakest when learners are full-time and living and working on the same campus. But for many learners - especially those who are part-time, or who have to travel in to a university site to engage in any group activity - there can be real difficulties in finding time and space for group work. Distance learning opens up new opportunities for group work by loosening some of these time and space constraints.
- **Social interaction.** It is easy to underrate the importance for learners of their interaction with peers. Some critics write off the 'social' use of email (etc) as a distraction from 'real' work. This is not how learners themselves see it, and indeed we should have severe doubts about both the possibility and the wisdom of driving hard divisions between the 'academic' and the 'social'. There is much to be gained from building on the social aspects of learning.
- **Ease of access to global resources.** Learners will increasingly feel that their use of distance learning merges seamlessly with their use of the Web. From the teacher's point of view, it becomes very easy, for example, to point to valuable resources on the Web when making points in on-line discussions.
- **Under-represented groups.** There is some evidence to suggest that the increased flexibility of distance learning allows some groups better access to higher education than they might experience otherwise. An example is women returning to study after some years of childcare. There is also some evidence that patterns of under-participation in face-to-face events by members of minority groups are not replicated in the on-line environment.
- **Changing relationships in learning.** Finally, some authors argue that e-learning can promote a 'democratisation' of learning relationships - with the teacher moving from 'sage on the stage' to 'guide on the side'.

Limitations

2.13. Most of the claimed 'strengths' of distance learning depend on a combination of the technology itself and appropriate pedagogy. Without sensible use, the strengths do not necessarily materialize and may sometimes even prove counter productive educators. Without competent technical support for example, interactivity can be lost. The following 'limitations' tend to be associated with particular forms of distance learning approach and some ingenious ways may be found of 'working around' them.

- **Lack of expressive richness.** This is most clearly the case with text-based communications and it is often cited as a major drawback of this form of e-learning. Some 'workarounds' include the use of 'emoticons' (such as a ? to represent irony or a joke). But it is also worth noting that 'expressive richness' can work - or fail to work - on a number of levels. Text-based messages may not have the expressive richness of a quick and lively verbal exchange. On the other hand, well-crafted text can be much richer than the stumbling improvisations we all hear and produce in seminars.
- **No immediacy.** This applies to asynchronous communication in particular. Some forms of communication really need quick turn-taking and/or a rapid response to a query.
- **Prolonged decision-making.** When discussion or group work extends over days rather than minutes, it can be hard and slow to build a consensus around a decision that needs to be taken.
- **Requires technical access and competence.** This is becoming less of a problem. Nevertheless, distance learning always has implications for access.
- **A different style of communication.** Not everyone takes to communication through irregular short text messages. That said, people who are not quick or confident in face-to-face debate can sometimes find themselves 'liberated' by the less intensive communicative demands of asynchronous communication.

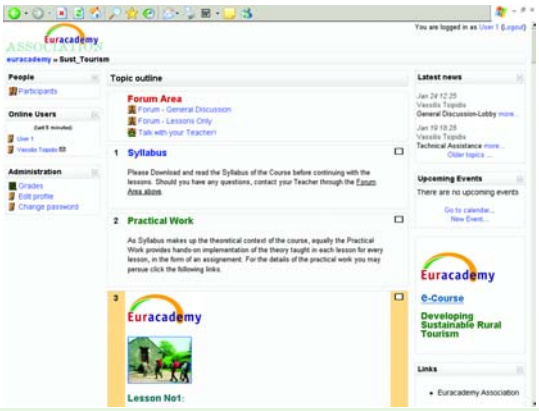
A combination of distance learning and face-to-face learning is favoured by many educationists

- **Levels of discourse may be at odds.** It is common to find a mix of language styles and contributions in an on-line discussion. Some contributions may be long, deep, analytic and thoughtful. Others may be much more spontaneous and flippant. Neither is necessarily inappropriate, but the mixture of the two can sometimes make all participants uneasy.
- **Depersonalising effects (more analytical/ judgmental).** The narrow bandwidth of text-based communication reduces the range of cues we have for building a mental picture of the people with whom we are interacting and for making judgements about what their words actually are meant to say. This can make the discourse more impersonal and analytic - which can be good, but not always be what is required.
- **Need for shared goal(s) to sustain activity.** It is unusual for participants in a distance learning activity to volunteer much of their precious time. Events like face-to-face seminars and tutorials, which are normally timetabled on a regular basis and which may even be compulsory, carry their own ways of disciplining learners' use of time. This is rarely carried across to the distance learning environment, since flexible use of time is often one of the attractions. This absence of a timetable may mean that a successful on-line event requires everyone to have a stronger stake in the shared goals of the activity than we can expect in higher education. Or it may mean that some kind of timetabling of contributions has to be laid down in the course design.

Curriculum development.

2.14. Course design is determined by the educator's technological skill sets. Content and mode of delivery are key issues of the development of any distance class. However, it is important that instruction, no matter the skill set, is designed to promote continuous learning in an engaging format. E-learning technology does not lend itself well to changing methodology once a class session has begun. With this in mind, there appears to be a need for distance teachers to stay with the 'prepared script' by designing distance education courses with high levels of organization that can control the input and output of the learning environment.

2.15. There are four "tele-techniques" that were first introduced by Parker and Monson (1980) and then described in more detail by Moore and Thompson (1990).These principles of instructional design are taken for granted in the traditional face-to-face lecture format but can become lost in distance education with disastrous results. The first is to keep students from becoming 'dehumanized' by the distance technology. The instructors must maintain a rapport with their students by creating an atmosphere that fosters relationships. The second is participation as it relates to interaction among the students within the audio/video environment. Multiple broadcast sites can be a challenge. The third is the message style in which the instructor creates strategies to generate student interest and appeal in the lecture or discussion. Finally, the fourth



Distance learning courses, such as those offered by Euracademy Association, can make a valuable contribution to updating the skills of mid-career professionals

principle is feedback. This is crucial for the instructor to determine the level of effectiveness of the distance learning process, whatever the learning environment.

Resistance factors

2.16. Resistance against e-learning concepts - including ODL (Open and Distance Learning) and distance learning - among teachers and students in adult education is due to four main factors in the tradition of adult education:

- The curriculum tradition
- The oral tradition
- Lack of confidence in technical solutions to educational matters
- Lack of experience with the medium

2.17. *The curriculum tradition.* The curriculum teaching tradition is based on linear progression in learning using study programmes, syllabuses, assignments and answers. Learners are expected to work through a certain pre-defined syllabus, to complete certain pre-designed assignments and to pass exams and tests before the institution can accredit the learning. This tends to produce a "just-in-case" curriculum: content is something which is good to know "just in case" one might need it. Distance learning is better at supporting a more direct learning need, directly tailored to individual learners' needs. Unfortunately this "just in time" approach conflicts with existing and established academic understandings of learning. The core curriculum content is, however, not changed when an academic institution offers ordinary education as ODL.

2.18. *Oral tradition.* Part of the pedagogical tradition is that learning is encouraged by dialogue and discussion. Therefore teachers in training institutions are used to oral and direct communication. This is sensitive and open to direct challenges and dialogues which include body-language, tone of voice and other non-verbal forms of communication. Some teachers doubt that digital communication can be as successful as oral, and can be inex-perienced at finding digital ways to inspire and challenge the student by other means. They need to guide students with different educational methodologies. These new challenges call for dramatic changes

in both teachers' and learners' writing and comprehension competences.

2.19. *Lack of confidence in technical solutions to educational matters*. Prior experiences with techno-fixes can provide little confidence in the success of this technology. Computers are not the first examples of this in the world of education. In the early 1970s language-labs were introduced; but ten years later, hardly any were still functioning. Radio and Television were also promoted as being able to render teachers superfluous when they were introduced into the market - they have now found their own, much humbler corner, in the classroom.

2.20. *Lack of experience with the medium*. Developing e-learning and distance learning requires acknowledging the medium and its strengths and limitations. Teachers must be encouraged to explore the potentials of the medium and to develop ways to integrate ICT pedagogically.

On-line testing / certification

2.21. Assessment of learning is a key component of pedagogical method. The usual testing method was a written test requiring manual marking or auditing. The use of technology changed this rapidly, and a number of different methods have been developed to provide sophisticated machine-marking and, with the use of online technologies, to provide quick and specific feedback to the student. Results can be presented automatically only a few minutes after the completion of the testing. In such a system, for example:

- The candidates are registered for a test and acquire an id and a password.
- They enter the web site where the test is situated.
- They apply the acquired ID and password and then enter the test.
- They choose the appropriate test, register their name and the test begins.
- Upon completion of the test, the candidate submits it electronically and within a few minutes the results appear on the screen.
- In this way the candidates automatically know if they have passed or failed the test.

2.22. Feedback usually consists of a grading of the candidates' performance in each of the test sections and the total grade at the end of the test together with the indication of pass or fail.

Distance learning in rural areas

2.23. Distance learning and e-learning in particular have raised hopes for the democratisation of learning, particularly in continuing and higher education towards the end of the 20th century. However, fulfilling the growing educational aspirations of rural inhabitants remains a challenge for many European countries. In the less affluent south and in most of the new member states, most higher education institutions and specialist vocational schools tend to be based in urban rather than rural areas. Furthermore, since its creation, the internet and more broadly ICT has been seen as the pathway to a renaissance for rural areas. By bringing about the 'death' of distance, the internet would balance geographic inequities. In reality, this has only partly happened. Despite the many advantages brought about by the advent of Internet, the disadvantaged position of rural areas has been reinforced by the Digital Divide.

2.24. By some measures, the rural digital divide is narrowing because more and more people in rural areas own computers and gain access to the internet. In the 1980s, the telecottages movement played an important role in this. Telecottages started to be installed in the Scandinavian countries, in remote villages, aiming to improve the access of their communities to public administration, education and business markets. A telecottage is an IT-telecommunication centre, equipped with a simple computer network serving to satisfy as many information needs as possible. The movement was spread remarkable widely in the 1990s across Europe, and found a particularly welcoming ground in some of the new Member States, such as Hungary (see Case Study 2.3).

2.25 Yet greater access does not mean that the digital divide is becoming narrower. Instead, more advanced forms of IT are making basic access obsolete and create a New Digital Divide characterized by disparity in speed, quality, and capacity of internet access. High-speed broadband access, which is becoming the standard for both business and personal use, is much scarcer in rural areas than in urban centres. This new digital divide is affecting distance learning more that other computer-based activities, because e-courses require usually high specifications of internet access to be delivered.

Telecottage in Bezeny, Hungary

2.26. Flexible, online learning may have many advantages for rural small and medium sized businesses. SMEs are notoriously difficult to engage in conventional training and learning, because it is particularly difficult for them to find the set time each week to commit to a classroom, perhaps a journey time away. Distance learning may provide a good alternative, if the adult students can obtain fast access to internet and if they have the necessary self-confidence and discipline to sit through a

virtual course. A study carried out by the "*Euracademy Observatory of the use of ICT-supported Lifelong Learning by SMEs, Micro-Enterprise and Self-Employed in Rural Areas*" among several hundred employees and owners of rural SMEs in 7 European countries showed that a major constraint for taking up e-learning was their IT 'shyness' and the lack of self-confidence or assumed lack of motivation to follow through an e-learning course. The attitudes towards e-leaning of both people who had used and those who had not used e-learning was on the whole positive, with regards to the availability of e-learning provision and the benefits that would expect from such learning (see Case Study 2.5).

Conclusion

2.27. ICT opens up new possibilities in pedagogical thinking. While classroom teaching is designed for the 'average' student, ICT enables real differentiation in content and working methods. Educational events can be organized in ways that meet individual needs and learning styles.

2.28. Distance education can be delivered in an economical and "user-friendly" format. In many ways, the traditional communication gap between the instructor and student, due to geographic distance, has been bridged. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that a correct match is achieved between learners' needs and the technological tools employed. Instructors need to be reflective in their pedagogical principles and adjust their teaching style in a manner that is conducive to student learning. They need to be aware of the psychological, social, and technical obstacles which distant learners face. Students will also have to take more responsibility for their own learning. To be a successful learner, they will have to partner with the instructor to overcome the obstacles that are inherent to the distance-learning environment and also overcome the intimidation of using the technology itself.

2.29. E-learning offers practitioners access to a wealth of resources to use with learners, but it is essential that the practitioner has an understanding of the material in order to handle and manage it effectively. The Internet contains many thousands of sites which have materials available to the tutor, and care needs to be taken to assure the validity and veracity of the information they contain.

2.30. When choosing a VLE and related pedagogical software, it is important to scrutinize its features in terms of learner engagement. A large proportion of online learning materials fail to take advantage of the possibilities of the medium and the reputation of online learning has sometimes been marred by unimaginative applications which fail to inspire the learners.

2.31. Good IT skills together with good teaching skills are needed; this can be achieved by bringing together the work of a team, who may create the materials or purchase and adapt commercially available materials. By combining specialist pedagogical knowledge with specialist IT knowledge, appropriate learning situations can be created for a range of learners. Learners with different learning styles benefit from a balanced range of presentation styles and can more successfully engage in the learning process.

2.32. Trends indicate that in the future there will be an increase in the volume of students taking distance learning programmes as well as changes in the type of delivery systems which will be used. Decision-makers in educational institutions need to know more about the possibilities, the investment and training required, and the administration needs of the new systems. Teachers and tutors need experience in ICT to be able to construct ways to challenge the student via the Internet, to respond to individuals and groups and to facilitate Internet discussions. Students need help in learning how to work with the medium, how to communicate, and how to cooperate with their peers.

Questions arising from Chapter 2 to reflect on:

1. How do strengths balance the limitations of distance learning in your opinion?
2. Have you ever considered taking up distance learning? If you had the opportunity, what subject would you like to study from a distance?
3. What constraints might limit the take up of distance learning by residents in the rural areas of your region? (E.g. infrastructure, training provision, psychological etc). Make an evaluation and a rank-ordering of the constraints according to their importance.
4. Can you describe the types of learner that would be most likely to take up distance learning in the rural areas of your region?
5. What subjects might be most attractive to rural distance learners in your region? E.g. job-related, leisure-related etc. Make a list of subjects and think who would be attracted by them in terms of sex, age, occupational status etc.

Case Study 2.1
Learndirect, UK

The University for Industry (Ufl), in the UK led to the creation of the *Learndirect* brand to deliver vocational e-learning and is the largest government supported e-learning organisation in the world.

Since 2000, 2 million learners have taken *Learndirect* courses and its advice service has provided free careers advice and guidance to more than 7 million callers. There are 550 *Learndirect* courses; more than 75% are available online.

Learndirect has the remit:

- To provide learning to reach those who are unlikely to participate in traditional forms of learning
- To equip people with the skills they need for employability
- To deliver through e-learning

There are 2000 Learning Centres across England, available to individual adults wanting to improve existing skills or learn new ones and to employers looking for an innovative way to develop the skills of their workforce.

How does Learndirect work?

Funding for Ufl comes from the Department for Education and Skills, the government body responsible for education in the UK. The learners normally pay a contribution for their learning, dependent on their own circumstances.

Courses are available for individuals, and many can be purchased online and learning can start immediately. Other courses need tutor guidance, which is normally provided by a Learning Centre. In this case, the learner visits a Learning Centre, where advice and guidance on the course, type of course or level of the training, is given by staff, the learner registers and again, can begin learning immediately.

Learning Centres provide the facilities for flexible learning. The centres have to be equipped to a certain standard, with up-to-date IT equipment and high speed Internet connections. Tutors have to be qualified to provide adult education.

There are about 550 courses available, most of which are available online. The availability of courses changes; new ones are added, some removed, some updated to reflect changes in legislation or good practice.

At a Learning Centre, facilities are available online to manage the learners registered to the centre, regarding registration, data reports, progress reports and tutor support information.

Learndirect for businesses

Learndirect has a range of services to help businesses of all sizes:

- Online courses give businesses and their employees the flexibility to learn new skills at a time and a place to suit them (home, workplace or learning centre).
- Wide range of courses available including IT skills, legal compliance, sector specific, sales, marketing.
- Includes courses on 'Setting Up a Business'.

Recently, *Learndirect* has offered National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). NVQs are work-related, competence based qualifications, which demonstrate ability at work. Learning resources that deliver the underpinning knowledge for the NVQ are available online with *Learndirect*, and Learning Centres have trained Assessors, who visit the learners in the workplace to assess their competences. Some business courses are government funded, but most are expected to be funded by the employer or the individual.

Although Ufl caters to a mass educational market, its strategic vision is to meet the skills gap by producing sector-specific products and it holds contractual agreements with the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to provide e-learning materials for their sector.

Learndirect is delivering a very large amount of work-based e-learning activity and is seen as a crucial partner in expanding this field. Employer engagement strategies for *Learndirect* are currently being refined. Working with SMEs is promoted aiming to identify their overall learning needs, the skills needed by the workforce and engage interest with both employers and employees. Any learning provider staff member is required to relate to, and work with businesses.

The barriers to learning include lack of awareness of provision, the financial and opportunity cost of training and still limited access to computers and broadband, for both individuals and employers. Broadband is available to 90% of the UK, but take-up remains a problem although this is rapidly changing.

Learndirect also has 'Learning through Work' - a way for individuals and work-based groups to get university degrees within the workplace, without formal attendance at a university.

SSCs are beginning to use e-learning to meet their goals. In collaboration with *Learndirect*, some sectors have set up sector learning hubs. Training is delivered to employees in the sector via learning centre, the workplace or at home.

Sector Skills Councils and Learndirect

Eleven SSCs work with Ufl/*Learndirect* to deliver e-learning and establishing the regional skills partnerships - Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), Jobcentre Plus and the Small Business Service (SBS).

These regional skills partnerships are major players in integrating regional activity on training, jobs, innovation and business support.

- Employers have been given a strong voice in design and content of vocational qualifications;
- Small Business Network - Support in Management and Leadership for SMEs 5-25 employees - this module will be available online.
- Extensive range of help available, including training, to help people set up their own business.

Other facilities

- Online e-assessment for Basic Skills (reading, writing, numbers and ICT) - more accessible to learners.
- Free training is offered which will give assistance into work for the unemployed.

UKOnline

Ufl also runs the UKOnline centres, providing another 6000 centres available to people for access to the Internet, access to e-learning with *Learndirect* and to 'Directgov' the UK government's e-portal for all government departments and services.

These centres were set up to deliver access to ICT for those people who do not have facilities at home -these include libraries, community centres, colleges.

Contact: www.learndirect.co.uk.

Case Study 2.2

The European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) Foundation

In 1995 the European Commission set up an Initiative to raise the level of IT skills in industry. As part of this initiative it funded a Council of European Professional Informatics Societies (CEPIS) task force to examine how to raise IT skill levels in industry throughout Europe. The task force identified the Finnish Computer Driving Licence (which had been introduced in Finland the previous year) as a potentially suitable vehicle and carried out pilot tests during 1995 and early 1996. Following this, a new test was launched as the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) in August 1996 in Sweden.

In 1997 the European Computer Driving Licence Foundation Ltd (ECDL-F) was established in Dublin with a small grant from the Irish government and the ECDL was subsequently rolled out across Europe and internationally. In the short time since its launch the ECDL has become the global benchmark for end-user computer certification.

The ECDL-F is the global governing body and licensing authority of the ECDL, the world's leading end-user computer skills certification programme. As a not-for-profit organisation originally founded under the auspices of many of the world's leading computer societies, the ECDL-F is imbued with a strong social ethos. From its original formation by the European computer societies, the ECDL-F has broadened and strengthened its computer society links and now numbers over 40 computer societies worldwide as ECDL/ICDL Licensees.

The ECDL-F was conceived with the express purpose of raising IT skills in industry. Its strong social ethos further requires the Foundation to dedicate itself to providing access for all to the Information Society and raising the general level of computer skills in society. ECDL-F is committed to expanding its range of end-user computer skills certification products and therefore has an active approach to product development. Many new products have come on stream over the last twelve months and more are in the pipeline.

ECDL certification is awarded by the ECDL-F to those who have passed the seven tests (75% average) using common desktop applications on a personal computer. Eliminating the need for labour intensive manual marking and auditing, the online, automated testing solution is the perfect complement for the certification.

The ECDL claims to be the world's largest and fastest growing certification in computer skills. The certification is designed specifically for those who wish to gain or improve basic qualification in computing; no prior knowledge of IT or desktop skills is required. The ECDL enjoys immense popularity around the world. Currently, over 3 million people have studied for the qualification in 135 countries around the world.

ECDL Hellas has developed an online automated testing solution that is based on the certification process specified by ECDL Foundation, where the candidate working in a simulated environment either answers the questions or accomplishes tasks in order to prove his / her expertise on each of the required modules for the certification. Once they pass a modules' test it is recorded on the skills card which is exchanged for certification when all seven modules are passed.

For information, contact Giannis Markasiotis:
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Case Study 2.3

Jaszkiser Telecottage, Hungary

Telecottages have helped to promote the penetration of ICT in many rural communities across Europe, reducing the digital divide between urban and rural areas. This digital divide was quite marked in the central European countries because of the low level of investment even in basic telephone services in rural areas during the socialist period.

In the period since 1995, the rural regions of Hungary have benefited from the creation of a network of telecottages. This network is now linked through the Hungarian Telecottages Association (Magyar Telehaz Szovetseg). But in the early days of the movement, the initiative was often taken at local level. An example of this is provided by Jaszkiser, a small town of about 5,000 people in Jasz-Nagykun-Szolnok County.

The telecottage at Jaszkiser was established as a civil institution in 1997. The initiative came through the Fund for the Children of Jaszkiser and the EU's Phare programme, which supported a project for the development of democracy skills among children in the village. The telecottage was opened with the assistance of Dem Net, together with local resources.

Jaszkiser telecottage provides information about economic, cultural, educational and public utility activities of the village. It gives organisational and technical support during festivals and social events, such as the preparation of journals to advertise folklore events, feasts in the village and the World Meeting of the Jasz People. It offers training programmes through which about 200 people have gained OKJ elementary and ECDL certificate in operating computers. It has helped to establish a civilian database, and a CD-Rom which evaluates the development potential of agriculture, infrastructure, human resources and the economy in the village.

In these ways, the Jaszkiser telecottage became a significant centre for local community development. The experience in Jaszkiser, together with the findings from several academic research projects carried out on the functioning of telecottages, point to the conclusion that alleviating the digital divide requires the commitment and resources of the state. Other key elements for the successful operation of telecottages include the appropriate planning of regional development in terms of new ICTs and local value systems, as well as matching infrastructure with local human resources.

ICT training is offered in telecottages in Hungary

Contact: http://www.telehaz.hu

Case Study 2.4

Euracademy-inspired distance learning in rural Poland

The course benefited from the village computer labs that were set up in several schools in the provinces of Kujawy-Pomerania and Pomerania

Following the successful completion of the Euracademy project, Nicolas Copernicus University set up a distance learning postgraduate degree course in the field of sustainable development with an emphasis in rural areas. For the delivery of the course an interactive internet platform was constructed and students were provided with login and passwords which also allowed teachers to identify students progress through each module. The five modules were Introduction to Sociology, Contemporary Polish Society, Sustained Rural Development, EU Common Agricultural Policy and Rural Development in various European Countries. Numerous features such as charts, tables, internet links and illustrations were used as reference material for students together with traditional type of learning material such as books and notes. For the continuous evaluation of the students' progress, self administered tests were distributed.

The course was pilot tested in February 2002 in the provinces of Kujawy-Pomerania and Pomerania. The students were proposed by the Provincial Authorities who were looking for staff with experience in local development and knowledge of the local economy and society. One of the conditions set by the university to the Provinces regarding student-nomination was that the number of the students enrolled did not exceed the number of computers available. Overall, 86 students enrolled in the courses. Lectures and workshops took place in several school computer labs via the internet. During those workshops, the students had the opportunity to consult the teachers and discuss the relevant modules. Throughout the learning period, the students were in regular contact with the teachers via email, with over 500 emails having being received by the teachers. In order to receive credits for the learning modules, students had to sit exams via the internet. The questions were drawn individually for each of the students and completed tests were automatically transmitted to the platform server. The final step for the participants to successfully complete the course was to submit and defend a thesis to the Examination Committee.

Following the success of the pilot stage of the course, which was successfully completed by 51 out of the 86 enrolled students, Nicolas Copernicus University is currently organising a full-time undergraduate degree in rural development, targeting Polish villages interested in applying for EU funding through the Common Agricultural Policy and Structural Funds.

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Case Study 2.5

The European Observatory of Lifelong Learning in rural areas

The *European Observatory of the use of ICT-supported Lifelong Learning by SMEs, Micro-Enterprise and Self-Employed in Rural Areas*, in short 'Euracademy Observatory' was a transnational project financed in part by the European Commission in the context of the Leonardo Da Vinci Community Vocational Training Action Programme. The project is led by the Ruralia Institute at the University of Helsinki, and is implemented by a partnership of eight organisations, mostly NGOs, universities and research institutes, from seven EU countries. The Observatory supports the creation of an online resource centre and databank of research findings concerning the lifelong learning uptake by SMEs, micro-enterprises and the self-employed in rural areas, placing emphasis on the role ICT can play in meeting the learning needs of these target groups. The potential beneficiaries of the Observatory include training providers, individual learners, certification agencies, social partners, policy makers and researchers.

The Observatory conducted original research in 7 countries (Greece, Finland, Poland, Hungary, Germany, Spain, UK), by delivering online 3 questionnaires in 9 languages. Completed research includes:

- Surveys of e-learning providers, aiming to describe and document the characteristics of learning provision in a variety of rural areas across Europe.
- Surveys of e-learners in rural areas, aiming to identify their learning needs as well as their job and socio-economic profiles; and evaluate the contribution of ICT-supported learning in raising their employment prospects, job security and mobility.
- Surveys of a control group, i.e. of people working in rural SMEs or seeking work in rural areas, aiming to establish the characteristics of the 'latent' demand for e-learning and investigate constraints that inhibit SMEs from taking up ICT-supported learning.
- A review of policies and practices of ICT-supported lifelong learning across Europe. This review provided the wider context to understand and interpret the findings of the surveys.

Some of the main conclusions of this study provide indications for the 'conditions' that should precede the wider uptake of ICT-supported learning in rural areas:

- spread a culture of learning among rural SMEs, which forms the basis of any kind of further education and training;
- overcome personal inhibitions and wrong perceptions of ICTs; among rural people;
- build satisfactory infrastructure in rural areas to allow fast internet connection that is necessary for e-learning;
- provide special support and counseling to rural people to help them start their e-learning careers;
- encourage training organizations to approach and target rural areas, understanding the needs of their inhabitants and enterprises;
- spread the correct information about the opportunities offered by e-learning for personal and career/business development
- persuade the less educated and older workers and entrepreneurs to take advantage of ICTs.

The Observatory is hosted on the website of Euracademy Association, www.euracademy.org and may be also accessed directly at the address www.euracademy-observatory.org . The Observatory has already built a body of information and knowledge through the research mentioned above. The research results, a database of best practice and 5 quarterly Newsletters have been published online. Also, the Observatory has started a library of relevant publications and hosts virtual workshops and a discussion forum on the subject of lifelong learning in rural areas. There are plans by the University of Helsinki and the Euracademy Association to continue the operation of the Observatory beyond the life of the Leonardo project, and expand the present network of training providers and social partners that are supporting the Observatory.

Contact: www.euracademy-observatory.org

The Observatory will continue to operate beyond the life of the project.

Part II: New Models for providing education and training

CHAPTER 3.

Primary and Secondary Education

The importance of rural schools

3.1. Rural schools mean a lot to the vitality of their community and sustainability of rural life. They act both as providers of education equipping children with the necessary skills and knowledge and as important institutions that sustain rural communities. Unfortunately, many rural schools close down every year across Europe, due to the inability of the states to sustain them financially. According to Lukkari (2005) the closure of a school affects a great deal of the local life and may have a strong negative impact on population figures and on the local economy. Experience has shown that once schools close down, many villages suffer a dwindling population and as a result a general decline.

3.2. Small village schools with less than 100 pupils from grades 1 to 6 - are often the ones best integrated in their small communities. Yet in many parts of Europe they are the ones facing the greatest threats. The Finnish experience on this, illustrates the issues faced by many rural schools.

3.3. In Finland, the trend of closing down small schools first started in the 1960s because of low birth rates and migration from rural areas. The remaining network of small schools were supported by the state until the 1990s, but from then on many structural changes contributed to an additional decrease in the number of schools: the state subsidy system changed, and the legislation for comprehensive schools was revised giving greater power to the municipalities. As Finland was at that time experiencing a heavy period of economic depression, one way to balance the budgets of the municipalities was to close down schools (Vitikka 2004).

3.4. There are over 400 municipalities in Finland, of which 62% are urban. In 2004 there were about 3400 comprehensive schools. The cost of delivering comprehensive education differs between different areas (from 3700 euros to 15 200 euros per pupil per year). Of course education in small rural municipalities with low population densities and declining tax bases is more costly to provide than in a larger urban location. There are now 900 fewer schools in Finland than there were in 1996. Of those closed down, the majority were schools of 50 pupils or less. And, with centralization, the number of schools for more than 500 pupils has increased (Vitikka 2004).

3.5. The process of closing a village school usually concentrates on the political and financial issues - no educational or social arguments are used or taken into consideration. It seems that the distance between those who work in and with the school, and those who make the administrative and political decisions is so wide, that the different realities are hard to match. Improved communication and cooperation is needed between the two parties to ensure both the survival of the schools and of the community surrounding them.

Other countries have also recognized the value of small rural schools in the sustainability of local regions and have undertaken initiatives to help support them. Two such examples are presented in Case Studies 3.1 and 3.4.

Hakojarvi is a thriving village in Finland, where the inhabitants managed to sustain the local school through voluntary work

Challenges and opportunities for rural education

3.6. In addition to the risk of school closures, other changes pertinent to modern societies affect the effectiveness of rural education. Adapting rural education to the needs of modern rural society is essential if we want to achieve equality between urban/rural life but also to maximize chances of sustainability of the rural regions:

- The first consideration is that the concept of sustainable development needs to transcend through the

educational system. After family, school is second most influential factor in a child's life. It helps instil values and principles, raises awareness about issues, and encourages a desirable behaviour. By embedding the principles of sustainable development in everyday school life, but also by building pupils' knowledge and skills, school children will grow into informed and more responsible adults with what regards the development of their village, town or region and more likely to become proactive citizens of their communities.

- One very important factor that modern education must consider is the shifting demands of the rural employment market. There are several market trends that drive this change. For example: (a) the shift from primary sector-dependent economies (agriculture, mining etc.) to the growth of the tertiary sector (services); (b) the technological developments that affect the possibilities available for employment, how people work and the skills they require to making use of these; (c) the shift to a global economy alongside a local one, (d) the change in the entire business model such as the increased importance of entrepreneurship, partnerships and networks and (e) a change in consumers' attitudes and choices such as the desire for organic food products or renewable sources of energy. These changes are relevant to one of the key outcomes of education systems - i.e. preparation for employment -thus affecting both its direction and scope. Schools must give their pupils the necessary skills and knowledge to respond flexibly to newly flexible job markets.
- Another challenge is a cultural one. We find ourselves in a multicultural and multi-ethnic society that calls for suitable, adjusted education plans if we wish to cater for the needs of an international or even global student body. Communities are faced with the realities of immigration, which is a new phenomenon in many European countries, and it is necessary to respond appropriately. In rural areas, the arrival of immigrants from different countries is not uncommon, and it is necessary to prepare schools to support the needs of these new populations. Schools represent an important institution in this respect, as they are expected to establish policies for the effective and equal education of all their students, to respect their diversity and build a positive world culture in their learning methods while honouring local culture.
- The growing importance of ICT is another important factor. This does not just affect employment prospects: Increasingly people are using digital technologies - mobile phones, blogs, the World-Wide Web - in their personal lives. This has particular importance for rural areas, bearing in mind that the ability to communicate is a key factor in both economic activity and in dealing with geographical isolation. This must therefore be reflected in school curricula so that students gain the necessary skills to participate in digital life.

The importance of ICT and connectivity in rural school education

3.7. In order to make rural schools sustainable across the 21st century, it is necessary to secure ICT skills and resources and access to the Internet. This is already common practice in some countries, (i.e. Scandinavian countries, France, UK) and helps reduce barriers to higher education, employment opportunities, access to information and to services. A good example is the usage of computers in French schools, as Case Study 3.3 suggests, representing one of the first examples of applying e-learning in primary schools in France - a practice which is now widespread among the rural schools of that country.

3.8. The increase in activities carried out through teleworking (i.e. working from home using computer and internet applications) can change the profile of work in rural areas, although their diffusion has not been as wide as initially expected. The ability to perform tasks from a distance, allowing flexible and part-time work models to develop in rural areas, serves the economic, social and educational needs of rural communities in a way that also helps people to maintain their quality of life. This also makes it possible for some people now living in urban areas to return to rural areas and yet retain their way of earning a living. Education should therefore incorporate those elements which would prepare students to adopt these flexible work models. Learning systems have to adapt accordingly and traditional training models are being reformulated into lifelong learning ones. Primary and secondary schools are considered as the initial steps of a lifelong learning trajectory, teaching the individual methods of knowledge transfer that will be used also at later stages for continuing education and training. An example of a centrally controlled, official effort to introduce ICT training and internet connection in the formal education system is given by policies in Spain.

3.9. In Spain, in 1996 there were 300 schools which had Internet connection, operating under a programme called New Technologies, developed by the Ministry of Education. In 1997 this figure rose to 3,000 schools with more than 15,000 teachers online. In 1998 connection was offered to all schools prossessing the appropriate means and a target was set of getting 5.000 schools connected to the Internet by the end of that year. Today Internet connection exists in practically all schools where phone connection is possible. This means that almost 100% of schools are connected to Internet even though they may be very small in size. Another example of a school ICT programme is presented in Case Study 3.2.

Innovative pedagogy in small rural schools

3.10. A typical educational practice in Finnish rural schools is the teaching of combined classes. This has traditionally been the way of organising teaching in small schools in rural areas, but now is also employed at some urban schools as an innovative strategy to cope

with fewer teachers or declining student populations (Vitikka, 2004). Research shows that in multi-age classes, pupils have greater chances to practice their social skills. The small number of pupils makes individual attention from the teacher more feasible than in bigger classes; pupils also learn to do things by themselves and show initiative, because the teacher has to look after children of different ages in the same class.

3.11. This pedagogy has a positive effect on pupils. Pupils in neighbourhood schools learn a lot from each other. They do different kinds of projects together and older ones help the younger ones. Neighbourhood schools are generally located mostly outside the built-up areas and offer more outdoor opportunities for sports and other break-time activities. The small size of the class also makes it possible to use all-round teaching methods. There can be fewer disturbances and teasing in neighbourhood schools, because smaller groups foster an atmosphere of safety, familiarity and joint responsibility.

3.12. In addition to the positive pedagogical aspects of small schools with combined classes, there also are challenges. Evaluations from the 1990s showed that although small schools are safe and welcoming, at the same time learning results can be less satisfactory than in larger schools, and academic quality needs support and attention. Teachers in small schools need to actively participate in continuous professional development and form alliances with colleagues from other schools in order to meet all the requirements of their demanding work.

A fire and rescue drill involves all the pupils of a neighborhood school

3.13. The most recent structural changes affecting the small village schools in Finland began in 1999 when the legislation regarding comprehensive schools changed again. This continued in 2001 when the distribution of class hours changed, and in 2004 when the national core curriculum was streamlined. The latter meant that there are no separate primary schools for grades 1-6, but instead, one combined curriculum provides a continuous learning path for the pupil through the whole nine years of comprehensive schooling. This again requires cooperation and discussion between the small schools and the large central schools, which traditionally collected the pupils from the small primary schools for grades 7 - 9. This movement between schools causes a major change in the lives of the pupils in many ways, in an educational and cultural sense.

3.14. One way to develop a school and to keep it alive - to make it the heart of the community- is to connect other services to it: afternoon day-care or club activities; catering services for older persons; activities of different associations; library services; adult education courses, etc. Case Study 3.4 demonstrates this practice in a Finnish village.

Training for entrepreneurship and participatory citizenship

3.15. It is important to include entrepreneurship training in the teaching and organisation of activities in small rural schools from a very early age. It is also a good way to involve the surrounding community to the everyday life of the school and its pupils. This can be done through different methods and in connection to different themes across the curriculum. As entrepreneurship is fundamental to the creation of sustainable rural economies, embedding entrepreneurship in the core curriculum can help improve the prospects of the school pupils.

3.16. "Participatory citizenship and entrepreneurship" is a cross-curricular theme (appearing in the Finnish national core curriculum, 2004). It helps pupils perceive society from the viewpoint of different players, develop the capabilities needed for civic involvement and creates a foundation for entrepreneurial methods. It is also an example of goal-conscious education incorporated in learning situations that help develop students' own abilities, so that they become initiative-taking, responsible and independent citizens.

3.17. The objectives of participatory citizenship and entrepreneurship are to create students who will:

- come to understand the importance, mechanisms, and needs of the school community, the public sector, the business world and the organizations, from the perspective of the society in which they live;
- form their own critical opinions, making use of various types of skills and knowledge;
- learn to participate in community life and to take action for shared concerns in their local and school communities;
- learn to confront and deal with changes, uncertainty, and conflicts, and to act with a sense of enterprise and initiative;
- learn to act innovatively and perseveringly in achieving a goal, and to assess their own personal actions and their impacts;
- get to know working life and entrepreneurial activity, and understand the importance of these to the individual and society.

3.18 The core content of such a curriculum includes:

- basic information about the activity and division of labour between the school community, the public sector, the business world, and other organizations;
- the importance of democracy in the community and society;
- various means of participation and influence in civic society;
- networking to promote one's own and general welfare;
- participating and exerting an influence in one's school and living environment, and evaluating the impact of one's actions;
- basic information on entrepreneurship, its importance to society, and getting an introduction to working life.

Contextualized learning

3.19. Contextualized learning is very important for all students and particularly appropriate to schools in rural areas. Contextualization can achieve the difficult task of linking 'school knowledge' with 'home knowledge' or 'life knowledge'. The experience, culture and 'knowledge' of people who live in rural areas vary from the ones of people that live in the cities; even between rural areas there are differences. However most primary school curricula in use at present are not place-based. Rather, they are organised according to the study of separate, specific content or subject areas or disciplines, such as language, mathematics, science, history, etc.

3.20. Contextualization allows teachers to relate the content, however rigid, to the local environ-ment. There are elements of all subject areas which can be locally contextualized. In this way, a centrally produced curriculum can be 'localized' because teachers adapt the way in which they deal with the prescribed content by using the experience of the learners as a basis for teaching and learning. This is one way of addressing the problem of rigid basic education curricula produced at a national scale, allowing, as it does, curriculum flexibility to be incorporated at the local level. The process of contextualization is most effective when it involves other stakeholders, not only the school, but also government and community representatives, businesses, professionals and experts and even the learners themselves as they contribute actively to the learning process. This leads to what Lubben et al (1995) called 'curriculum empowerment', and resembles the ideas of place-based education mentioned in the first Chapter.

Learning by doing can be fun while the traditional sex roles have been thrown away

3.21. Agriculture, for example, offers a valuable context for a large number of subjects, including science, health, mathematics and social studies. Also, by relating the school curriculum to the environment of children and young people in rural areas, the idea of sustainability becomes part of their thinking, as they link knowledge of the environment with the productive activities of their own communities.

Education for sustainable development: The experience of Hungary

3.22. Since the educational reform in Hungary, several interesting models of education for sustainability have been tried out which are very relevant to rural communities. These include:

a) *Forest schools*

Schoolchildren spend a week during the school year attending classes outside the school, in a place close to nature. The curriculum there includes topics related to nature, cultural heritage, local history and traditions. During the forest school visit, students lead a different lifestyle, organise projects and group discussions without a strict timetable or other traditional schooling practice. Environmental education offers a direct connection to nature, situating the curriculum within a local environment. Teachers can also develop their educational skills and competencies in the forest schools. The 'forest schooling' model includes a strong input from families and from local communities too. The initiative was awarded funding by two Ministries (Education, Environmental Protection and Water Affairs).

b) *Eco-schools*

Sustainability is the focus of eco-schools. The Hungarian eco-school network consists of public education institutions which give priority to education for sustainability. The idea of eco-schools was created in the context of OECD ENSI international cooperation, supported by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Environmental Protection and Water Affairs of Hungary. These schools have strong connections to local government and the local community and deliver efficient knowledge management, externally and internally. Their activities include regional conferences; in-service teacher training; annual countryside conferences; and an Eco-School Award programme. By providing ecological education, Hungarian eco-schools promote positive change in rural areas.

There are 3 types of eco-school models:

i) The school can be an 'ecological enterprise' where the

main objective is to improve the efficiency of schools in promoting sustainability.

ii) The school can be seen as a 'family' with strong identity and communication.

iii) The school can be a research community with the main goal of being a prominent learning organisation in its area, implementing the basics of sustainable development.

c) *Zoo-pedagogy programmes*

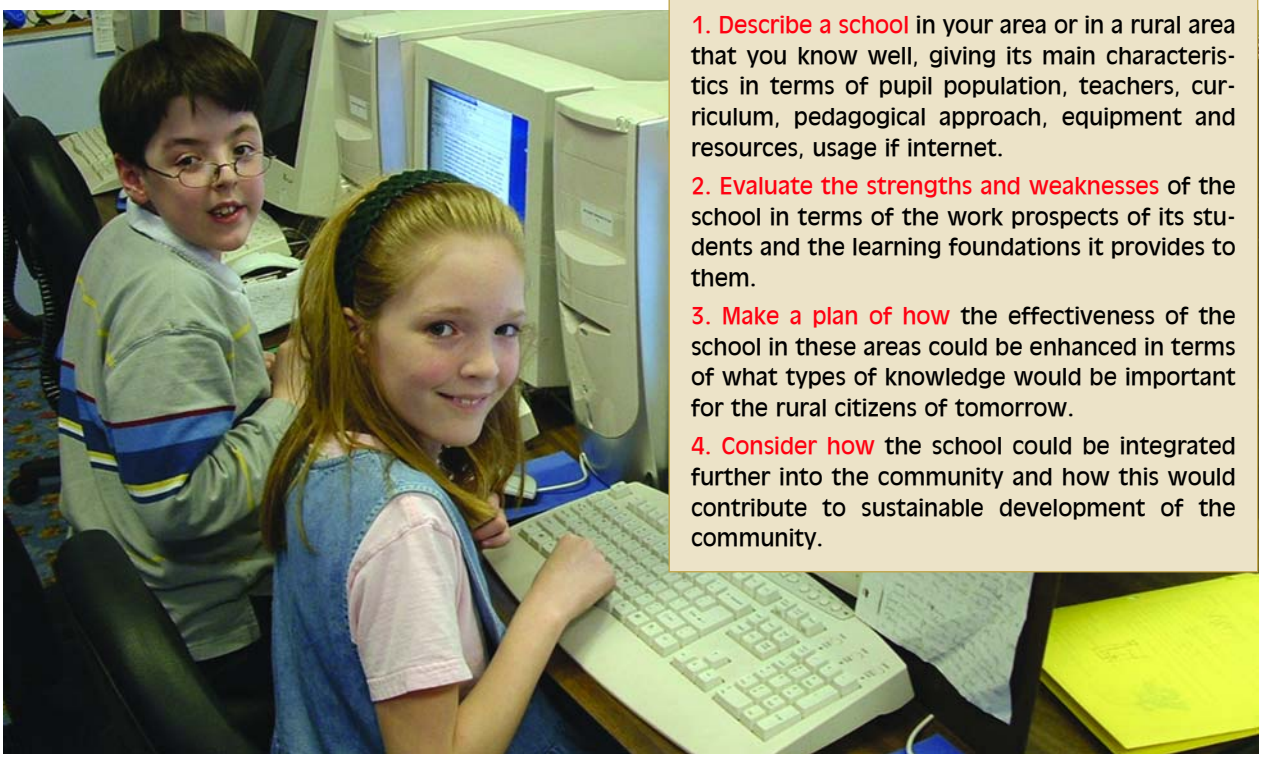
Zoo-pedagogy programmes are environmental/sustainability educational programmes offered by National Parks, Foresters and related enterprises.

Zoo-educators arrange special learning programmes for groups of schoolchildren. For example, educators in national parks organise learning programmes including short excursions to nature reserves and 2-3 day programmes for observing local nature and learning about nature protection. Foresters also offer local environmental education programmes on preserving biodiversity and the sustainable use of forests and wild nature. Another innovation in this field is the educational activity of public companies. For example, the Water Management Company, the Electricity Company and some other service providers produce teaching materials, use their websites and organize periodic 'learning visits' to the countryside for groups of pupils.

Conclusion

3.23. Rapid changes in rural society in Europe present both challenges and opportunities to rural schools. The provision of IT-connectivity provides even remote rural pupils with a chance to access the same pedagogical and cultural information as their urban counterparts. At the same time, the small size of rural neighbourhood schools offers pedagogical opportunities to support participatory citizenship through greater integration into the whole community and to encourage entrepreneurship and the passing on of rural skills. Inspiring examples of how this is being attempted include the Hungarian forest and eco-schools and some of the Finnish small schools. Other examples can be seen in the accompanying Case Studies.

The 'forest schooling' model includes a strong input from families and from local communities too.



Exercises arising from Chapter 3 to reflect on:

1. Describe a school in your area or in a rural area that you know well, giving its main characteristics in terms of pupil population, teachers, curriculum, pedagogical approach, equipment and resources, usage if internet.
2. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school in terms of the work prospects of its students and the learning foundations it provides to them.
3. Make a plan of how the effectiveness of the school in these areas could be enhanced in terms of what types of knowledge would be important for the rural citizens of tomorrow.
4. Consider how the school could be integrated further into the community and how this would contribute to sustainable development of the community.

Case Study 3.1

The Small School programme, Poland

Village schools can be used as centres of cultural life in a village since it is often the case that the school may be the only place where rural inhabitants can meet. The loss of a village school can strike a hard blow to community cohesiveness and spirit by making it difficult for the villagers to find places to come together or to create new activities.

In this context, the Ministry of Education in Poland, established a programme called 'Mała Szkoła' (Small School). The aim of this programme was to create new public schools in small villages and to support existing ones which are in danger. These schools are run by well qualified local teachers and non-profit organisations. Also parents and the wider local communities are involved in the running of the schools, thus raising the social capital of the community.

Small village schools also become a place where classes and courses for elder youth and adults can be established. Addressing the many rural skills gaps through lifelong learning, these courses aim to up-skill the local community's labour force. Classes focus on: vocational training, self-employment, economics, training for entrepreneurs and employees of small and 'micro' enterprises, European integration and much more. This activity supports the sustainable development of rural areas and fosters innovation. A good example is provided by the Primary School in Sumin which estab-lished computer courses for rural inhabitants, especially farmers, in 2003 and 2004. These courses were financed in part by the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture.

Small schools also offer the opportunity to support the education of mentally and physically challenged children in their local environment. Since 1999, 250 rural community associations have been established. In Poland there are now over 220 small village schools (both public and non-public).

The issue of preschool education is also closely connected to the development of the 'Mała Szkoła'' Programme. Integrating pre-school education into the Small Schools gives younger children the opportunity to learn whilst they are being minded. These alternative kindergartens, integrated into community-based primary schools are now spreading in Poland. Well qualified teachers working with a small group of children help to improve their skills for future education and future life. Children gain, in particular, from the opportunity to socialize in the primary school environment; and this makes them better prepared for formal schooling.

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Small schools open new horizons for rural Poland

Case Study 3.2

The effect of SULINET programme on primary school education, Hungary

A response to the challenge of internet provision in remote and poor rural areas is the SULINET programme in Hungary. This was first an attempt to get IT service provision in secondary and primary schools, and later to roll it out more widely to rural communities.

At the instigation of SULINET, a number of rural secondary schools were given Internet connection, provided with a server and 5-7 up-to-date computers. After some initial difficulties, network operation was established. Included in the programme was the delivery of CD-based software containing information programmes such as Wonderful Universe, Scientific Encyclopaedia (Cam-bridge), Computer Guide, Internet Guide, Hungarian Music History Guide, etc. These programmes are used in regular lessons, at afternoon classes and at home.

Besides the digital learning materials, the software includes several devices for teachers that make co-operation between teachers as well as between teachers and students a lot easier. Keeping IT networks integrated and working together is, however, a challenge. Infrastructure in schools is transitional, computer technology changes every day and therefore it is not easy to plan how these packages can be efficiently used. SULINET offers a forum for primary schools, where they can share their teaching plans and learn from each other.

SULINET Express assisted in the spreading of IT devices to rural areas, and, since 2003 was also helping families to buy them. The main goals of the programme, however, were to provide broadband internet connection for all schools in Hungary and to increase the number of computers until 2006, so that every 10 primary school pupils could share the use of at least one PC.

Both primary and secondary schools are connected to the Internet free of charge and can acquire new IT devices every year. SULINET had a positive impact not only on rural schools but also on the rural communities as a whole, as not only the quantity of computers but also the quality of services changed considerably during the lifespan of this programme. SULINET is also an important channel of content development for teachers and students. The SULINET website has become a starting point for many of them to access valuable information in the Internet.

Contact: www.sulinet.hu

SULINET has provided IT equipment and learning software to many schools in Hungary

Case study 3.3

e-Learning at primary school level, Moussac, France

The town of Moussac in Vienne, France, is a small rural community with 500 inhabitants. In the mid-1990s the council of the community realised that the primary school, with only 19 pupils, was at risk of closure, and decided that co-operation with other schools in the area should be sought, in order to strengthen the teaching skills that were available to the pupils. This cooperation was achieved by creating an active network, using ICT, to link the teachers and pupils of a number of schools in a common teaching project.

With support from the departmental authorities, Moussac and its neighbouring communities created the Vienne-Gartempe network, embracing eight rural schools. Each school was equipped with a multimedia computer, and the teachers were trained in the use of these computers. In 1997, the schools were linked by email and Internet, and the teachers began to use video-conferencing to prepare common projects. In 1998, NetMeeting software was installed, allowing the creation of a wide area 'electronic paper board' which is regularly used for 'extended classes'.

The project, that was launched well before schools in France started receiving basic computer equipment and Internet access, is now fully integrated into the teaching methods of the eight schools. The main benefit is felt by the population of 200 primary school children; but the system has also contributed to computer awareness and training in the villages concerned, since the computers are used after class hours for training the adult population in the use of ICT.

Contact: www.marelle.org

Training of adults in the use of ICT is organised during the after class hours

Case study 3.4

Entrepreneurship and participatory education in Kant multigrade village school, Finland

The school in Kant is a small rural school with 35 pupils and three teachers. 'Learning by doing' and 'memorable learning' have always been important in the Kant school. The school has offered practical entrepreneurship education since 1998. Such education is trying to support 'inner entrepreneurship' in students, i.e. the capacity to cooperate, survive failures, appreciate work done, and persisting to complete one's work. In higher classes entrepreneurship education also includes practical work. The values and skills that are cultivated include independent initiative, regard for one's own work, endurance, creativity and responsibility. Pupils are encouraged to set ambitious goals for themselves, using their creativity and raising their motivation to achieve these goals.

Entrepreneurship education is marked in the school curriculum as a cross-curricular subject which is named 'Citizenship activities and entrepreneurship'. In small rural municipalities there is a need for jobs, and self-employment is often one of the few ways to make a living in such places. By educating for entrepreneurship, existing residents are more likely to remain in the area and new economic activities may even bring in newcomers.

In the Kant school, entrepreneurship education is provided in the context of everyday life, but also in different projects throughout the school year. For example, twice a year a school cafe or bazaar is organised and the students make the merchandise for sale under the supervision of a teacher. Older and younger pupils work together, the former guiding the latter. On the morning of the bazaar the pupils bake the pastries for the cafe them-selves. Marketing strategies are formed and price setting (*by proportioning labour time*) is done by the group working together. Special emphasis is put on customer service. During the event older and younger students work also as teams in sales promotion.

Other activities of the school include the annual cultural week of the Karvia municipality, a community event called 'Will's happening', a special night for families with children and an art project, aiming to make the school more interesting inside, using art works. In this context, a space art installation was created in the school.

The Kant school also cooperates with local entrepreneurs. The pupils have, for example, created name cards for flowers for the local florists, they grow herbs for the school jumble sale, they design Christmas cards for a local company and they pick blueberries and lingonberries from the woods nearby, and currants from the school garden, for sale.

There have been clear changes in the behaviour of the pupils over the years. They are more active and can concentrate better in their own work. They also have more respect for the work they now do, and they can work both alone and in groups. Pupils recognize the value of money and they appreciate the school trips funded in this way as they earn themselves the money for these. There has been an increase in the time they spend together as opposed to going to amusement parks or big shopping centres. A 'We can do it' spirit can be seen growing. Cooperation with, and by the local community has increased and its positive value has been noted by both sides.

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Cafe-day organized and run by the pupils.

Picking up blueberries

Case study 3.5

Rural Education project 2003 - 2009, Romania

In May 2003, the Ministry of Education and Research launched the Rural Education project in Romania, which addressed significant equity issues in the education sector by helping rural students to benefit from improved access to quality education.

This objective was achieved through:

- Professional development of teachers and principals of rural schools;
- Improving teaching conditions in rural schools both with respect to adequate minimum facilities and providing basic teaching-learning materials;
- Promoting school-based innovation programmes and community participation; and
- Improving the policy-making capacity of local and central education agencies.

The project is supporting broader community involvement in education management, working not only with education authorities, but also with local councils, parents, and community representatives. It aims to support decentralization by increasing the capacity of schools and local authorities to develop their own school improvement plans and to improve school management. Thus, the project is encouraging democratic school governance and is strengthening school-community linkages.

The outcomes of this project will be measured in terms of rural student achievement as demonstrated by assessments and examinations, reduction of the gap between the scores of the students from urban and rural areas, increased school completion rate, and increased transition rates to upper secondary and tertiary education.

The three components of the project are:

- **Component 1: Improve Teaching and Learning in Rural Schools**. This component aims to develop professional competences of rural teachers (e.g. various training schemes, including mobile units and distance learning) and improve basic education conditions in schools (e.g. improved textbooks and teaching-learning mate-rials). The beneficiaries are 8.000 primary schools (I-IV classes) and 4.000 gymnasium schools (V-VI classes) from 33 counties in Romania.
- **Component 2: Develop School-Community Partnerships**. This component aims to empower rural schools and communities in order to develop a broad collaborative environment supportive of education. It includes an outreach and behaviour change, communication and sensitisation activities, through which schools and communities will be assisted by facilitators in dis-cussing education needs and in preparing their own school improvement plans, as well as school improvement projects.
- **Component 3: Strengthening Monitoring, Evaluation and Policy Making Capacity**. The overall objective of this component is to ensure the sustainability of the project by strengthening capacity in leadership and decentralized educational management at the local level and in-creasing the institutional and analytical capacity at national and local levels for policy analysis, formulation and planning.

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The project helps rural students to benefit from improved access to quality education

CHAPTER 4.

Higher Education

The changing context of Higher Education

4.1. Before we begin to examine what Higher Education can contribute to sustainable rural development, we must first take a look at the changing context of Higher Education itself. Many of the 'traditional' images of university students are now quite atypical in that many students are now:

- Mature students rather than school leavers
- Part time rather than full time learners
- Working for a living while studying
- Not attending campus classes
- Reading online resources at least as much as books
- Living at home rather than in residential halls
- Studying multidisciplinary courses rather than single subjects
- Studying in non-formal ways as well as fixed courses
- Seeking practical applications for their learning

4.2. Broadly, this corresponds to the shift from so-called "mode 1" to "mode 2" learning styles, as exemplified in the following table.

Figure 2. Transition from Mode 1 to Mode 2 (from Hills, 1999)

Mode 1	Mode 2
Communes of homogeneous subjects	Multidisciplinary teams, heterogeneous knowledge bases
Solitary scholar	Team work and active networks
Open publication, freedom of knowledge	The internet and intellectual property
Universal themes, falsification criteria	Mission led projects, local problem solving, final solutions
Objectivity and disinterestedness	Service of practical interests involving subject values
Fundamental blue skies research	Contextually defined applied research, collectivised problem solving
Lifelong vocation	Professional teams, entrepreneurial insecurity

4.3. All of these changes, one can argue, have helped to make the provision of Higher Education in rural areas more sustainable, affordable, and accessible. There are of course many exceptions and difficulties; new systems and technologies seldom arrive without some downside, but in general the relentless trend has been for educational provision to become more flexible and more student-centred. This has benefited rural areas in particular, due to the fact that many rural students now have an option (for the first time) to study from home and enjoy benefits similar to their urban colleagues. The continued extension of this trend has considerable potential to bring rural areas further benefits in social, economic, and environmental improvements in the near future, provided that the transition period is carefully managed.

Distributed learning

4.4. In order to fully appreciate the nature of these benefits, and to identify appropriate ways to manage the new opportunities, it is necessary to first understand a little about distributed learning and how it affects the relationship between rural areas and the centres that are responsible for the provision of Higher Education. The term 'distributed education' is used to describe a form of educational provision that is a) delivered across a wide geographical area, perhaps to multi-campus institutions and/or local learning centres, and b) a form of blended learning in which the teaching and learning resources are distributed across a range of media types and communication styles. The intention of the term is to describe the process rather than a particular theory of learning, and the implication is usually that it refers to a form of educational delivery that is distributed in both contexts.

The location of study tends to become irrelevant for many students

4.5. In relation to the location of students, distributed learning implies that both the campus-based students and those who are at sites remote from the tutor are able to access the same modules and courses, perhaps as part of the same 'class' and certainly over the same time duration. In practice these learners may be scattered across a number of learning centres, partner colleges, or in some cases individual homes or workplaces. There is no rule to differentiate whether they are distributed over three separate sites or three hundred. The course tutors and administrators may also be located at different sites around the network. Similarly, the concept of 'distributed resources' conveys an explicit understanding that a wide variety of courseware, learning styles, resources, communication tools, and types of assessment will be employed in the delivery of educational provision.

4.6. Using the internet for communications, a web-based 'virtual learning environment' (VLE) can host documents (with internal and external links), graphics, photographs (still and moving including full web-casts) as well as discussion 'threads' for short chats and larger computer conferencing between participants (see also Chapter 2). In addition, as staff expertise and confidence has grown, a greater range of distributed learning resources have been added to the variety available for students, including:

- Adopted academic textbooks and/or written course resources
- A well-developed electronic library system, which can be used to access resources 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Digitised articles and e-books
- email
- Online discussion board dialogue (able to be archived)
- Videoconference tutorials (able to be recorded and subsequently web-cast)
- Telephone tuition (one-to-one or teleconference calls)
- Instant Messaging software to enable short, focused discussions
- PC to PC tutorials using video, text, file exchange, and desktop sharing between computers
- Video clips of some lectures or guest presentations are recorded on CD, which allows slides to be spliced together with a video, audio, and text.
- Key references can be digitized and made available on the VLE or CD.

4.7. There has also been a significant shift in the quantity and structure of text based resources. The earlier years of developing new courses were typically very content-heavy (as is often the case with new academic courses) whereas more recent learning resources have emphasized context rather than content.

Libraries provide continuing support to all students, even online ones

4.8. A key feature of this structure of the online learning resources is that it allows for great flexibility. It allows the learning materials to be 'layered' so that students can choose whether or not to pursue a topic in greater depth by selecting additional resources that give a greater depth and detail. This also allows faster learners to explore at their own pace without being 'held back' by the classmates, and slower learners to use the online resources to revise and study materials that they have not been able to pursue in 'class time'.

4.9. It allows learning resources to be distributed across a range of different formats and types of learning materials to allow learners to select the type of resources that they are most comfortable with. For example, some people prefer to learn through books, others by conversation, still others by watching television or participating in field or laboratory activities

4.10. It facilitates both synchronous (learning together at the same time) and asynchronous (learning together but at different times) opportunities for learning, including new combinations, e.g. a videoconference by a specialist may be delivered live on the first occasion, recorded, and then offered on the VLE or a DVD for learners in subsequent years.

4.11. From this perspective it is readily apparent why many rural areas have enthusiastically adopted distributed learning techniques. These techniques are highly appropriate for a scattered, sparse population, and in the absence of a major university library on the doorstep, or fastspeed broadband connections, the wide diversity of learning resources employed means that distributed learning enables people in rural areas to access high quality education without moving to the cities.

Advantages of distributed learning

4.12. From the perspective of learners living in rural areas there are many benefits of a "technologically enhanced learning environment" to increase the accessibility and effectiveness of further and higher education. There are at least seven clearly identifiable advantages to this sort of 'blended learning' format of educational experience.

4.13. **Learner Support is not dependent on a single medium** - reliance upon any single form of subject 'delivery' is liable to be susceptible to system breakdown, whether human or technological. A mixed format spreads the risks and benefits of synchronous and asynchronous support between a wide range of 'high' and 'low' technologies and provides a backup. This is a critical factor in rural and remote areas as internet access is frequently poor or nonexistent.

4.14. **The format gives time and distance flexibility** - which is a particular attraction for students who are part-time, have family and/or work obligations, who are based in locations remote from the tutor, and/or are spread across a wide (global?) geographical area. This is especially critical for rural learners, who can study without commuting or requiring to move for employment to the city.

4.15. A consistency of learning resources is provided for all students, regardless of whether they are located on

the main campus, have easy access to a university library on site, or are working in some degree of isolation from a campus. No longer do rural learners need to feel disadvantaged because they cannot attend lectures or other face-to-face classes in the city university.

4.16. The mixed format is subject and student sensitive - with no requirement to operate according to an inflexible plan. It allows an opportunity to customize student support, to a limited extent, by using tuition styles and technologies with which the student is most comfortable, e.g. using evening telephone tutorials or support at local study centres.

4.17. This enables the tutorial resources to be used in an appropriate context - for example, adjusting the use of the tuition medium used to the lowest level of complexity will enable wider access. There may be no need to use slow resolution, expensive videoconference technology if the same result can be achieved with web-based resources backed by a telephone tutorial or drop-in facilities. Resources that need broad bandwidth may be in-cluded as optional extras so as not disadvantage students who do not have broadband access.

4.18. The mixed format develops extra skills in students - both 'standard' written and verbal communications skills, together with an added competence in a variety of ICT applications of differing complexity. In distributed courses the diversity of skills is extended due to the multidisciplinary nature, necessitating familiarity with widely different concepts, contexts, problem-solving, and metho-dologies of investigation.

4.19. More power is invested in the students - through the ability to select their own style and pace of working, as well as, in some cases, both the context/application of the study module. Increasingly the choice of module preferred by the student can be self-selected from a pool of modules at the appropriate academic level. Furthermore, the mixed format increases opportunities for using non-linear strategies for problem-solving, explanation, and the storage/ retrieval of information.

4.20. The priorities for the adoption of new technology to provide distributed education in the UK were emphasized in a recent report to government on the opportunities and barriers to the use of broadband in education that highlighted five main areas of added value. These are:

- Transforming the learning experience
- Improving inter-institutional collaboration
- Achieving new potentials
- Improving efficiencies in existing provision
- Widening access to education

Disadvantages of distributed learning

4.21. It would be wrong to paint a uniformly positive picture that e-learning is the panacea for all our difficulties regarding learning and teaching in remote areas. It is for this reason that we have stressed that distributed learning is a much more complex approach, with e-learning only being one element in this approach, albeit a major new, and exciting element.

4.22. A shift towards distributed learning is one that moves away from instructing the learner how to learn in favour of facilitating the learner to learn how to learn. While this should benefit the learner in the long run, it does mean that the tutor needs to be more organized and prepared than for 'traditional' style classes. Students, too, need to be prepared to take advantage of the flexibility this system allows them, becoming active, rather than passive learners.

4.23. It also means that, while e-learning is not a cheap option (well designed, it should cost no more than conventional models) but there is normally a heavier upfront investment in the design and preparation stages. This is offset by the fact that delivery costs can show a good return due to the small marginal costs of adding extra learners to the system. Advantages to the faculty include an enhanced ability to offer a wider academic choice to learners, improved administrational efficiencies, the expansion and retention of specialist staff in rural areas, and a potential recruitment area for learners far beyond the limited local geographical constraints.

The link of higher education to business needs is an important issue for local communities

4.24. Access to information is no longer the real issue, but the ability to distinguish the useful data from the misleading, and to know how to analyse, select and summarize it, may lead to information overload for both the learner and the tutor. As a consequence, expectations and course aims, need to be realistically monitored. Learners therefore need to acquire a new literacy to 'read' the level of legitimacy of information sources on the web in a similar manner to that done over the generations by academics studying print based materials. Students need to develop the facility to study from the screen, to work in learning communities with people they have only 'met' online, and generally to think digitally.

4.25. E-learning can be a very isolating experience when students are unfamiliar with the environment and learners need a lot of self-motivation in order to persist. As a result, the elements of distributed learning such as real-time contact, fast responses from tutors and fellow students, and visual stimuli through videoconferences or video-on-PC can help to provide a sociability that supports students in their learning activities. For the learners (and staff) who adapt easily to the online environment there is the danger of over-dependence on the technology, and the corresponding frustration when connections fail. Once again the careful design of the

'blend' of the distributed resources avoids putting 'all our eggs in one basket' and provides a safeguard if any one communication medium should temporarily fail.

4.26. The online world also has its own style and etiquette which some learners resist, and although broadband internet access offers a much richer learning environment - voice, moving image, learning by doing - learners need to be adaptable and willing to learn in new ways. It is necessary to instruct learners at an early stage in their studies about techniques to maximize their 'search and select' skills as well as how to communicate effectively with colleagues in new media. In this respect, early induction training for distributed courses has proved beneficial for both learners and staff.

4.27. Lastly, the geographical difficulties of providing high-speed internet connections in many rural areas mean that even if universal availability of broadband access is achieved soon, it will still be a long time before it will be universally adopted as a standard educational tool. Whatever the technology, there are always the have-nots, and the limitations of being unable to guarantee all learners a consistency of high quality connection to Internet-facilitated resources will restrict the speed of adoption of new applications and techniques by e-learning course designers in formal education.

Practical work offers an advantage for attracting the more mature student

4.28. The equivalence of student experience is likely to emerge as an issue of contention, with a focus on the quality of the student experience regardless of the geographical location or mode of study of the learner. A common concern among advocates of this new learning style is the necessity of achieving a 'culture shift' among their colleagues to view the incorporation of technology as a potential solution to enhance learning rather than a technological irrelevance to be avoided or resisted (and this applies to educational administration as well as teaching roles). To accomplish this technology-supported culture shift in distributed learning opportunities will result in potentially huge economic and social benefits for small, flexible learning institutions such as regional colleges and campuses.

Implications for sustainable rural development

4.29. An issue among some researchers has been the contribution that distributed learning can make towards the support of sustainable development of communities in rural areas. This work is ongoing, but a number of immediate benefits have been identified, particularly in the reduced travel costs and travel time - for students who participate in the course. The ability to engage with Higher Education within a relatively short distance from the home or work location has meant participation by students who could not afford the financial cost or time cost to travel to (and probably reside in) the major centres of population where most Higher Education Institutes are situated. This has opened up access to individuals and geographical regions previously largely excluded from participation in the knowledge economy of Higher Education.

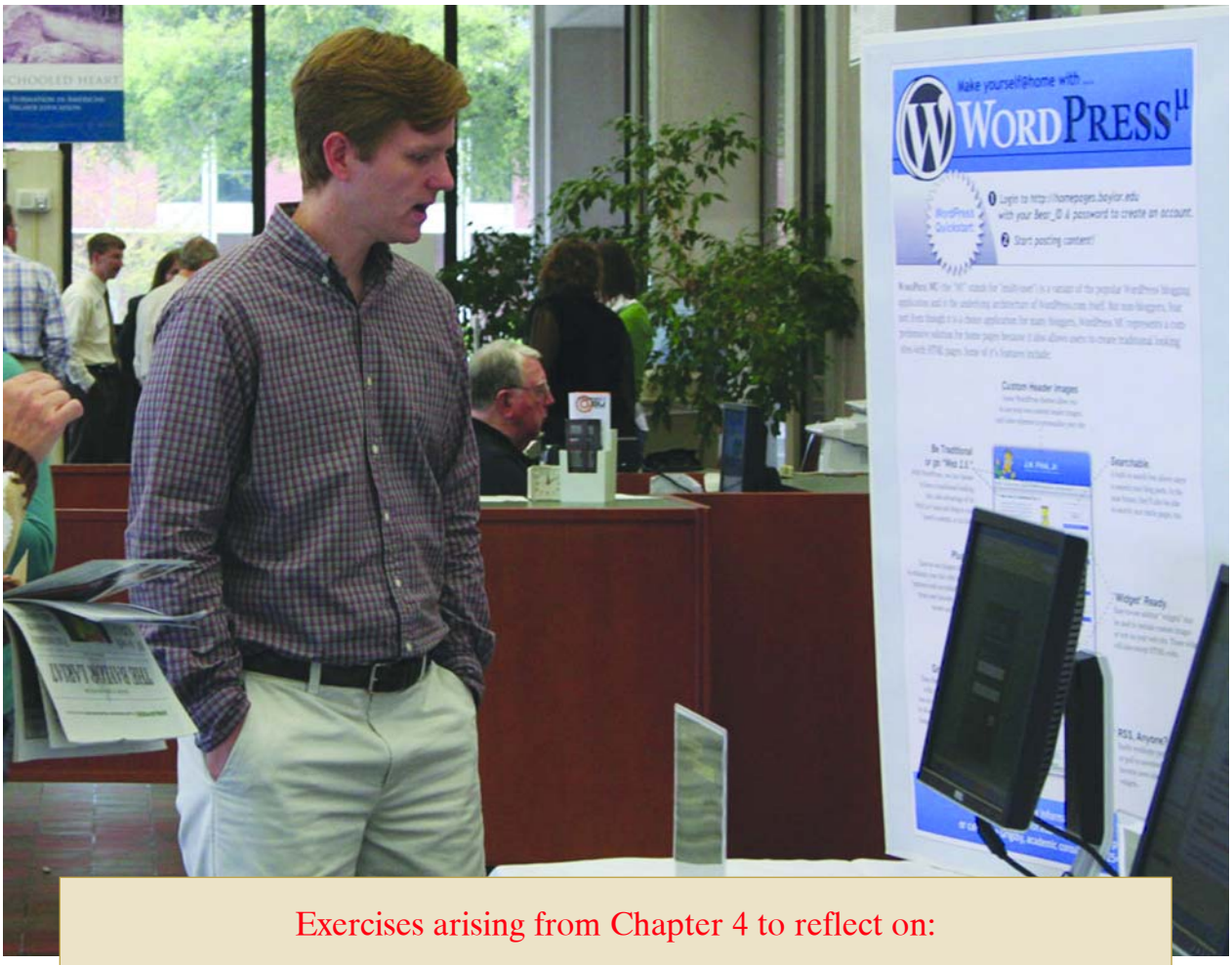
4.30. As a consequence, the financial cost saved on commuting and student lodgings can potentially be released for spending in the local rural economy, supporting the rural market and contributing to a local economic multiplier. Enabling learners to live in their home area allows them to be available for local employment, and this incentive for retaining and attracting of skilled citizens is an important aspect of demographic development in many rural areas.

4.31. The growth of distributed learning offers opportunities for realising the rhetoric of 'lifelong learning' in rural areas, where the geography and the economies of scale almost inevitably place restrictions on the delivery of education by 'traditional' means. The accumulation of additional intellectual and economic skills are therefore available to be used to build up the social capital of the region rather than be a causal factor in the out-migration by the rural population in search of academic qualifications.

4.32. A substantial body of literature now exists on the creation of educational online communities, both for specialist interests and for social purposes. Rather than the perception of individuals in sad and lonely isolation with their computer, the research literature documents many new social networks and enhanced social diversity that may be found through participation in online communities. The benefit of this social enhancement alone may be a significant contributory factor to social enterprise in rural areas, where low population density may make the establishment of face-to-face clubs etc. for specialist functions difficult to organise. Digital inclusion therefore offers some of the gregariousness of the city, with the desirable lifestyle advantages of the countryside. Furthermore networks of Higher Education online communities offer rural learners the intellectual and social stimulation that may not otherwise be readily available in the same format within their home area.

4.33. Some research feedback indicates that among the most significant benefits of distributed learning access to Higher Education in remote areas, may be the perception by the rural communities of an improved quali-

ty of life through access to a wider range of services, facilities, and educational or economic structures. Students frequently cite the benefits of access to online resources and network support in reducing the limitations of physical communications across the rural regions. The feeling of 'connectedness' to individuals and resources within their own local community may in itself be a motivation and/or entrepreneurial factor that can in part compensate for the economic disadvantages of living physically remote from centralised (urban) markets and facilities. There is growing evidence from regional studies that this may be a significant factor in the relocation of centralised administration facilities to areas currently peripheral to main business centres. These relocations may be geographically distributed around the country to take advantage of local infrastructure, differential urban/rural costs, and the quality of life concerns of staff. It further suggests that some providers of Higher Education in rural areas may become emerging catalysts in stimulating social and economic rejuvenation in the rural areas that they provide for.



Exercises arising from Chapter 4 to reflect on:

1. Make a search in your region/country to find out the proportion of rural people who study in higher Education. How does this compare to higher education students from urban areas?
2. Taking into account the structure of higher education in your region/country, the available infrastructure and the prevailing culture, does it appear feasible to promote studying through distributed learning? Explain why.
3. Find out if higher education is delivered through distributed learning in your region.

   If yes, make an assessment of its benefits by rural areas in terms of subjects offered for study, methods and resources.

   If no, make a proposal for introducing distributed learning and suggest the subjects, methods and resources that would best fit your region.

Case study 4.1

Walking the talk - Distributed courses in managing rural areas, UK

The Highlands and Islands of Scotland are predominantly both rural and mountainous. In 2000, the UHI Millennium Institute (UHI) was created as the only Higher Education Institution based in the region. It provides university-level education and research through a partnership of 14 colleges and research institutions linked to about 100 learning centres across the region (www.uhi.ac.uk). A key element of the UHI is the use of new technologies for the delivery of teaching and research tuition, as well as for networked administrative tasks such as committee meetings.

Following the interdisciplinary model of a successful undergraduate course in rural development studies, in 2003 a Masters degree was introduced in Managing Sustainable Rural Development. This degree is part-time and uses a highly flexible approach to allow students to access the course throughout the UK without attending campus-based classes. Most students are working while studying part-time, many of them working in remote rural areas and upgrading their professional skills in relation to their employment. The modules that comprise the course combine academic theory with practical skills for working with rural communities, and students can exit with the awards of Post-Graduate Certificate, PG Diploma, or Master of Science, depending on the modules that they complete successfully.

The staff and students make use of web-based learning resources, telephone, email, videoconferencing, and a number of other technology options in order to allow students to study when and where it is most convenient to them. Assessments are varied and rather than a set of exams, students are required to submit essays, reports, presentations, and project work that are specifically selected to reinforce the real skills that will face them during their future employment in rural areas. Core modules include environmental issues, community development, and policy analysis and these can be combined with a number of optional subjects that students can select to suit their own interests and talents.

This course is a good example of the changing impact of Higher Education in rural areas for two fundamental reasons: 1) The course is designed to enable students to undertake the course from any location, thereby allowing learners to remain living and working in rural areas. They no longer need to leave family or employment to move to the cities in order to gain an advanced education. 2) The content of the course is specifically directed at providing high-level education and skills for workers in rural areas to address their own regional challenges and opportunities. Although sustainable development is a broad goal for many organisations, there is seldom only one plan to achieve this. By placing the needs of the student at the centre of a flexible framework for providing higher education, the students and their employers can seek to make the learning experience more interesting and more useful in the context of their own lives. The distributed format and online delivery holds a great promise for involving other countries and rural regions in the improved development of their own areas without the drift of expertise out of rural areas to urban centres of education.

Contact: www.lews.uhi.ac.uk

The Learning Centres network of UHI offer exciting learning opportunities to the inhabitants of Highlands and Islands

Case study 4.2

Peninsula Medical School - the medic of the future, UK

The Peninsula Medical School is a new medical school opened in the south-west of England in 2002. It is a joint initiative by the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth, and students are randomly assigned to one or other site for their first year of studies. The School has adopted the pedagogical approach of problem-based-learning in which the students receive less direct formal teaching than in other 'conventional' programmes of study, but have a wider range of learning resources to support their study of the assigned problems. An em-phasis is therefore on the appropriate context of the learning rather than just the content. The School uses a web-based VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) to integrate an extensive range of electronic journals with other learning resources such as videos, ebooks, animations, audio files, and virtual reality experiences (e.g. students no longer dissect cadavers as 'dissection' work is done online.) Students are able to access online medical books and other resources on a 24/7 basis.

The medical students are largely campus-based for their first year of study, but then assigned to clinics and rural hospitals during their second year. During this time they maintain their access to the online library and other electronic resources, although due to the complexity and large file sizes the users require broadband internet access to utilise the resources properly.

The medical school is based at numerous locations throughout the region of Devon and Cornwall, a very rural area of England, and provides an alternative model to the usual example of medical training in an urban-based university and teaching hospital. A recent initiative has expanded the facilities to provide a new Dental School. In keeping with established ethics, the new Dental School will reflect the belief that dentists need to adopt a socially accountable approach to their work and to understand the social and community context of modern health care provision.

Contact: www.pms.ac.uk

National Science Week organized by the Peninsula Medical School in Plymouth

Case study 4.3

Local Learning Centres, Sweden

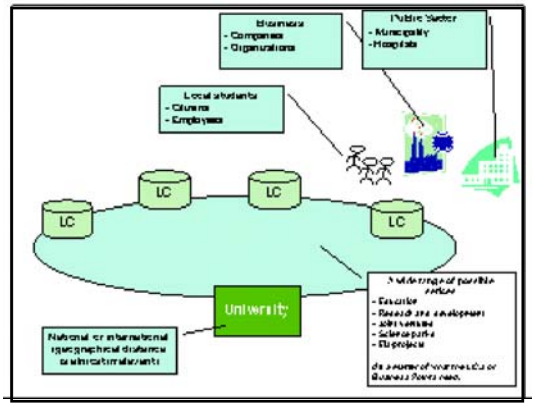
Sweden is a large country which is scarcely populated. Education is considered important for both personal and national growth and therefore access to education at all levels is vital for the development of the nation. There are more than 30 universities and university colleges established across Sweden but in spite of this, a lot of the potential students live far from cities with higher education institutions.

This has led to an ever increasing amount of distance education solutions. The most widespread means of delivering distance education is by the use of video conference. The student is situated in a facility with the necessary equipment and the teacher is located in a university which could be located hundreds of kilometres away. The local facility that is involved in this type of distance education infrastructure is the Learning Centre. In Swe-den there is a growing number of so called Learning Centres. Almost 250 Learning Centres are now established and are becoming an increasingly important part of the national infrastructure for higher education. This growing infrastructure is now so well established that other levels of education are starting to adopt the same concept.

Flexible learning offered in this manner reaches students who would otherwise have limited access to education. One of the aims of Learning Centres is to reach professionally active adults who are geographically immobile. Another aim is to reach young people from homes with no tradition of higher education. Learning Centres are thus becoming an enabling concept when it comes to attracting groups who would normally not study at all. Learning Centres handle local marketing, study guidance and recruitment of students. They typically provide premises for self-study, group activities and technical equipment. The Centre' s function thereby overlaps with some of the functions traditionally associated with an institute of education. Learning Centres provide a wide range of services for the students as well as for teachers. Practically, all the activities connected to a course can be carried out at the Centre.

In addition to the convenience of the self-managed studying element of distance education, many students value the interpersonal contacts which are also available at Learning Centres in the form of local study groups. Due to the social and support functions offered by the Centres, the number of students dropping out of courses is low. Flexible learning generally requires discipline, dedication and motivation. These are all easier to come by in the context of the Learning Centre. Generally, Learning Centre students achieve the same results as ordinary university or college students.

Universities and university colleges offer more than just education! There is ongoing research, business oriented collaboration in the form of tailored courses for companies, EU-projects, business networks and more. A growing trend in Sweden is to expand these functions and include them into the Learning Centre concept. A Learning Centre could be viewed as a 'satellite', or as an



extended part of one or more universities and as such it could also offer research and development contacts, cuscustomized courses for companies, and access to the expertise available at the universities that cooperate with the local Learning Centre. This is a very interesting aspect of the Learning Centre concept and will lead to a very exciting development in the not so distant future: the business meeting point.

In other words, a Learning Centre is a local facility with access to all the resources that one or more national, or international, universities have to offer but available at a local level. This is a great opportunity for students, the municipality and of course the local/regional organizations. Learning Centres could in the future be seen as a local business point, a hub, with connections to the services offered by the most interesting universities and university colleges worldwide.

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Case study 4.4

Distance learning course in European rural development offered by the University of Gloucestershire and partners, UK

Anyone with appropriate background skills can now study for a Masters in European Rural Development from anywhere in the world!

Recent changes in the EU (enlargement and the new Common Agricultural Policy) plus the growing recognition of the need to maintain sustainable rural communities is bringing many new people into rural development, all over Europe and beyond. The new programme offered by the University of Gloucestershire aspires to create a cadre of experienced collaborative learners who provide leadership for rural development.

The University of Gloucestershire is working with universities in Sweden, Italy and Poland to further develop a distance learning MSc in European Rural Development that has recently been launched by the University of Gloucestershire alone. The aim is to develop a robust partnership drawing on the expertise of the different institutions. The course enables students to study from home and obtain a Masters degree for a fraction of the cost and without the up-heaval of a residential cou-rse.

The University of Gloucester-shire has already built up a reputation for distance learning courses in the UK, particularly in policy and community development. Staff come from a range of disciplines including geography, sociology and economics in both the Department of Natural and Social Sciences (DNSS) and the Countryside and Community Research Unit (CCRU), a leading European research centre into socio-economic aspects of rural change.

The CCRU has been heavily involved in research and consultancy relating to rural development for nearly 20 years. Those designing the course have consulted widely with EU officials, rural development experts and bodies such as Euracademy to address the challenges of European rural development in old and new member states.

Distance learning uses computer-based technology and the Internet for education. To participate the student does not have to physically be in the place where the teaching material is produced. All that is needed is a computer and access to the Internet plus the desire to learn and exchange ideas and experiences. However, there is also a pre-sessional and a summer school to bring the students and staff together to create opportunities for shared learning. The aim is to build a learning community, one that will maintain links and build networks even after formal academic programmes finish.

The course has been designed for those working in the private, public and voluntary sectors who want to develop their understanding of the social and economic theory of rural change, and be capable of acting in key roles in guiding and shaping development opportunities in rural Europe. The course specifically addresses the needs of people working in rural development who want to enhance their skills, but who cannot spend significant time away from home or workplace and it offers great flexibility.

The course can be studied on a part-time basis over 3 years, or just 18 months for full-time study. The part-time option extends over 2 years for the taught modules, but is flexible to accommodate those in work. Full-time students study 6 modules over one year with the dissertation taking a further six months.

Course participants during a field visit

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CHAPTER 5.

Continuing education and lifelong learning

Education for sustainable development

5.1. Education is critical in promoting sustainable development and in improving the capacity of people to address environmental and development issues. Education, including continuing education in all forms, i.e. formal, non-formal and informal learning, achieves this by raising people's environmental and ethical awareness, and also by instilling appropriate values and attitudes, developing skills and encouraging behaviour consistent with sustainable development and enabling the public to participate in decision making. This chapter takes a brief look at the UN and European policy framework for education and lifelong learning as it affects sustainable development, providing also interesting examples of providers of continuing education in rural areas. Further, it touches on the contribution of lifelong learning in improving the quality of life in rural areas, thus enhancing the sustainability of rural development; and takes a look at the issues surrounding the validation of informal and non-formal learning and related qualifications.

5.2. The vision presented by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE, 2004) states that education in addition to being a human right, it is prerequisite for achieving sustainable development and an essential tool for good governance, informed decision-making and the promotion of democracy. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) strengthens the capacity of individuals, groups, communities, organizations and countries to make judgements and choices in favour of sustainable development. It can promote a shift in people's mindsets and in so doing enable them to make our world safer, healthier and more prosperous, thereby im-proving the quality of life. ESD can provide critical reflection and greater awareness and empowerment so that new visions and concepts can be explored and new methods and tools developed.

5.3. With this strategy UNECE aims to encourage its members "*to develop and incorporate ESD into their formal education system, in all relevant subjects, and in non- formal and informal education*". This will equip people with knowledge of and skills in sustainable development, making them more competent and confident and increasing their opportunities for acting towards a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature and with concern for social values, gender equity and cultural diversity. The objectives of the strategy are to:

- Ensure that policy, regulatory and operational framework support ESD;
- Promote sustainable development through formal, non-formal and informal learning;
- Equip educators with the necessary competences to include sustainable development in their teaching;
- Promote research on and development of ESD;
- Strengthen cooperation on ESD at all levels within the UNECE region.

EU Cohesion and Lifelong Learning Policy

5.4. The European Commission presented a new concept of the delivery of the EU cohesion policy for 2007-2013. The European Fund for Regional Development (EFRD), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund which are the vehicles for delivering the cohesion policy contribute to three objectives: a) Convergence, b) Regio-nal Competitiveness and Employment, and c) European Territorial Cooperation

5.5. The cohesion policy becomes particularly important in the context of the European Union's aspirations to deliver the Lisbon Strategy goals. "*The Union must mobilise all the available national and Community resources -including the cohesion policy- in three dimensions (economic, social and environmental) in order to take better advantage of their synergy in the general context of the sustainable development*" (Council of the European Union, 2005)

5.6. In accordance with the Lisbon Strategy the programmes supported by cohesion policy should seek to target resources on the following three priorities (Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs: Community Strategic Guidelines 2007-2013, 2005):

- improving the attractiveness of the Member States, regions and cities;
- encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship and growth of the knowledge-based-economy;
- creating more and better jobs.

5.7. The modernisation of the education and training systems is a centrepiece of the Lisbon Strategy. The Euro-pean Council proposal (2004) has adopted common objectives and a work programme to transform the education and training systems into efficient lifelong learning systems accessible to all citizens and to promote convergence of these systems in order to raise the overall standards. The focus of the work programme is on:

- improving the quality of education and training; curriculum reform, new teaching methods, quality assurance,
- increasing access to education and training at all stages of life, including e-learning,
- opening education and training to outside influences of the world of entrepreneurship and worldwide competition.

Continuing education of adults

5.8. Continuing education, in the context of lifelong learning, may have varied objectives: it may help adults acquire skills that are necessary to enter the labour market or secure their position in the labour market; or it may help them re-orientate their occupations or change careers or update their knowledge in fast-changing professions; or it may contribute to the personal development of the adult learners, expand their horizons, improve their performance as citizens, cultivate new interests, and more generally, improve the quality of their lives.

5.9. A report from a research project conducted by MIJARC Europe, an international youth NGO, describes issues particularly relevant to youngsters in rural areas, who move from formal schooling to employment:

- They have reduced access to adequate and relevant education, training and work experience opportunities.
- They encounter bridges and barriers in the movement from school to employment (from childhood dependence to adult independence).
- There is lack of meaningful work opportunities for them leading to chronically high youth unemployment rates.
- They are geographically isolated from social, recreational and cultural life and there is an inadequacy of recreational and social spaces.
- Public and community transport is significantly lower in rural compared to urban areas (importance of having an own moped or car).
- Youngsters migrate from rural areas to urban areas to look for a job, thus changing the population balance of rural areas, which have a much higher proportion of older people than urban areas..

5.10. To overcome these barriers, many of which are also relevant to older rural inhabitants, a combined policy effort is necessary. This effort includes a central element of adult education and lifelong learning, in a form that is suitable for rural areas, reflecting the needs and lifestyles of rural inhabitants. Examples are given below.

5.11. **The Folk High School** represents an important tradition in adult education, with special focus in rural areas. It has a long history in Europe, in such countries as Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Poland, Germany, Russia and other Baltic countries, dating back to 18th or 19th centuries. The role of N.F.S. Grundtvig, the Danish developer of independent educational institutions for adults has been vital. The first Folk High School was established in Denmark in 1844. It is notable that in Baltic countries and Russia, where adaptations of the Folk High School idea are still in existence, there is commitment and considerable enthusiasm for its application. The establishment of Folk High Schools responds to the problems of exclusion and marginalisation of individuals and social groups in rural areas, as well as building a strong civic society.

5.12. According to Byczkowski et al (2003), based on their experience in Poland, Folk High Schools have the following tasks:

- promotion of civic education, local democracy and the idea of social partnership;
- taking up actions in favour of individuals and groups that are socially excluded or disadvantaged;
- propagation of the ideas and practical solutions for sustainable social and economic local development;
- enhancing multi-foci regional education and preservation of local cultural and natural heritage;
- offering opportunities for leisure time activities, developing the individual and social talents of community members.

5.13. Folk High Schools provide general education (ICT, liberal arts, languages, personal development etc) but also offer vocational courses such as agriculture and animal breeding, local trades or health education. Additionally they tackle illiteracy and address personal or community related topics, such as local heritage and tradition, family planning etc. Another example of Folk High School is presented in Case Study 5.1.

5.14. **The Neighbourhood Learning Centres** is a contemporary initiative in the UK which aims to provide remedial or special education to adults with outdated skills or few qualifications. They address people with literacy, numeracy and language needs, people from minority ethnic backgrounds or people with disabilities, learning difficulties or mental health problems; and those returning to the labour market after a long interval outside it.

5.15. The Neighbourhood Learning Centres have re-engineered the delivery of Basic Skills training in a local area, drawing on collaboration and partnership between Colleges of Further Education and lo-cal community agencies. Their aim is to work with the communities, many of which are in rural areas, and to find alternative learning paths which are responsive to the needs of the learners. The Centres link voluntary agencies, networks, neighbourhood communities and individuals by working

Summer schools, like the ones organised by Euracademy Association, complement successfully the education of mid-career professionals

alongside them to develop community capacity, leadership and skills. A new infrastructure has been developed that connects learning with progression to vocational education and training and labour market opportunities, supported by appropriate information, advice and guidance.

5.16. **Higher education institutions**, such as universities also offer outreach programmes targeted at rural communities, aiming to help rural enterprises to overcome the disadvantages they face, due to their isolation and the weak networking links that result from it. WIRE is a successful project that has been established in UK along these lines, aiming to help rural women entrepreneurs in particular. A network of over 3,600 wo-men has been set up and integrated support has been organised by a university, including training workshops, courses and on-line business help. Personal development workshops have been also organised, dealing with issues like assertiveness training, confidence building, image management and self-help coaching. At the same time the members of the network became eligible for preferential financial packages from a major bank, and obtained access to various business services, such as assistance and advice regarding business and financial planning, marketing and legal matters business mentoring, help to find available grants and aids. Such an integrated approach to providing training, advice, financial support and personal development proved highly successful, as described in more detail in Case Study 5.2.

Recreation and culture form an important factor of quality of life

5.17. **Third-Age Universities** are also valuable resources of lifelong learning, addressing the vulnerable group of older people. Such a group suffers from greater isolation and exclusion in rural areas, especially as their mobility is restrained even further by old age. Third Age universities are founded in Europe, Australia and America. They are usually affiliated to universities, and offer lectures, seminars, conferences, workshops, visits and excursions to people over 50, who wish to learn, make new contacts and enrich their knowledge and abilities. The university programmes for the third age are a special form of Open University. They provide the opportunity to older people to take up independent studies at university level without any formal requirements or qualifications. By their nature, Third Age Universities are ideal resources for rural inhabitants, because in addition to meeting the challenges of older age, they also respond to the problems of isolation (see Case Study 5.5). Distance learning is adopted by many Third Age Universities for delivering their courses, making their products more attractive and accessible to rural inhabitants.

Lifelong learning and quality of rural life

5.18. As mentioned in the introductory paragraph, improvement of quality of life makes rural development more sustainable, because it renders rural areas more attractive to their residents and other people who would opt to move to them.

5.19. The link between education and quality of life in rural areas is a multifaceted one. Quality of life is often confused with standards if living. Education and training have been declared by UNESCO to be the two most powerful weapons in the fight against rural poverty and in raising rural standards of living (Education for All-Web Portal). However, we talk about two different concepts that are not necessarily related. Standard of living is generally measured by level of consumption and thus, by levels of income. Quality of life is related to both material and psychological factors, and reflects the extent to which an individual enjoys self-fulfilment and satisfaction with life. Thus, further to raising the economic prospects of rural inhabitants, education and training can contribute to their quality of life by offering opportunities to explore their culture and tradition, become more active in their communities, improve their professional prospects as well as enhance social participation and civic cohesion.

Rural quality of life indicators

5.20. A study by the European Foundation on Living and Working Conditions (Anderson, 2004) examined the quality of life in rural Europe and tested a number of indicators that influence quality of life. These were:

- Economic resources
- Health and health care
- Employment and working conditions
- Knowledge, education and training
- Families and households
- Community life and social participation
- Housing
- Local environment and amenities
- Transport
- Public safety and crime
- Recreation and leisure activities
- Culture and identity, political resources and human rights.

5.21. These indicators were tested in a European Quality of Life Survey in 28 countries (Anderson, 2004). Educa-

tion and training were found to interact with most other parameters, having an impact on the overall quality of life in rural areas. The limited access to continuing education observed in rural areas was considered to affect seriously the quality of life of their inhabitants, as such limitations reflected upon other aspects of rural life, like employment, recreation and leisure activities, community life and social participation, family and household responsibilities.

5.22. Thus, lifelong learning may contribute to the quality of life of rural inhabitants in various ways, which reflect upon the prerequisites for sustainable development:

- by empowering the individuals to become involved in local policy and decision making.
- by improving their literacy, numeracy and computer skills.
- by building self-confidence.
- by enhancing their identity and culture.
- by enabling them to deal better with family responsibilities.
- by improving career prospects and stability of employment.

Lifelong learning opens new horizons

5.23. Education is in itself a highly esteemed value in rural areas, as Polish researchers have noted. In a number of research projects, it has been pointed out that education, as a social value, is placed at the top of the hierarchy of life aspirations declared by rural inhabitants over the past 15 years. Education is perceived as an element of a well planned life, assuring the quality of one's own life and of that of his/her children. Looking at the educational needs of the inhabitants of the village of Podlasie, it was confirmed that improving one's education was a great aspiration of almost one third of individuals between the ages of 18 and 40. The education level of farmers was a crucial factor in determining their ability to integrate in the local market; but these farmers also defined 'the better life' on the basis of the educational opportunities available to them and their children. The access to learning providers beyond the formal education system was also considered a privilege, connected with living in a big city.

5.24. Thus, lifelong learning can strengthen people's capacities for productive activity but may also open new horizons for self-improvement and self-fulfilment, having a direct or indirect impact on rural quality of life. The examples provided in paragraphs 5.11 to 5.17 above offer good examples of lifelong learning resources that contribute to quality of life more generally.

5.25. ICT learning, as part of continuing education and training, is also opening further opportunities in rural areas. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the internet, since its creation, has been seen as the pathway to a renaissance for rural areas. By bringing about the annulment of distance, the internet would balance geographic inequities. In fact, the opposite has taken place: the

ICT learning in non-formal classes empower rural inhabitants to fight the rural Digital Divide

internet and other types of electronic communication have reinforced the disadvantages of rural areas. Advanced elec-tronic communication has become integral to almost every kind of business activity and a prerequisite for competitive advantage in nearly every industry, as well as dominating many cultural and social activities. At the same time, providers of communications services have become increasingly concentrated in urban centres whose dense markets promise a higher return on investment, shutting out rural areas from the innovations that were supposed to produce a rural renaissance. Thus, the 'Digital Divide' emerged between rural and urban areas.

5.26. By some measures, the rural Digital Divide is narrowing because more and more people, even in rural areas, own computers and gain access to the internet. But improved access does not mean that the Digital Divide is closing. Instead, more advanced forms are making basic access obsolete and creating a new Digital Divide characterized by disparity in speed, quality, and capacity of internet access. High-speed broadband access, which is becoming the standard for both business and personal use, is much scarcer in rural areas than in urban centres. However, continuing education, up-date training and informal learning can improve the capacity of rural inhabitants to take advantage of ICT, complemented by lobbying national governments for improved ICT infrastructures in rural areas.

Valuation and certification of non-formal and informal learning

5.27 Skills and competences gained through life-long learning and continuing education are very important for personal development, as already discussed. Individuals develop skills and competences through professional and non-professional experience, as well as through formal or informal routes. It is often the case that without the mechanism to validate this prior learning, individuals and employers miss out on potential opportunities for further development. Validation of prior learning thus refers to the process of developing one's competences in a proactive life long learning fash-

ion for the benefit of the individual, employer and society as a whole. This goal is better served by a flexible system that adapts itself fast to the changing needs of the global economy and job market, rather that the current mainstream system that is based on formal qualifications.

5.28. Valuation of formal learning is rather easy compared with valuation of non-formal and informal learning. Formal learning (education and formal training) is often based on specified learning goals and well-defined training programmes, followed by a test or exam. Certification and recognition of the ensuing qualifications are integral to the system.

5.29. In contrast, non-formal or informal learning are very difficult to evaluate, validate and certify. Non-formal learning, by definition, is not planned to lead to a specified qualification (e.g. an evening class on a professional or leisure subject) while informal learning takes place unintentionally and is not programmed (e.g. questions and answers raised at the end of a speech or watching a documentary on TV).

5.30. The learning in such situations is often more effective because of the context, the relevance and/or the timing; moreover, such learning can be monitored by the individual learner at his/her own pace, and be directly 'context related' (see Chapter 3) for maximum results. However, valuation of informal and non-formal learning is challenging, although its validation and recognition is very important, as it leads to qualifications and helps the mobility of workers, which is essential in rural as well as urban areas.

5.31. Innovative services and projects have been developed across Europe to enable the Valuation of Prior Learning, as a method to achieve validation and certification of informal and non-formal learning. Two interesting approaches to validate non-formal and informal learning are provided by the VPL project (http://www.vpl4.eu/) which concentrated on the principles and methodology of the Valuation of Prior Learning; and the Euro-Validation project (http://www.euracademy.org/euro-validation) which promoted best practice and piloted the Learning Pathway as a method for targeted valuation of prior learning and needs assessment.

VPL

5.32. VPL aims at validation, recognition, and further development of what an individual has learnt in every possible learning environment, including formal environments (such as school) and non-formal or informal environments (such as the working place or home). VPL links three reference levels:

"I": me, the individual:

I am able to take control of MY own competence development and career to become or stay employable, no matter if I am young or old and/or the context I'm in and the way I am learning.

"WE": the communities / organisations I'm in

Companies, non-profit, volunteers organisations, private life: OUR organisation will support ME in my learning project, individual or with others, and make it possible for ME to use this to follow MY personal mission and to reach MY goal, while making use of my competences in contributing to the larger goal of the community I am working / learning / living in (OUR goal).

"THEY": the system and its elements

EFQ, NVQ, VET, guidelines, tools and advice, and other services for individuals, labour organisations, local municipalities and welfare care: To support ME and US from within THEIR existing frameworks, so that I can keep on developing and OUR community (village, company, volunteer organisation, sector, etc.) can also further develop. This is named the 'they-level', i.e. the level of collective services that are or must be available for all citizens.

5.33. VPL is the designation of a broad outlook on the implementation of lifelong learning. In the context of

VPL in 5 phases

. A VPL-procedure consists in general of five phases:

I. Engagement and awareness of the value of my own competences;

II. Recognition (formal and informal) of my competences, by looking back, reflections;

III. Valuation and/or validation of my competences, formal, informal and looking forward;

IV. (Advice concerning the) development of my competences;

V. Structurally taking up a competence-based development process, according to a personal or organisation-guided plan.

The VPL process in 10 steps

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Awareness	Starting/ targets	Preparation & Personal Development Plan	Retrospective	Choose standard	Valuation	Validation	Prospective	Working on Personal Development Plan	Empowerment
Commitment		Recognition			Valuation			Development	Empowerment

Traditional music-playing and singing is a central feature of community life in Poland, resulting mostly from informal learning

the knowledge society, VPL addresses this need by showing the real human potential of a person, based on the analysis and evaluation of personal competencies. VPL offers a personal development strategy, structured in 5 phases and 10 steps as shown in the Figure below.

Euro-Validation project

5.34. As already discussed, many individuals have extensive knowledge obtained through non-formal or informal learning and there is a need for a comprehensive European system to cover the accreditation and validation of this prior and experiential learning (APEL). This is especially true in the rural context where validation and certification of non-formal learning could contribute greatly to personal and (overall) territorial development. Certainly, certificates and qualifications are an important reference point for employers in the labour market, and innovative forms of certification of prior learning could widen the recognition spectrum.

5.35. The Euro-Validation project was designed to raise the issues of validation and certification of lifelong learning with a specific focus on skills and competences that would assist sustainable rural development. Reviews of certification systems relating to non-formal and informal learning and of the different sectoral needs for qualifications were performed in 11 European countries. These formed the base for the development of a flexible methodology of evaluation and validation of prior learning, with a view to identifying the learning needs of those individuals who wished to take up the profession of Rural Animator.

5.36. The methodology was based on the Learning Pathway Diagnostic Tool and utilised a Rural Animator Core Tasks and Competence Matrix. It was pilot tested in several European countries and a Learning Pathways Guide was produced, which introduced the methodology to the education counsellor and to the learner. In addition a Good Practise Guide was produced which reports on the results of the pilot-testing of the proposed system in different national environments and at different levels of education (higher, post secondary, continuing). The candidate-learners were positive about the Learning Pathway process. For many it was their first opportunity to examine and analyse their own work, tasks and competences in such detail. They saw the process as valuable and felt it had brought previously unidentified training needs to their attention. The role of guidance was greatly appreciated and valued, as will also be stressed in the next Chapter.

The Euro-Validation Conference in Athens, Greece, brought together policy makers, training practitioners and learning validation experts.

Training centres are sometimes combined with hotel and conference facilities, to make them attractive for residential courses

The Competences and Core Tasks Matrix as completed by Finnish Rural Animators

COMPETENCES	CORE TASKS			
	Social communication and information processing	Recognising community's needs and problems	Managing and coordinating group actions	Updating knowledge and understanding of sustainable rural development
1. Competence to han dle inform ation	Methods of information processing. Intermediating information. Public performing.	Methods for group work. Analysing skills Making relevant questions.	Leadership and management skills Knowing different funding resources.	Recognising and utilising silent knowledge.
2. Competence to act verbally and in writing	Voice control. Improving versatile communication skills; both literal and verbal.	Ideation methods.	Methods for groupwork. Leading meetings with the right procedures. Language skills (English, Swedish etc).	
3. Competence to plan and orga nise tasks			What is a learning and innovative organisation like	Project leadership and management.
4. Competence to perform tasks and solve pro blems	Recognition and working with different types of persons . Administration, funding and economic management. Accounting.	Knowing laws and regulations.	Leadership and management skills, Negotiation skills Problem solving skills and methods.	Creative problem solving skills. Awareness of the silent knowledge.
5. Competence to cooperate	Cooperation skills. Methods for group work.		Communication and interaction in networks. Negotiation skills. Developing methods to improve internal communication of the group.	
6. Competence to use equipment	Photo processing and editing Updating skills in using office solutions .			
7. Quality aware - ness competence			Quality management. Evaluation of the quality of services.	
8. Aestheti c b ehavi - our comp etence			Customer service skills.	Customer service and marketing skills.
9. Ethical beha viour competence	Laws and regulations about concealment of confidential information.	Communication in marketing.		Sustainable development.
10. Dev elopme n tal inclination competence				Creative methods Understanding the connection of rural development to a larger framework.

Questions arising from Chapter 5 to reflect on:

1. Make your own assessment of how adult education and lifelong learning may help sustainable development in the rural areas of your region/country.
2. What are the measures that the government of your country has taken to facilitate adult learning in rural areas?
3. Do you know of any voluntary sector movements that have significantly contributed to improving the skills of people living and working in rural areas? What are their major achievements? How are they sustained?
4. What is the role of colleges of further education and universities in improving the skills of people living in rural areas? How is this achieved?
5. How important is the recognition of skills and knowledge in your country? Do people in rural areas in particular take adult learning mostly if it leads to a qualification?
6. Can you describe a few cases of informal and non-formal learning that you have experience of, and make an assessment of the skills and knowledge gained (a VPL process) for yourself?
7. Complete the Competences and Core Tasks Matrix for Rural Animators yourself.

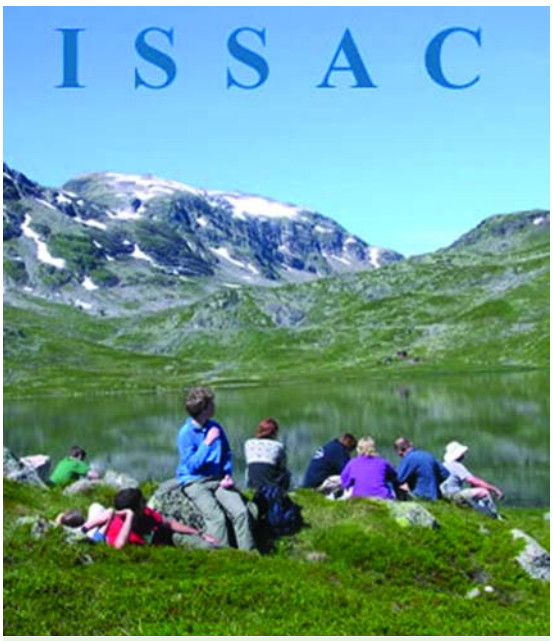
Lantern Festival involving young and old, Wick Scotland

Case Study 5.1

The Swedish Folk High Schools (Folkbildning)

Folkbildning's philosophy presumes that all citizens are free and independent individuals, with the right to participate in all aspects of a democratic society. The activities should provide a comprehensive approach, stimulate curiosity and critical thinking; as well as be a part of the crucial process of lifelong learning. Folkbildning creates the conditions necessary for people to freely pursue knowledge and contributes towards giving them the opportunity to change their lives. Folkbildning in Sweden is organised through Study Associations and Folk High Schools (Folkhogskola).

Folk High Schools are now a popular, important and established part of the Swedish education system. 105 of the schools are run by various popular movements, organisations and associations (NGO?s), whilst the remaining 43 are run by county councils or regions. At Folk High Schools, the students' experiences of working life and society are put to use, and their contribution is very vital. The schools constitute small, educational societies where each individual makes a difference. Studying in a warm and open environment, working closely with other students and staff stimulates personal growth and development. The traditional freedom of the Folk High School has led to ample experimentation and educational innovation. Problem orientated and thematic studies for longer or shorter periods are quite common.



Some Folk Schools offer a 'study abroad' programme as well

The overall object of the Swedish Folk High School is to give general civic education. Each year about 30 000 students take part in the long courses. The Folk High Schools receive financial support from the state. A certain interest has been directed towards groups with special educational needs, e.g. people with short basic education, people with various disabilities, immigrants and the unemployed. The minimum age for admission to the general courses is 18 years. There is no upper age limit.

There are many courses to choose from, varying from a couple of days to several years. All Folk High Schools provide general courses (allman kurs). They are suitable for those who have not completed their secondary education or for those who want to go on to further education. The course content covers a broad spectrum of subjects, with social studies, language and science as the main fields. In addition to the general subjects the student may also choose an optional special course such as computing, music, sport, art & design etc. Some schools provide vocational training for various leader categories, e.g. youth and recreational leaders, and drama leaders. The variety of short courses, mostly during the summer, is also large - music, art & design and creative writing are just a few examples. The courses can be altered from year to year, often in cooperation with various popular movements and organisations.

General courses at the Folk High Schools have been ascribed a specific rate of qualification by the state. A person who has completed a 1, 2 or 3-year course of studies at Folk High School and who has achieved results corresponding to a Pass in the core subject courses at upper secondary school level shall be deemed to have basic eligibility for higher education. The length of the studies required depends on the extent of the student's previous studies and work experience. (Certificate Eligibility for Higher Education).

Students who so wish, may be given an overall assessment of their aptitude for studies. This assessment is an appraisal of the student's scholastic capabilities as a whole and is based on the assessments of all the teaching staff. Scholastic aptitude assessments are given only for those study courses which the school considers to be relevant. To assist the determination of the assessment the Swedish National Council of Adult Education has approved special guidelines.

An important part in many of the Folk High Schools is the boarding element. Studying and living at school creates a sense of community, gives possibilities of close companionship and the chance to exchange views during free time. Many schools offer cultural activities (e.g. concerts, theatre, films) and outdoors pursuits (e.g. team sports and athletics) alongside the studies. In some places the folk high schools are day schools.

Contact: www.folkhogskola.nu

Case Study 5.2

Women in Rural Enterprise (WiRE), UK

WiRE is a network or-ganisation of rural women, linked to the Harper Adams University College (UK) outreach programme. Its 3,679 members are offered assistance in setting up successful new business in rural areas. It organises conferences, locally based training-workshops and courses and gives access to online business help (see www.wireuk.org). Members are eligible for preferential financial packages from a major High St bank, HSBC, which is also a sponsor of the project. WiRE Business Club members have access to various business services, e.g. assistance and advice regarding business and financial planning, marketing and legal matters, business mentoring, help to find available grants and aids. It offers assistance with the formalities of starting up a business, tax affairs and media handling. There are also various workshops dealing with personal development like assertiveness training, confidence building, image management and (self-help) coaching.

Why WiRE?

The idea behind WiRE is to offer women help and assistance on the specific problems and restrictions women experience but which are seldom dealt with in 'regular' business services or in a way inaccessible to most women because for instance the price, location or course design. WiRE bases its 'products' on what the women themselves have said they are interested in and need. It offers a safe and empathetic learning context. Workshops are organised on request, focussing on those problems and ques-tions women appoint as the most interesting. Through the link to Harper Adams University College the network can benefit from the latest scientific research relevant to rural businesses and use their knowledge of the specific problems rural business and rural entrepreneurs encounter. More latterly WiRE has been able to offer help and encourage these businesses to begin exporting through facilitating Trade Missions. The professional support, educational offering and credibility the university gives by hosting the project and guaranteeing the network's organisation is very important. Although remaining in essence a network for and of rural women, the professional organisation is essential for the professional character and the continuity of services WiRE is able to offer. Rural business women starting up their enterprises are seldom in a position to organise such a network by themselves. Through WiRE, Harper Adams University College has shown what education can do for sustainable rural development.

Contact: www.wireuk.org

Case Study 5.3

Benarty Regeneration Action Group (BRAG) Enterprise Ltd, UK

Benarty is the collective name given to the villages of Ballingry, Crosshill, Glencraig and Lochore which are situated in the north of Lochgelly within the Fife Council area, with a population approaching 10,000.

BRAG Enterprises (Benarty Regeneration Action Group), based in the Crosshill Business Centre, Crosshill, is a voluntary, "not for profit" organisation, acting as the lead agency delivering community-based learning provision and economic regeneration in the Central Fife Coalfields Area. BRAG was originally established in 1988 by the people of Benarty in response to the Coal Industry closures to assist in addressing the subsequent high levels of unemployment prevalent in the area. Those who were and still are involved, recognize the importance of diversification, flexible retraining options, the provision of locally-based learning opportunities and the development of new skills that meet with learner interest and employer demand.

The Central Fife Coalfields area, where the organisation is based, remains one of very high unemployment, multiple deprivation and disadvantage. The local communities still face many of the traditionally-associated barriers to accessing training and employment opportunities, namely, low income, difficulties with childcare/dependant care, lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, poor educational attainment, lack of car ownership and poor transport links. However, it is also an area of tremendous community spirit, cooperative effort and amazing potential where we see progress being made every day.

The Crosshill Centre was officially branded by the Scottish University for Industry (SUfI) as college@BRAG in March 2001 and strives to help learners overcome many of these barriers to learning and employment. By providing demanded, community-based learning opportunities and preventative assistance to raise employability, we can assist those people without jobs return quickly to the labour market or self-employment, through the provision of appropriately tailored learning opportunities.

A BRAG training course in action

Courses, leading to SVQ level II qualifications in Administration and Information Technology, combine real work experience, raising employment potential, career planning and the development of work-readiness as key elements. The students are often drawn from a number of harder to reach groups at risk of being socially excluded, and as such occasionally need extra support and mentoring to rebuild confidence in their ability.

As an accredited learndirect-Scotland Centre, it has secured a Capital Modernisation Fund of some £49k to improve the IT/ICT equipment and learning environment for students and other service users. The Centre now has 35 new high specification computers, data projectors for teaching and conference use, as well as portable equipment for use at training events and presentations and a modern Internet Cafe for community access. The 5 main elements of the organisation's work are:

1. Learning and Training

- Providing a range of vocational training programmes
- Delivering community-based learning opportunities
- Encouraging employee development programmes
- Flexible learning & drop-in facilities

2. School for Social Entrepreneurs

- Support for project and business development for community and social benefit
- Provision of individualized and group learning packages
- Mentoring
- Personal and peer support
- " Learning by Doing"

3. Local Economic Development

- Supporting existing and developing community businesses
- Delivering local economic development as part of a service-level agreement with Fife Council
- Supporting communities and individuals in accessing funding

4. Small Business Development

- Supporting the growth of small businesses
- Developing new managed workspace locally

5. New Deal

- Jointly managing and delivering the Voluntary Sector Option for Fife
- Programmes for 18-24 year olds and 25+

Contact: www.brag.co.uk

Case Study 5.4

Vocational adult education in the Rural Institute of Central OstroBothnia (RICOB), Finland

Competence based qualifications in Finland

Qualifications in vocational adult education and training in Finland are mainly competence-based. The competence-based system came into force in 1994. The system has been developed in close co-operation between teachers and representatives of working people, aiming to maintain and enhance the vocational skills of the adult population, to equip adults to become self-employed, to promote employment in general and to support lifelong learning.

Competence-based qualifications include vocational qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications. Adults may demonstrate their vocational skills in competence tests regardless of how and where they have acquired the skills. Although taking part in competence tests does not require formal preparation, many participants participate in preparatory training to rectify gaps in vocational skills learnt at work and to enhance vocational skills. The students participating in preparatory training are provided with individual learning plans. At present, there are 358 qualifications (183 of them further vocational qualifications and 123 specialist vocational qualifications) included in the structure. The requirements for the competence-based qualifications are specified and confirmed by the National Board of Education.

The Rural Institute of Central Ostroothnia

The Rural institute of Central Ostrobothnia (RICOB) began using the competence based exams in 1996 and over 100 students have gained diplomas through this system. RICOB organises competence tests in 6 vocational, 4 further, and 3 specialist qualifications, engaging annually 100 to 300 adults Most of the adult students are running farms or fur farms after their studies. RICOB prefers to offer global training to ensure that students acquire the multiple skills that are needed in running enterprises in the long run. RICOB has also been coordinating national e-learning projects between vocational institutes. Sustainability is part of the curriculum as a general emphasis and is also included in each course.

A new strategy for personalising adult education at all levels is now launched. This includes a three phase personalisation process. The first phase occurs during the application and is dealt with by course secretaries and teachers in cooperation with potential students, trying to identify the applicant's personal skills. The second phase involves the completion of competence tests. These reflect the student's actual (existing) skills and measure them against the standards set by the national curriculum. The third phase of learning personalisation focuses on obtaining the needed skills. In this phase the RICOB staff plan the preparatory education and on the job learning. Personal constraints in learning are taken into account. Study is focused upon students' existing or future enterprises. Most of the assignments are dealing with developing students' own enterprises.

Learning is a social process. Individualising and personalising studies has its downsides as well. Students may lose important learning opportunities that they get when they take the full training programme, attending classes twice a week during wintertime. Coffee and lunch breaks are the best times for learning by sharing experiences with other students.

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In Finland rural education has a long history

Case Study 5.5

Third Age Universities in Finland - an unused adult education resource for rural areas?

The first University for the Third Age (UTA) was established in France in 1973 in Toulouse by Professor Pierre Vellas. In Finland the first UTA was founded in 1985 at the University of Jyvaskyla followed by the University of Helsinki six months later. Today nine universities run UTA programmes and the activities are coordinated and developed by a national advisory board which was established in 1989. All UTAs of Finland are connected with the universities. In some cases the programmes are arranged jointly with the local summer universities or with local open colleges.

The UTA has been popular in Finland from the beginning. Each year about 4400 elderly people participate to its activities, 80 % of whom are women. The average age of the participants is 69 years, their basic education varies from primary to tertiary level and also the vocational profile of the participants is very heterogeneous. The typical reasons for par-ticipating to UTA is that these students have not had a chance to study earlier in their lives due to lack of financial resources, war, or some other external constraint.

The university programmes for the third age are a special form of Open University. They aim to impart knowledge of topical research findings to older people and to offer them opportunities for independent studies at university level without formal requirements of qualifications. The University for the Third Age is a genuine meeting place for scientific knowledge and life experience.

The programmes offered by different UTAs vary considerably with regard to both contents and methods of delivery. There is no standard model but a freedom of choice. Activities organised depend largely on the 'age' of the UTA thus the 'oldest' ones (Jyvaskyla and Helsinki) have a greater variety of programmes than those which have been founded more recently.

The UTAs gives a concrete meaning to lifelong learning. The ability to learn is preserved all through life, though the forms of learning may change. People have a right to learn and develop themselves also after the active working life. Studying can promote their physical, psychological and social well-being in many ways.

The knowledge and skills gathered through one's life can provide different views on the matters studied. In the UTA studies, scientific knowledge and life experience have possibilities to meet and negotiate with each other.

The lectures and classes given at the UTAs of Finland are of university level. The different UTAs are organized as an integral part of the local university. The UTAs of Finland were acknowledged as a special form of open university education by the Ministry of Education in 1991.

According to the principles of Open University there are no entrance requirements as regards the age or the educational level of the student. The goal of the studies is not degrees, credits or any professional benefit. The students attend the UTAs to widen their scope of thinking, to develop their personality and to get tools to comprehend the surrounding world.

The basic principle in designing programmes and other events is cooperative planning. The activities are planned jointly by students and academic staff. To encourage students to personal initiative is a continuous challenge to the third-age university.

The UTAs in Finland are located in urban environments and their activities are organised in the cities. Yet in the rural areas there are a lot of old inhabitants that fit the profile of an UTA student, who in addition to meeting the biased attitudes of the general public against old age are also facing the challenges of living in rural areas without the means of coping. The ideology of UTA and the activities organised by it are all possible to take place in rural areas and become an emancipating resource for the older people.

Contact: www.avoinyliopisto.fi

Third age university participants in a conference

Case Study 5.6

Stowarzyszenie Nowa Europa project, Poland

This project is implemented by organisations in Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, Ireland, Denmark and the United Kingdom. These countries have already held 13 folk school courses attended by approximately 260 participants, basically female residents in rural areas and small towns. The project's objective is to provide access to education and promote sustainable development in rural areas.

The folk school in Poland was attended by 15 female Lipsk residents aged 19 - 45, predominantly with secondary or foundation vocational education background. Due to women's high unemployment, most of them were marginalised from the labour market and consequently were limited to household duties.

The training offered to the women included a variety of subjects, as listed below, aiming to help them improve the quality of their lives:

I. **Social and Personal Development:** Personal development planning; life objectives; system of values, strengths, aptitudes; communication styles; occupational activity; interpersonal communication in occupational or public situations; public speaking; appearance; make-up art.

II. **Health and Sustainability:** The health-conscious food and herbs; herbal gardens; study visit to an organic and agro-tourism farm; organic food; workshop; prevention of addictions; patient rights.

III. **Arts and Handicraft:** Crocheting; Easter eggs painting; traditional Christmas decorations; cross-stitch embroidering; table decoration.

IV. **Modern Information technologies.**

The Stowarzyszenie Nowa Europa project introduced two new ideas to the Grundtvig programme.

- A study visit to a sustainable and agro-tourist farm at Gize was organised, where Anna and Lech Marczak held a workshop on healthy food and lectured on tourism-oriented farms. The trip was an introduction to further activities with a view to encouraging local residents to engage in rural tourism. Furthermore it aimed at teaching participants in earning additional income by using skills in traditional crafts, handicrafts, and provided an opportunity for networking in order to promote and sell ideas and products.
- The second idea was to prepare the participants to give public speeches, including personal presentations and handicraft products demonstrations. Promotion materials were developed for each participant so as to help them make presentations at handicraft fairs, festivals, and other trade events. The final meeting was attended by guest-instructors, who offered specialist help. The promotion material prepared helped in establishing first points of contact with potential buyers.

Participants found the classes enjoyable, relevant and practical. Practical elements of these courses included handicrafts, self-presentation skills, image building, make-up, public speaking, body language, Power Point presentations, writing articles for newspapers, and managing agro-tourism farms.

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Painting Easter eggs is a long-standing tradition in Poland that needs to be preserved and a great opportunity for creative artwork in rural areas

CHAPTER 6.

The role of guidance in supporting learner engagement, participation and progression

Introduction

6.1. In this chapter on the role of guidance in supporting learner engagement, participation and progression, it has been decided to focus on the policy and practice in Scotland, with some references to other parts of the UK, as an illustrative example of approaches to and models of guidance delivery in rural settings. Recent European reports have recognised the developments in Scotland as presenting as effective example of addressing lifelong learning, guidance and progression.

6.2. Like many other countries, the geographical landscape of Scotland presents specific challenges in ensuring that national policy and practice is applicable to both urban areas and more remote, scattered communities. Scotland has a population of 5.5 million people across a broad land-base which includes a range of rural and island communities. The profile of the population includes the fact that, reflective of demographic changes nationally, rural communities have an ageing population.

Policy context

6.3. There is an extensive record of policy initiatives at national and local levels that have influenced and continue to influence education, guid-ance and rural development. These policies relate to lifelong learning, social inclusion and active citizenship and include particular themes such as community-based adult learning, social regeneration, rural regeneration, adult literacies, community planning, employability and qualifications' framework.

6.4. Collectively, these policies contribute to an holistic and cohesive approach to encouraging participation in and progression through learning within a lifelong context.

6.5. Earlier chapters of this Guide have examined what we mean by lifelong learning, different types of learning and training, different models of delivering learning and training, frameworks of qualifications and progression routes for learners from non-accredited learning and within qualifications frameworks. The scope and range of options and opportunities available can be positive in extending access to and relevance of learning and qualifications. However, this can also pose difficulties for some people. Navigating their way through the range of options can require additional support and guidance. This support can take different forms and functions. In this chapter, we will examine the role of guidance in supporting learners at the various stages of their journey and consider the impact of guidance with particular reference to rural development.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework promotes lifelong learning in Scotland

Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework

6.6. In Scotland, there have been developments which have resulted in the establishment and operation of a single qualifications framework, the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework (SCQF), which introduces a common approach to leveling and accrediting learning and vocational training qualifications and experience. This operates across all sectors, awarding bodies and types of learning: academic and vocational; formal, in-formal and non-formal. This assists the progression of learners and creates access to accreditation for skills, knowledge and experience achieved in diverse settings through RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning). Whilst this system allows for transparency and developmental learning routes for individuals, there is a need to provide information, advice and guidance to individual learners to ensure that they understand the process and collate the appropriate information required to gain accreditation and identify options for progression and development.

6.7. The information provided by the SCQF describes the process as "*looking at a road map. You can see where you are now and the different routes you can follow - like the different routes of learning- to reach your destination*" It also highlights that there is "*the possibility of lots of horizontal as well as vertical routes to successful learning*"

6.8. The SCQF was developed to meet the needs of Scotland's learners and was created by bringing together all Scottish mainstream qualifications into a single unified framework. It was developed in partnership by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, Universities Scotland, Quality Assurance Agency Scotland and the Scottish Executive and was launched in December 2001. It uses two measures to describe qualifications and learning programmes: level and credit. There are 12 levels within the Framework which indicate the complexity of learning, and credit points which show the volume of learning undertaken to achieve the qualification. The aims of the SCQF are to:

- assist people of all ages and circumstances to access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfil their personal, social and economic potential;
- enable employers, learners and the public in general to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, how they relate to each other and how different types of qualifications can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce.

6.9. The SCQF is also intended to help describe programmes of learning that lead to the various qualifications; support the development of routes to progress from qualification to qualification; and maximise the opportunities to transfer credit points between qualifications. It will do this by making the overall system of qualifications and relevant programmes of learning easier to understand and providing a national vocabulary for describing learning opportunities.

6.10. By maximizing the opportunity for credit transfer, learning providers can offer and individuals can access more flexible learning opportunities and planned progression routes.

6.11. The SCQF is a non-regulatory Framework that is designed to include all learning which is described in terms of learning outcomes , provided there is a quality-assured assessment of learner achievement. Learning outcomes are defined as "*statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to do t the end of a period of learning*". The SCQF Framework is now successfully established in schools, colleges, universities and other places of learning throughout Scotland. These learning outcomes are defined by SCQF credit points, 1 credit point represents a notional 10 hours learning time. Along with level descriptors, credit points allow learners, learning providers, employers, and guidance workers to compare different qualifications at the same or even different levels.

6.12. This process supports access and participation in lifelong learning by creating better opportunities for the transfer of credit from one programme or qualification to another; by building clear routes of progression from programme to programme; and by developing arrangements for giving credit for previous learning including learning achieved through experience and non-formal learning in the community, workplace or voluntary settings.

6.13. The SCQF will also assist in making clear the relationships between Scottish qualifications and those in the rest of the UK, Europe and beyond, thereby clarifying opportunities for international progression routes and credit transfer.

6.14. Further details of the SCQF and RPL are included in Case Study 6.1 on Qualifications and Accreditation in Scotland.

What do we mean by guidance?

Definitions

6.15. There are differing definitions of guidance. In March 2004, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) report on career guidance and public policy described guidance as follows:

"*In the context of lifelong learning, career guidance refers to a range of activities that enables citizens of any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities and interests; to make educational, training and occupational decisions; and to manage their career. Career guidance helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities. It helps them to understand the labour market and education systems, and to relate this to what they know about themselves. Comprehensive career guidance tries to teach people to plan and make decisions about work and learning. Career guidance makes information about the labour market and about educational opportunities more accessible by organising it, systematising it, and making it available when and where people need it.*

6.16. This and other working definitions of guidance are generally in agreement that guidance is a process which supports individuals to develop skills that enables them to source and interpret information, undertake self-exploration and plan and review their personal development .Guidance is an active, ongoing and empowering process. It is not about telling people what to do within the field of education, there is a debate regarding appropriate terminology to describe the focus of guidance for lifelong learning. The OECD definition describes an holistic focus in its use of the term "career guidance".

Aims of Guidance and Learning Support for Adults

6.17. The aims of guidance can be expressed in various ways. Key themes emerging in the context of learning and training include encouraging lifelong learning by helping individuals to understand and negotiate the complicated range of provision in formal non-formal and informal learning settings; and developing appropriate learning opportunities which reflect the needs and goals of individuals in the range and shape of learning provision.

6.18. It also helps individuals realise their potential through learning, training and work-based opportunities, helping them to be aware of their interests and skills, draw up and implement a plan of action to achieve their goals; helping people to make satisfying decisions that match their interests and goals.

Types of Guidance

6.19. The types and activities involved in the guidance

process can be defined differently according to context, purpose and roles of those involved in the delivery. Broad categories that are often used to clarify the purpose of guidance are; **educational guidance** involving educational choices based on learning needs, interests and options to achieve goals; **vocational guidance** involving choices about paid work, voluntary work or community involvement; **personal guidance** involving a range of circumstances that impact on individual choices.

6.20. These can be further defined according to specific reasons for people accessing guidance services and support.

Principles of Guidance

6.21. Underpinning the actions and activities of guidance are principles which offer guidelines on the values and approaches that should be followed in the development and delivery of guidance. These principles would normally include: client-focused or learner centred, confidentiality, accessibility, transparency, equity of access and impartiality.

Activities of Guidance

6.22. In the literature sources on guidance, there are variations on the activities of guidance described. In the Challenge of Change, first published by UDACE (Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education) in 1986, seven activities are identified. These are: Informing, Advising, Counselling, Assessing, Enabling, Advocating and Feeding Back.

6.23. These have continued to represent the core activities within guidance provision, although additional activities have been included in different contexts and countries. In the UK, these original activities were extended to eleven by SCAGES (Standing Conference of Associations for Guidance in Education Settings) to include Networking; Teaching; Managing; and Innovating Systems Change.

6.24. Very few providers will be involved in delivering all activities and aspects of guidance. Their particular range and level of guidance services offered will depend on their organisations' overall aims and objectives. However, an holistic approach to providing comprehensive guidance can be achieved through networking, cooperative working, partnership and referral. An underlying aim of such approaches is to create a seamless "one-stop-shop" access to the range of guidance provision.

Barriers to participation in learning

6.25. The development and delivery of guidance can pose challenges for policy makers and service providers in any context. Guidance support makes a critical contribution in helping individuals to overcome the barriers to participation in and progression through learning and training. Making the 'right' choices not only improves confidence and achievement of individual learners but also improves retention rates and is therefore cost-effective for learning providers.

6.26. The barriers to participation identified in a range of research are similar to those that face people in rural communities. The following barriers were highlighted in NIACE's Education for Other People, Access to Education for Non-participant Adults, (Givney, 1990): the cost may be prohibitive; unavailability of transport, or lack of community-based provision; unavailability of affordable childcare, or facilities for carers of other dependents; timing of courses and learning opportunities do not fit with shift work, or caring responsibilities; buildings not accessible to people with restricted mobility; insufficient support available to people with learning support needs; inappropriate curricula that do not meet the needs of individuals or communities; marketing of the provision only directed towards certain sections of the community; fear of a repeat of a previous bad experience of education; peer pressure; a feeling that it is not the norm within one's own family or community a feeling of "not for the likes of us"; a feeling of not fitting in or not knowing how to cope in an educational setting; a lack of confidence in the ability to learn; and a more profound loss of self-esteem resulting in a feeling of not being able to take action to change a personal situation, or an expectation of not being accepted or wanted in certain situations.

Several barriers have been identified to participation in formal learning in rural areas

Challenges for rural communities

6.27. Within a rural setting there can be even more challenges to address.

"*There are other barriers to learning - disability, mental health problems, caring responsibilities, and access difficulties experienced by those living in rural and remote areas - which limit uptake of learning when experienced singly, but when combined with some of the other issues detailed here, makes learning less likely*" *(Scottish Executive, 2003).*

6.28. Whatever the reason, once people feel excluded from services or opportunities, the barriers and issues often multiply. Skilled help and guidance can play an important part to enable individuals and communities to overcome these barriers. Additionally, cooperative and partnership working can help to pool resources of staff/volunteers, skills, knowledge, accommodation, equipment and funding to provide a fuller range of guidance and learning provision.

6.29. What are the particular challenges that face rural

communities and how does guidance provision need to develop approaches to address such challenges? The case studies that accompany this chapter illustrate these approaches in practice.

Challenge 1

6.30. Maintaining confidentiality in small communities, especially if advisers also live locally. The process of guidance and choices about learning will often involve discussing personal and sensitive details. There can be a degree of stigma in admitting to a need for learning especially for basic skills topics.

Approaches

- Training for staff involved in guidance activities which includes confidentiality, legislation, ethics and protocols.
- Quality guidelines and systems on client information recording and practice.
- Agreed protocols on client information exchange across agencies with client approval.
- Client charters specifying rights, entitlements and practice.

Challenge 2

6.31. Identifying and contacting potential learners. Promotion and publicity can be difficult and costly within scattered communities. Services are less visible. There is less accessibility to drop-in to services or make casual enquiries. People can be unaware of provision. Counteracting any negative perceptions of previous learning experiences or the belief that "guidance is only for the young" especially as there is evidence that rural communities have above an average ageing population figure.

Approaches

- Coordinated marketing and promotion strategy at national and local level both for the ongoing service delivery, but also to arrange local events such as exhibitions, specific events for "hard to engage" target groups, community events, open days and learning festivals.

The types and activities involved in the guidance process can be defined differently according to context, purpose and roles of those involved in the delivery

- Linking to national and European marketing campaigns, such as Learndirect Scotland, Big Plus campaign for adult literacy and numeracy in Scotland, Adult Learners' Week, International Literacies Day.
- Local marketing and promotional activities such as local radio and press; posters and leaflets displayed in local community venues; entries in local directories; local 'champions' and word of mouth encouragement; presentations to local groups; distributing information via school children to parents/carers.

Challenge 3

6.32. Offering accessible and comprehensive guidance. Research indicates that individuals prefer face to face access to guidance and support at least at the initial stages. Physical access can be a difficulty as many services are not available in all rural areas or may offer a restricted outreach provision.

Approaches

- Providing access at a distance through non-traditional methods that are flexible and responsive to lifestyles such as telephone helplines, websites, online programmes and e-guidance. This might include arranging access to ICT equipment in local venues or on a loan basis.
- Sharing premises for service delivery on a scheduled basis or establishing a "One Stop Shop" type of provision.
- Mobile resource, either dedicated to learning and guidance or within other services such as mobile library facility.
- Arranging transport to delivery centres.

Challenge 4

6.33. Delivering programmes and services that offer relevant guidance services and learning topics and courses at appropriate levels to meet specific and diverse needs.

Approaches

- Accessing existing data or undertake market research to establish the needs, priorities and current gaps in provision in the local area.
- Maintaining accurate and up-to-date information on labour market profiles and trends.
- Integrating guidance support into learning programmes, both formally and informally, as appropriate, to raise awareness of its purpose and accessibility. It is important to recognise that not all learning participants will seek progression and that guidance is a two way process.
- Arranging staff and equipment support for distance or open learning opportunities.

Challenge 5

6.34. The viability of offering a broad programme to small numbers in rural areas and the dilution of specialist services. Learner-centred approaches are resource intensive, especially when learners are located across scattered geographical areas; the viability of offering a broad programme to small numbers in rural areas and the dilution of specialist services.

Approaches

- Examining collaborative or consortium learning and programme delivery to extend local provision.
- Accessing any state funding to support rural provision.
- Arranging transport to combine session delivery across communities.
- Applying new technologies such as video conferencing and online learning groups.
- Developing training for staff in local organisations to extend their guidance skills and the level of services they can offer, combined with referral for specialist guidance and support.

Challenge 6

6.35. Transportation, childcare and funding inadequacies can be specific barriers to participation.

Approaches

- Building community transport facilities such as minibuses and car-sharing.
- Scheduling service delivery and programmes to accommodate school timings and to access school transport for others.
- Working in partnership to share costs for activities.
- Cooperative approaches to sourcing funding for local areas.

6.36. There are particular demands for staff involved in the development and delivery of guidance for learning, training and employment to rural communities. In addition to their required skills profile, they need to be creative and resourceful; have detailed and expert knowledge of learning and support provision within their area; ability to network and operate a joint-working approach to service planning and delivery; work simultaneously on a diverse range of client needs; establish good relationships with community members and groups; be able to feedback and influence local provision.

Visits to industrial units form part of the career guidance

Delivering guidance

6.37. Change is one of the few constants in our lives. In relation to our engagement in learning, vocational training, career and personal development, it is important to consider the why, when and how we engage with and manage change.

6.38. Learning, whether formal or non-formal, accredited or non-accredited, can be a key factor in influencing change and progression for individuals and communities. In some instances, we engage in learning or training in a reactive manner when change is imposed by external circumstances such as geographical relocation, labour market trends, unemployment patterns, changing work practices and skills, career promotion or upskilling, lifestyle changes (family commitments, age, health, retirement, finances). The choice to participate in lifelong learning can also be proactive in response to personal growth and creativity when we respond positively to opportunities and take control of the process of change.

Why do people need guidance?

6.39. Reasons for people seeking guidance at different stages of their lives include retraining, career enhancement, career planning, compliance with legislation/regulations, leisure learning for its own sake, local community development, improving confidence, self-esteem and personal well-being, first steps back to learning, ICT and new technology skills, planning structured learning pro-grammes and progression routes and recognition of prior learning (RPL).

6.40. An element of change and transition is present in these circumstances, and individuals and groups benefit from a range of guidance activities and support as appropriate. Information and support from experienced and knowledgeable staff are perceived as being critical factors in making appropriate choices.

6.41. As well as having an impact on individuals' learning outcomes, effective and appropriate guidance, information and support also has a positive impact on learner retention, completion, achievement and progression. It is therefore cost effective for learning/training providers and in socio-economic terms.

When is guidance required?

6.42. Within the context of lifelong learning, it is important to ensure that guidance is available at all stages of our lives and career development. In the learning cycle, guidance may be appropriate when an individual is first contemplating learning or training and is seeking the most appropriate opportunity; starting on a course or learning package from staff knowledgeable about particular courses and programmes; during the course of study from tutorial staff, student counsellors or careers advis-ers; and on completing a course of learning or training to review what has been achieved and to set new goals.

What types of guidance and service are required?

6.43. There have been a series of research exercises undertaken in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK to iden-

tify the needs, demands and expectations of people for guidance and advice services. From this research, three levels of guidance and support have been described.

- Information - details of learning opportunities; accreditation and RPL; funding sources and state benefits; childcare; and signposting to other support services or specialist agencies.
- Advice - helping clients to interpret information; review their circumstances and personal factors; and decide on the most suitable course of action.
- Guidance - an in-depth process that assists clients with self-analysis, exploring a range of options; making decisions; setting goals; action planning and reviewing progress.

6.44. This model can help guidance services to target their time and resources according to individuals' readiness for career decision making as developed in the model of differentiated services by Florida State University (FSU) which suggested three categories of service users: those needing information only; those needing advice on how to use the information and on what the information might mean; and those who need more in-depth guidance as to the implications of certain choices, and how to identify where it is they want to go and how they might then get there.

6.45. During more in-depth guidance, adults are taken through self-assessment and reflection in order to try to identify learning pathways that are useful for them, which 'fit' their needs, circumstances and priorities, and which therefore are more likely to lead to them staying with their learning choice As indicated earlier, increased op-portunities offer greater choices but can also be confusing and may deter individuals. Skills and knowledge of guidance workers can assist individuals to make appropriate choices. This model of a differentiated service framework is operated by Careers Scotland (Case Study 6.1).

6.46. When research was undertaken with previous and potential users of guidance services, the following categories were identified. These were replicated in research undertaken with similar groups in Scotland and more recently with older adults.

- Life Guidance - addressing personal issues which impact upon career, work and education
- Work Expert Guidance - involving advisors with specialist knowledge of particular fields
- Work Appraisal Guidance - concerned with appraisal of work performance
- Work Experience Guidance - facilitating experience of different sort of work
- Job Search Guidance - focusing upon technical aspects of finding and keeping a job
- Personal Development Guidance - in-depth analysis of abilities and capabilities
- Learning Guidance - geared to deciding upon and accessing guidance
- Mentoring/Outreach Guidance - aimed at reaching and supporting those not motivated to engage in work and/or learning.

Who provides guidance?

6.47. The provision of guidance is not the exclusive domain of state funded agencies which have a remit for guidance. As individuals we access guidance, information and advice from a range of influential sources in our lives. This can be described as informal guidance, non-formal guidance or community-based guidance. Examples of these are: guidance offered in existing relationships by parents, peers, family; guidance offered by volunteers in community organisations; guidance offered by professionals in other fields such as youth workers, community development workers, social workers, health professionals, teachers, tutors, work supervisors and vocational trainers.

6.48. The support from informal guidance sources may need to be supplemented by more skilled support from guidance professionals, including: relating information to individual circumstances, labour market and local community needs; recognising skills, aptitudes and learning styles; coaching in jobsearch and presentation skills; motivating and confidence building; and understanding qualifcations' frameworks and learning progression routes. It should be recognised that formal guidance workers will often deliver their services through these non-formal guidance agents and settings. This could involve providing an input to learning programmes or using the premises of other agencies for outreach delivery.

6.49. Many organisations, agencies or community projects do not have the necessary resources to offer the full range of guidance, support and information services and learning opportunities to meet the needs of their community. This is the case for both rural and more densely populated areas, but is even more evident within the rural context. Providers of learning and guidance services in rural settings can often feel additional pressures to de-liver the whole package of guidance, information and support because there are limited agencies operating in the geographical locality. These resources would include adequate staffing to deliver services at all times and in all locations; funding to support learner engagement and progression(travel, childcare, fees); staff who have the required knowledge, skills and information; remit and funding for particular services.

6.50. It is also the case that there are very few organisations whose remit and provision is exclusively guidance and which can then deliver comprehensive guidance services. Some organisations do have particular departments or sections which have a guidance remit such as Student Services in Further and Higher Education institutions and state employment agencies. For others, guidance is a small component of the services provided, such as local libraries offering information on learning opportunities

6.51. In response to these factors and to offer a holistic range of support, it is important to consider how agencies can establish effective partnership working

approaches that make optimum use of available resources to deliver 'joined up' and comprehensive services to individuals and communities. There are examples of how networking has been developed to offer seamless access to guidance through Community Guidance Networks supported by Careers Scotland within community planning processes. It is also important to establish appropriate training in guidance skills and techniques for staff in other agencies who are involved in guidance activities.

6.52. Some of the key stakeholders who are in-volved in the delivery of guidance might include: careers/adult guidance services (state-funded, voluntary sector or private sector); further and higher education institutions; community learning and development services; adult literacy and numeracy learning services; youth services; community projects; Citizens' Advice Bureaux; employers; trade unions and professional associations; social work services; housing agencies; voluntary sector agencies; training providers; Job Centre Plus/ employment services; libraries; and health services. Approaches to partnership and collaborative working are illustrated in the case studies that accompany this chapter.

How is guidance delivered?

6.53. A recent OECD report on career guidance and public policy (Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap., OECD 2004) described the diversity of guidance services and delivery methods as follows:

"*While personal interviews are still the dominant tool, career guidance includes a wide range of other services: group discussions; printed and electronic information; school lessons; structured experience; telephone advice; and on-line help. Career guidance is provided to people in a very wide range of settings: schools and tertiary education; public employment services; private guidance providers; enterprises; and community settings.*"

6.54. Often when we consider what is the traditional model of guidance delivery, we think about information enquiries or one to one interviews with guidance workers from statutory agencies with a central base or delivering services on a scheduled basis in settings such as careers centres, schools, colleges, universities, employment agencies. The methods and models of accessing and delivering guidance present a diverse range of provision. Some organisations will offer their guidance services by more than one method to extend access and match the specific needs and circumstances of their target groups and individuals. Some clients may only require information or signposting to opportunities, whilst others will need more in-depth advice and guidance. This differentiated service framework is key to the operation of Careers Scotland.

6.55. Whilst there is still a strong focus on personal contact, guidance services are not only available by prearranged interview and appointments. There is also access to guidance workers and advisers through telephone, email and website communications. There are drop-in opportunities in both central bases and in outreach centres which are often within premises of other agencies.

6.56. Some examples of methods of offering guidance services are: discrete guidance services, out-reach services/ mobile facilities, integrated guidance in learning programmes, telephone helplines/call centres, online/e-guidance, computer assisted guidance programmes, personal development courses, individual learning plans, workplace support services and Continuous Professional Development (CPD), intermediate labour market programmes. In many instances, guidance is integrated into learning and training provision on both a formal and informal basis. In some accredited and non-accredited learning programmes, there will be specific modules or units in which relate directly to the guidance process. These might include Personal Development Planning, Learning Planning and Review, Job Search and Preparation, Work Experience and Work Trials.

6.57. There are examples of programmes that are specifically focused on guidance and personal or career development. These might be for women returners who have been out of the paid labour market for some time, unemployed jobseekers, redundant workers, young people making the transition from school to college or work and employed career changers.

6.58. The diversity of guidance service delivery means it is responsive to the lifestyle and circumstances of the target groups and reflects locality/geographical access, 24 hour access and domestic demands on time and differentiated needs of individuals. It is also an important strategy to meet demands within resource limitations and ensuring that provision is "fit for purpose" and supported by effective cooperative working at strategic and operational levels by appropriate stakeholders.

Recognising the impact of guidance

6.59. Guidance can have an impact on individuals, communities and economic competitiveness in a range of ways including: more motivated and engaged learners and improved retention rates in formal learning; socio-economic benefits of people achieving greater financial

A workshop in the 5th summer academy of Euracademy Association discussed guidance as an important factor of lifelong learning

security through higher level jobs; savings in state benefits as more people enter paid employment; social cohesion through an increased sense of social responsibility and active citizenship; and improved health and well-being and associated health care cost savings.

6.60. The Council of the European Union Resolution (6786/06), "Draft Council Resolution on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Lifelong Career Guidance in Europe" (2004) also recognised the importance of guidance in supporting effective lifelong learning:

"*Career guidance contributes to the achievement of the European Union goals of economic development, labour market efficiency and occupational and geographical mobility, by enhancing the efficiency of investment in education and vocational training, lifelong learning and human capital and workforce development. In addition, effective career guidance provision can promote social inclusion, social equity, active citizenship and personal and professional fulfilment*".

6.61. There is also acknowledgement of the contribution that guidance can make to mobility in learning and employment in Europe. This applies equally to mobility across different countries and within individual countries. The issue of geographical mobility is of particular relevance to rural communities.

6.62. When individuals and communities feel that they are in some way excluded from anything and access to opportunities is denied to them, the actual barriers to participation and issues that they face can sometimes multiply. Whether these are actual or perceived barriers, the role of the 'skilled helper' is critical in enabling people to overcome them.

Conclusion

6.63. Finally, the role of information and guidance in supporting individuals and communities to overcome barriers and develop opportunities can be described as: to help people to overcome external or structural barriers to learning by: assisting them to find the right opportunity; unravelling the jargon and "information maze" associated with different types of courses and qualifications; acting as an advocate for appropriate learning support; and providing information and support to access financial assistance and childcare facilities and to support individuals to address internal barriers that they face by: reassuring them that they can achieve and succeed; giving positive feedback about their skills and abilities; listening and empathising about their anxieties about their abilities; and building individual confidence and self-esteem by enabling them to succeed.

Questions arising from Chapter 6 to reflect on:

1. In what ways does the existing policy context in your country/local area support the development of guidance services to support learning and training? Are there any policies that should be introduced?
2. What do you think are the advantages/issues of having a single qualifications' framework like the SCQF? How does the SCQF compare with the processes and procedures for accreditation and progression in your country? (see Case Study 6.1)
3. Are there any protocols or guidelines that apply in supporting consistency and quality guidance services in your practice?
4. What is being done at present or could be done to address the barriers to participation in learning?
5. What methods of service delivery are in operation to offer flexible and accessible guidance provision to accommodate the needs of individuals and communities? Are there ways in which these can be further developed?
6. How appropriate is the differentiated guidance service framework model, outlined in Case Study 6.1 on Careers Scotland, for your circumstances?
7. There can be a range of stakeholders who contribute to delivering comprehensive guidance services. Which organisations can you identify in your country/local area are involved in or could be involved in offering formal or non-formal guidance?
8. How can you measure the impact of guidance on individuals, communities and national economy?

Case Study 6.1

Careers Scotland, UK

The establishment of a national publicly funded career guidance service in Scotland was recommended by the Duffner Committee. By bringing together Careers Service Companies, Education Business Partnerships, Adult Guidance Networks and Lifelong Learning Partnerships, Careers Scotland was set up in 2002 as a national organisation offering all-age guidance to the people of Scotland. In total, 80 previously separate organisations were integrated to form the national service. Careers Scotland has also been strengthening its work with partner organisations through its Community Guidance Strategy.

A central aim of this work is to create effective links between lifelong learning and lifetime guidance. The approach to developing partnership working is being driven at both strategic and operational level. As well as supporting individuals to achieve their goals, this collective approach to guidance contributes to achieving public policy, social equity, labour market efficiency and effective and efficient lifelong learning systems.

Key activities that are developed through Adult Guidance Networks and Community Guidance Partnerships have included networking and referral procedures to offer comprehensive and efficient guidance services, quality assurance, information exchange, joint training, coordinated promotion of learning and training, collaborative working and collective feedback to address gaps in provision.

Principles that underpin these developments include a commitment to work together and to ensure that people and communities are genuinely engaged in the planning and development process.

In 2005, the progress of Careers Scotland was reviewed. The review notes that "Careers Scotland is probably the largest publicly-funded organisational structure in the world that is dedicated to career planning support". Key positive features include:

- embedding itself within a policy setting primarily concerned with economic development;
- its use of the Career Planning Continuum/ Journey as a tool for conceptual coherence;
- its adoption of a model of differentiated service delivery, distinguishing between self-help, assisted and in-depth services;
- its implementation of a channel strategy comprising walk-in, phone-in, log-in and look-in options;
- its customer segmentation model;
- its staffing structures;
- qualifications framework for its staff, a supervision and support system for staff and support for reflective practice;
- its development of a set of Careers Scotland Quality Standards for its work;
- its sophisticated customer record management system;
- its work on impact assessment;
- its partnership agreements with the other main career guidance providers in Scotland, at both national and local levels.

The Review concluded that: "in relation to OECD benchmarks, the practices being adopted by Careers Scotland are comparable to leading good practice across the world".

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Case Study 6.2

Online Borders: The Scottish Border Community Grid project, UK

Online Borders is a partnership project of the Scottish Border Community Grid that aims to provide information on learning, guidance, care and volun-tary action to people living and working in the Scottish Borders The impetus for establishing Online Borders arose from the recognition of two emerging factors:

- the escalating demand for more and better information on local resources;
- the shift towards electronic media for information exchange.

A number of project groups including: Social Work and Health 'Care Directory'; the ABCD database of voluntary sector resources; Scottish Borders Careers and Scottish Borders Council-Community Education were already looking towards their next phase of development. Independently, each project was beginning to explore the ground for the creation of online facilities. With an awareness of their common aims, and the search for funding to support these aims, the partners decided to join forces.

An earlier study commissioned by the Borders Rural Partnership had taken the first steps towards an information strategy for the Borders and identified the key considerations for an holistic information provision utilising the new technologies. The Scottish Border Communi-ty Grid project partnership was the first step towards creating this vision on the ground.

Partnership Working

The partners in the Scottish Border Community Grid project are:

- Scottish Borders Council - Community Learning and Development
- Scottish Borders Council - Social Work Services
- Careers Scotland (Scottish Borders)
- Borders Forum of Councils of Voluntary Service (4 local CVS)
- NHS Borders

The lead partner is Scottish Borders Council. All the partners are committed to the concept of the Community Grid being community-owned and not driven by the partner organisations needs. Each partner already has a website and while Scottish Borders Community Grid may signpost to these sites, the aim is to make the portal member-centric, providing information tailored by proximity to the user or user needs, rather than structured through an organisational hierarchy.

Outcomes

The potential benefits identified following the delivery of this project are as follows:

- Increase the number of people undertaking vocational work to develop their own skills.
- Improve the quality of life for carers by providing access to learning and training opportunities and substitute care for their dependant(s).
- Increase the number of care provider staff undertaking vocational learning opportunities.
- Reduce the duplication of effort in providing information to the public by a number of organisations.
- Increase the IT skills of voluntary organisations' staff and facilitate the production of web sites for these organisations.
- More accurate and timely delivery of information on voluntary sector development opportunities.
- Wider understanding of the benefits of lifelong learning.
- Twenty new voluntary organisations' web sites added per year.
- Twelve hundred voluntary organisations included within the portal's database.
- Offer facilities such as bulletin boards, mailing lists and online queries which are not at present available.
- Reduce duplication of effort in maintaining databases.
- Improve currency of information.
- Offer more information than is currently available in paper or on CD.
- Develop further web facilities for smaller organisations in the partners' networks.
- Improve ICT skills and capacity in the partner organisation networks.
- Be of use both to the public and to those offering services and information.

Contact: www.onlineborders.com

Online Borders is an active community grid

Case Study 6.3

Regional Vocational Advisory Centres, Hungary

The agricultural sector of Hungary has undergone significant structural changes since the 1990s: Extensive privatization process changed the structure of ownership, and landowners were no longer necessarily the land users. At the same time the number of agriculture units increased and the use of land was diversified.

These factors led to the creation of a new advisory and training system which included several Institutes of Advisory and Institute of Further Training. By 1999, 11 Advisory and Training Institutes were designated to become advisory bodies for farmers. Over time their function widened, and the Institutes became responsible for the training of local development managers and for the management of various grants.

In 2004, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development strengthened further the role of these Institutes by establishing a network of Regional Advisory Centres in the seven Hungarian regions

The Centres deliver:

- Education and training
- Advice and Regional Development
- International and trans-border projects
- Professional publications
- Consultancy for farmers

Each Centre focuses on their geographical region, which means the programmes, advice, training and education depends on local conditions, and aligns itself with the objectives of the micro-regions each represents.

Each Centre also operates satellite centres in their region. These function either as a department of the main Centre, delivering part of its service and/ or usually some training.

The Regional Vocational Advisory Centre of West-Transdanubian Region

The Regional Vocational Advisory Centre of West-Transdanubian Region is in Mosonmagyaravar, 45 km far from Gyor, at the faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences of the University of West Hungary. This Centre focuses on the provision of education/training and of an advisory service.

With regards to the educational programme, the Centre offers a range of short courses aimed at farmers and people involved in rural development. For the practical training, model farms are used where trainees can practice new skills.

There is also a postgraduate course for advisers / managers of rural development on offer. This course covers subjects like economic law, EU policy, marketing, agricultural policy, rural development, enterprise development, agro-business etc.

Farmers and those involved in rural development can access information and advice on relevant topics.

The Centre also operates eight satellite centres which offer mainly educational services enabling farmers to validate their past experience and skills.

Over the years the Regional Vocational Advisory Centre of West-Transdanubian Region has built wide international and national contacts, as for example with the Agriculture Chamber of Burgenland (Austria), and the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences in Vienna .

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Training and Vocational Advisory Centres are created in many rural areas of Hungary

Case Study 6.4

Learning on Prescription, UK

Learning on Prescription is an initiative that uses health settings as a way of engaging with adult literacy and numeracy learners, particularly excluded individuals and groups. It has been piloted in the East End of Glasgow and is in the process of expanding to the South East of Glasgow. Core funding for the project has been awarded through national government funding from the Scottish Executive which is coordinated by the Glasgow Community Learning Partnership, a body which has produced a strategic plan to address literacies needs in the Glasgow area.

Learning on Prescription is a Greater Glasgow NHS Board project. It is part of an overall strategy to support Greater Glasgow NHS Board develop its potential to engage with learners through staff who are in contact with patients and by piloting workplace learning that supports Adult Literacy and Numeracy learning for NHS employees. Learning on Prescription is available in the East and South East areas of Glasgow. Although this project operates within an urban setting, the size of Glasgow means that there are distinct communities in areas which experience similar issues of exclusion and accessing learning and guidance services to rural areas.

Delivery approaches

Partnership working

Staff employed on the Learning on Prescription project work cooperatively with healthcare staff to support patients in accessing free, local adult literacy and numeracy tuition for English speakers and for those who are learning English as an additional language. This is done in partnership with local learning providers such as Further Education colleges, voluntary sector and Glasgow City Council Cultural and Leisure Services.

Referral

The project and its Learning Advisers are able to take referrals from any organisation which works with adults (post-16) who are potentially interested in accessing tuition in literacy and learning generally.

Client Tracking

Arrangements are in place for progress monitoring and tracking of clients to review their progress in achieving their goals and gather feedback on the guidance received.

Service Development

During the operation of the pilot phase, the project has broadened its approach from working purely from GP practices to thematic work as well, such as men's health and working with mental health resource centres. The project continues to have a relationship with GP practices. Additional personal development support is delivered through specific programmes organised through the Learning on Prescription project as well as by referral to existing learning opportunities offered by local provid-ers. The following are examples of specific programmes:

Wellman Clinics: In order to participate in wellman clinics, men complete a detailed health screening questionnaire. A Learning Adviser is on site during these clinics to offer drop-in type support for filling in the forms. Being able to provide support for a challenging and health-significant literacy task provides a useful starting point for en-gagement.

Confidence building: A confidence building course is offered to project participants in partnership with Glasgow City Council Cultural and Leisure Services. This offers participants the opportunity to work on relaxation techniques and look at ways to improve confidence with the aim of supporting progression to other learning opportunities.

In a genuine outreach guidance model, Learning on Prescription staff are increasingly involved in shaping provision for learners as well as placing them into existing appropriate provision. They offer specialist guidance and assessment in terms of: providing an assessment of needs and identification of learning goals, presenting learners with options and impartial advice, and establishing a starting point against which to review learner progress.

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An innovative and useful initiative for rural communities

Case Study 6.5

Scouting Gelderland as a learning organisation, The Netherlands

Many Scouting Volunteers experience difficulties in achieving acknowledgement for the experience they acquire during their volunteer work. Scouting Gelderland therefore wanted to recognise competences acquired by their volunteers in order to acknowledge their efforts.

There was a desire within the organisation to properly establish and document the skills expected from group leaders, taking into account the needs of their team members. This documentation can be used to make clear what an individual volunteer has learnt to educational institutes and future employers.

Steunpunt Scouting Gelderland is one of the regional offices for the support of Scouting and Guiding in the Netherlands, based in the province of Gelderland. They support scouting groups by offering information, training and tools which they can use to ease and better their practice. Overall, 30.000 volunteers work for Scouting in the Netherlands.

Scouting Gelderland started with the development of a VPL (Valuation of Prior Learning) procedure as an answer to the need to get volunteers experienced in how to write their competences down in their curriculum vitae. The scouting jargon complicates communication with future employers and educational institutes. The support centre for Scouting Gelderland does not offer certificates or diplomas, but tools which support the volunteers to express their scouting experience in more general terms.

In this way, non formal and informal learning counts in the application procedure and at school. This provides a benefit for the employer, the volunteer and the educational institute. In addition, the recognition of Scouting groups as 'learning enterprises' has made them a part of formal education system. In this sense part of the diploma is based on scouting experience. Regional Training Institutes recognise scouting groups in Gelderland as official learning organisations. The developed competence profiles make clear what competences are learned within the organisation. Every scouting group that wants to offer recognised trainee posts has to be recognised by the OVDB (Knowledge centre for learning in practice). They have to prove that the organisation is competent to coach their trainees.

Volunteers are not always aware of the extent of their skills and knowledge when building their profiles. Scouting Gelderland therefore uses training to raise awareness of these competencies. A Swiss model 'the CH-Q (http://www.ch-q.ch/)' has been used to develop this training. Scouting Gelderland learned of this model through the Knowledge-centre, and adapted it to the Dutch context.

The training consists of three steps: -

- What am I good at?
- How should I formulate my expertise?
- Where can I actually use it?

Beside CH-Q training, group leaders can observe the trainees, give feedback, write a recommendation letter for (team) leaders and practise job interviews with the STAR methodology.

Tools that Scouting Gelderland developed include:

Competence game; workshops, CD-ROM with documentation for leaders, team leaders and group leaders; Guide for a STAR-conversation and Competence Profiles.

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CHAPTER 7.

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