

SOCRATES Grundvig Project

Learning in HE: Improving practice for non-traditional adult students

An overview of the different National Contexts

This document provides an overview of the different national contexts of the project partners using the following common headings:

1. Structure of HE
2. Funding of HE
3. Admissions into HE
4. Non-Traditional Students
5. Learning and Teaching approaches with non-traditional students
6. Ideas from the literature/national experience

This overview provides a useful basis for reference and for the comparison of the national contexts of the different project partners. It has informed the initial work of the partners as well as the Interim Report and the Final Report. It has been translated into a matrix for easy reference and comparison (see project handbook). It is in alphabetical order, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

FINLAND

1. Structure of HE in Finland

Finland has a binary system of polytechnics and universities. The Candidate/undergraduate degree (130 credits) at a university takes from 3 to 4 years, and the higher Masters degree (160-180 credits) from 5 to 6 years. Universities also provide vocational training, Open University courses and continuing education/training. Studying in polytechnic lasts from 3 to 4 years after finishing upper secondary school or comparable studies. Statistically polytechnic degrees are ranked at the same level as undergraduate university degrees, the Candidate degrees.

A new law in January 2003 was introduced to provide labour courses for the unemployed - skills for work life. This law will allow university drop-outs to finish their degree, which has not been possible so far with these kind of labour courses, as without a degree it is difficult to obtain employment.

2. Funding

University education is free and can take several years. Funding is equal for both young and adult students. Non-traditional students have access to the same institutional funding as everyone else. Students with disabilities are allowed to apply for special funding from Finland's Social Insurance Institution. This funding requires that the chosen field of education is appropriate for the disability in question and that by implementing the studies, the student has a possibility to gain employment.

Adults in HE are eligible for a low-rate loan and also for housing support from the government. Adults, including non-traditional adults, have the opportunity to obtain professional training funding. The conditions for this funding are that he or she is over 30 years old, currently employed, has a work attachment that has lasted at least for a year and has at least 5 years of working experience. This funding comes from the government too.

One possible way for non-traditional adults to fund their education is through insurance or pension corporations, if they need to re-educate themselves because of a work accident, work related illness or a

traffic accident. Different foundations and organisations also provide grants and scholarships for non-traditional learners.

Other services to support study

Municipalities and/or the government can grant a personal assistant for a severely handicapped student, helping with daily educational routines or a sign language interpreter for a deaf student. This aide is legislated by the law, but under strict conditions. Education institutions do not hire these assistants. The student him or herself will act as the employer, while the funding comes from the municipality or the government.

3. Admissions

In Finland non-traditional learners have to go through the same procedures as everyone else when applying to Higher Education institutions. There is no quota for them and neither is there any tradition of encouraging or giving special support non-traditional learners trying to access Higher Education. There are some general admission criteria defined by law, but mostly institutions are allowed to set their own admission criterion. In many institutions, universities or polytechnics it is possible to implement special arrangements at the entrance examination, for example people with different kind of disabilities. These special arrangements can be, for example, extra lighting, extended time and so on. These special arrangements are individually agreed on beforehand. Usually the applicant has to present a medical certificate or a clarification of the reasons why he or she should get these arrangements.

In universities a baccalaurean examination is usually required, but a few people without this examination are taken in each year. According to the law, the university is also allowed to accept people with polytechnic or vocational education qualifications or the requisite amount of Open University studies. They may also accept a person who has enough skills and premises to carry out the studies. These special cases are defined individually. So there is also an opportunity for non-traditional adults without adequate prior education to get into higher education this way. It is not a very common practice, though.

The same rules apply to other non-traditional learners, like immigrants or ethnic minorities. The ideas of equality and equity are emphasised in Finnish Higher Education institutions, at least in principal. For example in Helsinki University there is a standing equality committee, which aims to promote equality amongst all the students and university staff. This includes questions of equal opportunities for men and women, people with different disabilities, ethnic minorities and immigrants.

4. Non-traditional students

As there is no special provision for non-traditional adult students it is difficult to tell who the non-traditional students are. Students with learning difficulties face real problems since the standards in secondary school and in HE are so different, with the effect that the earlier adopted methods don't always work anymore. At the beginning of HE study, in a new situation in life, it is difficult to adapt new learning methods to match the standards of HE.

5. Learning and teaching approaches with non-traditional adults

The external conditions for education for non-traditional learners are organised in Finland, but teaching practices and strategies can vary a lot and there really are no institutionalised practices and procedures. Non-traditional adults are also not specially taken into account. The study attainments and curricular objectives of a non-traditional learner have to be the same standard as anyone else's. Student cannot be freed from any compulsory part of the degree. In extremely severe cases, for example when a deaf student can't take part in a language test, an alternative way to indicate student's language skills is usually agreed on.

Personal study plan

What we have in Finland is a national agenda based on personal study plans (see below). These personal study plans are produced on the basis of the curriculum and the choices of individual students. They are

development plans for students, which support career planning and self-assessment. The basic idea is that students participate in the planning of their own studies, make personal choices, follow their individual progress in the studies and assess their own learning process. Each student co-operates with teaching staff to draw up a plan based on curricular objectives and the students' own objectives. This project takes account of the students' background.

The implementation and monitoring of personal study plans are supported through student counselling. Students, tutors and teachers may bring issues that have a bearing on the implementation of personal study plans. Each student is guided to make decisions concerning his or her own learning. The plan can also be modified in the course of the studies.

Data networks

Most institutions in the Finnish Higher Education system emphasise the use of data networks and other education technologies as a part of the daily education and study activities. These special pedagogic tools are widely researched and used in Finland. This in part can help certain non-traditional learners in their studies. The national agenda focuses on personal study plans, self-assessment and career plans - individualistic approach.

6. Ideas from the literature/own experiences

In Turku University there is a working party exploring the opportunities for non-traditional learners. They have suggested possible solutions for students with learning problems:

- There should be someone in the faculty with the right experience and knowledge to discuss with the student and help her/him in the beginning and with developing the personal study plan.
- In faculties information should be available about the possibilities for non-traditional learners
- Non-traditional students should be allowed to take an exam several times.
- The procedures and practices for non-traditional learners should be unified.
- Learning materials should be available for everyone.

Additional Finnish Material

a. Personal Study Plan (HOPS)

Student-based learning, positive attitude towards students and close collaboration and relations with students are the key elements in adult education. A natural part of this approach is involving the student in his/her own learning path. Personal Study Plan is not only a plan; it is also a commitment.

Personal Study Plan can be built:

- For supporting studies
- For understanding different values and parts of life
- For developing expertise

Personal Study Plan reflects on adult's situation in life and it has to be done thoroughly at the beginning of the studies. Personal Study Plan has to be trustworthy, motivating, meaningful and goal-oriented.

Working with Personal Study Plan means sensing the earlier backgrounds of the student and learning about his/her emotional learning experiences. If negative learning experiences are left untreated, student can bring his/her own dissatisfaction into the group, be overcritical and create a negative attitude around him/her. In early stages of studies it is important to open up earlier experiences and learn to understand them. This is where Personal study plan approach comes in.

Personal Study Plan and assessment of knowledge

In Personal Study Plan *discussions* student reflects his/her background; earlier study and work experiences: what he/she can do, what he/she has learned. The student puts into words his/her own knowledge and

experience and assesses how they can be applied in different situations and in the curricula. Adult students are capable of assessing what they need in relations to where they would like to work, what kind of work they would like to do. At its best, creating a personal study plan can be creation of an orientation map for student's own learning path, which he/she uses on his/her way to his/her goals and aims.

Personal Study Plan discussion themes vary according to student's situation. Discussion brings a structural element into the professional analysis, as student discusses with tutor what dreams, expectations, passions and concerns can come true during these studies.

Motivation of an adult learner

A thoroughly created Personal Study Plan gives student permission to carry out studies with various alternatives. Methods chosen by oneself also support other kind of dreams; e.g. growing as a person. The fact that the student has been able to participate the implementation of learning increases appreciation of his/her own learning.

Implementation of the curricula and the Personal Study Plan

Training arrangements, assignments and tasks obviously have to be planned in a way that gives space for implementing the student-based personal study plan. Personal Study Plan discussions give a lot of material for the educator of students' wishes, needs and targets. These should be considered when planning the curricula. If possible, assignments should be constructed in a way that their aims are explicit, but methods of implementation are free and encourage new experiments.

Taking situation in life into consideration

In Personal study plan discussions circumstances in life are also taken into consideration: Is it possible to study full-time or to study while working? For student it is important to realistically piece together what studying means to myself, my family and friends and people at workplace. The question is how can I balance other demands in my life while carrying on the studies? During the studies it is quite common, that situations change, in which case it is important to check out the personal study plan or to create a new one.

There are a lot of details to be taken into consideration about studying environment: Is there a peaceful place at home to study, is there a computer and a telephone at hand, a library close to the student, is possible to interact with other students... In word there are many details, which support getting at goals and motivate carrying on.

Educator's task is to follow the implementation of personal study plan and to give guidance when needed. Student's task is to use guidance, because goals are reached that way. Depending on changing situations, from plan A is moved over to plan B, in some cases even to plan C.

All this preliminary research creates safety and shows respect and appreciation towards the life situation of adult student.

Building a Personal Study Plan

Although there are no specific rules for building Personal Study Plan, here are some examples that can be used:

- Education and work history
 - Why did I start to educate myself in this area? How have the methods of study and work changed and developed during time? In what circumstances it is easiest for me to learn?
- Reasons to study
 - Why did I decide to start studying? What expectations do I have? What does studying demand from me?
- Development of professionalism
 - What is the interaction between practice and theory?

- Future challenges
 - Where to focus? What are the aims and goals? Where should I concentrate?
- Personal situation in life

b. Examples of e-learning approaches

Finnish Virtual University (FVU)

Finnish Virtual University is a project organisation founded by universities, which conduct virtual university activities. The educational formats may range from fully online education to classroom education supported by information and communication technology solutions. What is relevant is that information and communication technologies are used in teachers' and students' work in ways that are flexible in terms of time and/or place, taking into account, however, the teachers' resources and capabilities. Students can conduct online conversations with the teachers, other experts and other students, as well as have web access to guidance and material for completing the course. According to the objectives of the FVU, the aim in organising education is to minimise the need for students from outside the organising university to travel to the location of the organising university. The formats, timing and amount of compulsory classroom education must also be precisely described in the course information. Studies may also include face-to-face counselling, exams and other supervised coursework formats. For more information, see: <http://www.virtuaaliyliopisto.fi/?profile=etusivu&language=eng&pageref=0> (in English, also in Swedish and Finnish).

The IQ Form Project

There are several ongoing projects in the virtual university. **The IQ Form project** system consists of a large data bank, which contains different kinds of instruments of mapping needs of learning and learners on the Web. The instruments are used to evaluate learning profiles, styles, motivation, strategies, skills and self-regulation. With the help of the system there can be gathered up [quantitative and qualitative feedback](#), which can be analysed. The system is suitable for tutoring when studying on the Web; it operates as a student's support during his/her studies and gives feedback to teachers, designers and Web material producers already during the course. [Guidance given by the IQ FORM motivates him/her to develop his/her strengths and learning strategies](#) based on the self-assessment tests. The system is also developed to support [virtual collaborative learning](#). The IQ-FORM is suitable for independent Web courses. With the help of the system can be identified which contents and assignments suit the student best. Also the actions of guidance can be better directed with the help of the system. It also gives feedback about the functionality of the Web learning environment.

The system of data acquisition

- Recognizes the styles and motivation strategies, which the student uses when learning
- Gives information about the social navigation on the Web
- Gives direct feedback about the fluency of the announcement practices to the designers
- Forms the students profiles by which teaching of the course is scheduled and immediately developed to match the student's needs better - e.g. by individual learning tools
- Gives feedback about teaching, the learning process and problems in learning
- Gives the teacher an opportunity to follow his/her study group and notice e.g. the passive students before it is too late
- Gives feedback about the results and collects up a summary for the evaluation
- Helps to develop the pages and the functions of the Web course user-friendlier

For more information on the project, see: <http://www.edu.helsinki.fi/iqform/project.htm>

Key Reference:

New Directions of Adult Education Policy in Finland (2000) in S.Tosse et al (eds) *Reforms and Policy, Adult Education Research in Nordic Countries*, Trondheim: Tapir, 23-28

GERMANY

1. Structure and policies of Higher Education in Germany

In Germany you can identify three different types of institutions of Higher Education:

Universities

The policies at universities are still influenced by the reforms by Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835). They work on the principle of unity between research and teaching. Courses of studies at universities are theoretical and scientific orientated. Students can obtain different university degrees: diploma, masters of arts (Magister Artium) and - in context of the newest reforms - the international degrees B.A. and M.A. Graduate students have the opportunity to do their PhD or their postdoctoral qualification. It can be distinguished between universities, technical universities, colleges of Theology, colleges of Education, colleges of Arts and Music¹ and comprehensive universities.²

Fachhochschulen

The Fachhochschulen are an outcome of the discussions about education in the late sixties in Germany. The idea was to train qualified graduates to keep up in European competition. Although research takes also place at Fachhochschulen the main interest is to train academic practitioners. The courses of studies are practically orientated and the length of one's studies is shorter than at universities. At Fachhochschulen students can obtain their diploma but they are normally not allowed to do their PhD. Despite the short tradition Fachhochschulen get established in German HE system. At least one fourth of the German university entrants starts their studies at Fachhochschulen. Most of the Fachhochschulen are public ones. The comprehensive universities must also be ascribed to Fachhochschulen (see FN 2).

Other HE Institutions

Beside the public Universities and Fachhochschulen there are also some private institutions. Most of them are economic universities and are directed at elite students.

2. Funding of Higher Education

Most of the institutions of HE are mainly public financed by the Federal Government and the Laender. In average that are about 60% of the whole incomes. 30 % are financed by administration fees and about 10% of the funds are earned by commissioned research work mostly for public institutions, foundations and trade and industry. This distribution varies between the different types of institutions and subjects. At technical universities for instance the rate of commissioned work particularly for trade and industry is much higher whereas in medical sciences the incomes of administration is about 65% and therefore the most important way of funding (Wissenschaftsrat 2000). At public HE institutions students don't have to pay tuition fees, except for those students whose studies take longer than the number of terms prescribed for the completion of a course. Most institutions charge a fee for administration work. However at private universities students have to pay a rather high amount of tuition fees.

3 Admission procedures and policies

The different access routes to HE in Germany can be summarized in three groups. The *first way of education* is represented by those students who received their qualifications directly at school (e.g. Grammar Schools, Specialised Grammar Schools). The qualifications you can obtain by attending these types of institutions grant entry to institutions of HE. For some subjects students have to apply to the ZVS (a public national institution) that distributes the places among the applicants whereas for other studies they have to apply directly to the university. For popular studies the admission is restricted by a NC (numerus

¹ It is to mention that the courses of studies vary enormously between traditional universities and the colleges of Arts and Music. These colleges are much more practical orientated and therefore more similar to Fachhochschulen. But officially universities and colleges of Arts and Music are of equal rank.

² Comprehensive universities are an union between universities and Fachhochschulen. Students can choose which degree they would like to acquire.

clausus). At institutions for Higher Education for Arts and Music there are often special selection procedures.

Those students who got their qualifications later in life (e.g. Evening Classes, Adult Education College) are called *second chance* students. With this qualification they can also apply for all subjects. Mostly they obtain a general A-Level. They mainly differ from students who got their qualification directly at school only by age. And, finally, those students who gained their qualifications in another way are called *students of the third way of education* (qualifications by work-experience). The regulations concerning this third way of education vary considerably in the different Federal States of Germany, e.g. with regard to entry criteria, type of examination and qualifications obtained by this examination. In the following paragraph we will describe three common types of those regulations³.

Type I

Thirteen out of sixteen Federal States⁴ prefer an examination to grant access to HE. The following criteria have to be met for this examination:

- completed training (duration of training: two or three years)
- work-experience of two to five years (in the profession)
- a minimum age of 24 years
- permanent address or professional work for at least one year in the respective Federal State
- additional qualifications

Whereas this examination gives access to a specific university and a specific field of study the “examination for exceptionally talented” gives work-experienced people who are exceptionally gifted because of their personality, their talent and their education the chance to take an „external A-level-exam“.⁵ The criteria that have to be met comprise:

- a completed training
- work-experience of five years (in the profession)
- a minimum age of 25 years
- permanent address in the respective Federal State

Type II

In some Federal States⁶ it is possible to gain access without an entry test. There it is possible to take part in an interview with a commission to check if someone is suitable. This is especially relevant for those applicants who have reached an advanced level in their profession that is useful for the aspired studies. The criteria for the interview, namely the minimum age, the work-experience and the permanent address, are mostly comparable to those for the test.

Type III

Some Federal States of Germany⁷ allow applicants to begin their studies for a limited period without passing a test. After this period of time it will be decided through a particular assessment procedure whether the student is able to continue his/her studies. This is called „experimental studies“. Moreover the criteria of the permanent address and the work-experience must be met. In every case the applicants begin their studies in the first grade. The experimental grades will count towards in the total time of studies. In some Federal States⁸ the applicants have got the opportunity to pass a test in order to find out if they are able to begin their studies at higher levels.

4. Non-traditional Students

According to the results of a former research project “University Adult Access Policies and Practices Across the European Union and their Consequences for the Participation of Non-Traditional Students” (SOE2-CT97-2021, see also Final Report) we defined a non-traditional student as

³ KMK, 1997

⁴ Baden-Württemberg, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Hessen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Niedersachsen, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Rheinland-Pfalz, Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen, Schleswig-Holstein, Thüringen

⁵ Isserstedt, 1994, p. 5

⁶ Hamburg, Hessen, Saarland, Schleswig-Holstein

⁷ Berlin, Bremen, Niedersachsen, Rheinland-Pfalz, Schleswig-Holstein

⁸ Niedersachsen, Rheinland-Pfalz

a mature student entrant, with no previous higher education qualification whose participation in higher education is constrained by structural factors additional to age.

For Germany we can state that only 3.6% of the first year students in Germany in 1996/1997 are non-traditional students.⁹ Comparing the non-traditional students with the first year students in their entirety they chose much more often law and social sciences and economics. Moreover we could identify that the special way of qualification influences the choice of study in a more significant way than gender or age do. Regarding the different types of institutions we could see that more non-traditionals take place at Fachhochschulen than at universities. But therefore the pattern of choosing the subject is more equal between traditional and non-traditional students at university than between these groups at Fachhochschulen.

These findings are very similar to the results of our qualitative research. For Germany we could identify five different student types: patchworkers, educational up-climbers, integrators, careerists and emancipators. In the following we give a very brief overview of the different types:

Patchworkers

Generally, only few resources can be disposed of, and those the person can fall back on are rather diffuse and therefore they do not provide any aid to orientation as far as biographical planning and decisions are concerned. The patchwork-type has diffuse claims and demands on life.

Educational up-climbers

The cultural capital is not bound (which means that for example the family has or had no cultural orientation), but the social capital – especially relationships with family members and friends – plays an important role. But the biographical and personal “horizon” is not completely absorbed by the social capital. As soon as this type opens up to the cultural capital (for example by attending further education courses or taking up his studies) the social capital that has accumulated during life is relativised. (People break away more or less abruptly from social relationships and their families).

Integrators

Concrete manifestations of the social capital: a high attachment to the family and an interesting stimulating milieu, emotional security, social integration, a clear feeling of belonging to a milieu, consistency in patterns of behaviour and attitudes. These facts are not called into question.

Careerists

They utilise university as an instrument to reach their own specific goals, which have been chosen very pragmatically and for strategic reasons. Usually these students use HE instrumentally to take social and/or material advantages. They expect to improve their income or their social position through the degree respectively the qualification they acquire. They use resources they already carry with them, thus they are characterised by continuity.

Emancipators

Further education does not have prime importance for them, they are rather interested in personal development and self-realisation. Through their studies they try to break away from past experiences and to create a new biography. Thus HE is not viewed as a means to gain professional advantages, but as a means of liberation and empowerment. It represents a symbolic change in their lives and a search for a new identity.

The German project discovered relatively stable trends of self locating of the different types of non-traditionals within the symbolic space of universities: Whereas the patchworkers, educational up-climbers and emancipators prefer the tentatively marginalised groups of HE institutions as technical colleges or reform universities, the integrators and careerists use to enter the traditional universities. The same trend can be found concerning the preference of study disciplines: Again the former group locates itself mostly in the “soft” subjects such as education or social sciences, whereas the integrators and careerists take “hard” disciplines like biology, chemistry, even medicine. The “winners” place themselves in the high

⁹ These data are based on special statistics of the Statistisches Bundesamt.

ranked spaces. The “losers” put themselves down to the “symbolic bottom”. Moreover the integrators have a much better prediction for their studies. They demonstrate what is needed to overcome the risks of studying: a large amount of social capital. For most non-traditional students this resource has been eroded before entry or is destroyed through the process of university studies. Universities as lifelong learning institutions need to realise that academic learning has to promote and even increase this kind of symbolic capital. (Alheit 2000)

5. Learning and teaching approaches

With regard to the small number of non-traditional students it is not surprising that there are no specific learning and teaching approaches in Germany. Usually they take part in the same courses as the traditionals do. In most cases that are lectures or seminars. In general the “soft” subjects are not as school orientated in their teaching methods as the “hard” subjects are so that they are more open for any demands of mature and non-traditional students. Moreover some institutions (for instance the institutions for distance learning) are adjusted as a whole to meet the interests of mature students. In this connection the most important thing is to take into consideration the time factor because of family and professional commitments of most of the mature students.

6. Ideas from literature/experience: Some Considerations

With regard to our findings it is important to develop learning and teaching approaches for non-traditionals which refer to the respective background of the learner’s biography. They must enable the learners to bring in their personal resources and skills. One concept which could make it possible to support such learning processes is the Projektstudium (feasibility studies)¹⁰. First of all a Projektstudium is characterised by a problem orientated learning process. The students are working in groups. By working on a specific problem all students bring in their own knowledge, their skills and their experiences which are needed to solve the problem. That means for non-traditional students that they are able to make a more or less ‘legitimate’ use of their former experiences. This learning process is guided by a lecturer who is acting like a supervisor. He or she should encourage the students to reflect their working and learning process. This enables non-traditional students to reflect their own situation. Working in small groups and getting contact to the lecturers could maybe more and more break up the “mystic” of the symbolic universe of the academic lifeworld and promote the social capital of the non-traditional learners. Moreover non-traditional students are more able to influence the learning conditions and to create a learning atmosphere which meets their own living conditions.

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¹⁰ For a detailed description of this concept see Alheit, 1999; Borgnakke, 1999; Illeris, 1999; Prieler-Woldan, 1996; Salling Oelsen/Højgaard Jensen, 1999; Wildemeersch, 1999.

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IRELAND

1. Structure of Higher Education

Higher Education in Ireland, with its population of 3.9 million, is provided mainly by the universities (eight), the institutes of technology (twenty), and the colleges of education (eight). Five other institutions provide specialised training in fields such as art, design, medicine, music and law. Additionally, there are five Colleges of Theology in the country. There are some spatial difficulties in the distribution of higher education in Ireland. Of the forty six institutions mentioned, twenty one – plus a number of private colleges - are located in the capital, Dublin.

Current enrolment in full-time higher education stands at 100,000 (2.6% of population) approximately, with 55,000 (1.4%) of these attending universities. The Report of the Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education (1995) forecast an enrolment figure of 120,000 (3%) by 2005. This expansion is fuelled in part by economic growth but also by the demands of social justice to seek a more equitable distribution across diverse population groups. Comparisons with other countries, however, must be made against the backdrop of the very high proportion of the total population who are in the 18 – 25 age group.

The ongoing policy of the Irish Government has been to widen access to higher education through:

- Simplifying the process of entry
- Providing additional places
- Accessing finance from the European Structural Fund for capital development

The planning and advisory body for higher education in Ireland is the Higher Education Authority (HEA). This body was set up on an ad hoc basis in 1968 and was given statutory powers in 1971. The HEA has wide advisory powers throughout the whole of the third-level sector. It is the funding authority for the universities and a number of designated institutions. Institutes of Technology are currently funded directly by the Department of Education and Science, although from 2004/2005 it is expected that the HEA will assume authority for their funding also.

The numbers of “traditional” students entering higher education in Ireland have dropped since 1999 and will continue to decline until 2013, - a result of lower birth rates between 1980 and 1994. There is therefore a substantial opportunity to meet government policy objectives by creating greater accessibility for mature and non-traditional students. Greater accessibility requires that the diverse life-stages and socio-economic backgrounds of the adult learner be acknowledged.

2. Funding of Higher Education

Fees. Most higher education is provided by institutions which are supported by the State – universities and institutes of technology receive 90% of their funding from this source. Students in private colleges pay fees. University fees for full-time undergraduate students were abolished in 1996. Institutes of technology have never charged fees to Irish students, unless they have failed examinations and are repeating a study year. Therefore, since 1996 fees have not been levied on Irish or EU citizens. Non-EU students are required to pay full fees, which are a multiple of the sum charged to an Irish/EU student who is repeating a course. Asylum seekers are in this category. Also in this category are non-nationals who have been long-term resident in Ireland but are not citizens. For example, the wife of a doctor from Nigeria who himself paid very high fees to the Royal College of Surgeons, worked in the Irish medical system for 15 years and contributed to the tax system, is not eligible for free tuition.

Maintenance Grants: These grants are available to students from deprived socio-economic backgrounds on foot of a means test of parental income. Interestingly, a mature student is considered a dependant if s/he lives at home *or has lived at home during the previous year*. A further anomaly exists in the case of married women who are considered dependants of their husbands. A married woman is not entitled to a grant if her

husband's means are deemed sufficient. Such women are therefore dependent on the goodwill of their husbands. Deserted wives whose husbands refuse to supply details of income cannot apply for a grant, nor can their children, until such time as they are in receipt of a Deserted Wife's Allowance. This may take some time.

Special support. Assistance is available to students who find themselves in straitened financial circumstances through the Student Assistance Fund (SAF). This assistance is funded from the European Social Fund filtered through the Department of Education and Science and is intended to provide support on an ongoing basis through the academic year. The size of the SAF fund is variable, not guaranteed and expected to diminish. Prior to SAF a discretionary (or "hardship") fund was available to assist students who might not need ongoing support throughout the year but simply emergency help or a loan. Some institutions retain approximately 5% of their SAF funding for use as a hardship fund

Disability. Students with a disability receive a grant which is not linked to income.

A *Back To Education Allowance* (BTEA) is available to students who have been unemployed for at least the preceding six months. This discriminates against students who, perhaps for family reasons, wish to pursue a course on a part-time basis at night, because these courses, unlike full-time courses, carry fees.

Creche costs are also funded for students unless their means are clearly sufficient. Means tested maintenance grants are available to students, including mature students, following full-time undergraduate courses in an EU member state.

3. Admissions procedures/policy

Most students apply for a place in a third level institution through the Central Admissions Office (CAO). Places are awarded on foot of Leaving Certificate results.

4. Non –traditional students

Entry regulations vary between institutions, Some require applications to be made directly to the institution while others require that applications be made through the CAO (Central Admissions Office). An application fee is payable to the CAO, or to the institution concerned if application is made directly. The institutions use the CAO as a matter of administrative convenience –it is the institution and not the CAO which decides whether or not to offer a place. The decision is based on the applicant's performance at an interview. Institutions run Return to Education workshops for potential mature students. Mature Student Officers and/or Access Officers are available for consultation. Frequently, potential applicants are directed onto a Post Leaving Certificate Course (PLC) or onto a Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme (VTOS) course to better prepare them for higher education. Many institutions provide foundation courses in particular disciplines with guaranteed entry onto a degree course on achievement of a required result. There is, however, no co-ordinated policy either within the institution itself or between institutions. The HEA is currently in the process of devising a national admissions policy.

5. Learning and teaching approaches

Study skills. A study skills course, specifically catering for mature students, is offered to mature students across all courses at the beginning of each academic year. The take-up rate is not very high. Some courses, for example nursing, do not allow time for students to attend these courses because of the requirement for work experience in hospitals. Some Access Officers express the opinion that the course should be built into the syllabus. There is a belief that such a move would be resisted because the syllabus is designed by the Nursing Board who would then have to pay for the course since the course would be delivered by the educational institution.

Learning difficulties. All students are entitled to assessment by a qualified professional if the student has reason to believe that s/he may be suffering from a learning difficulty. In many cases, but by no means all, these difficulties have been noted at second level. However, some Access Officers have specific concerns

about non-traditional students. Most of these belong to an age group for whom assessment at second was not available. Some may have left education early *because* of a learning difficulty that was not detected, and may now, unwittingly, be placing themselves in a situation where they may experience failure yet again.

Learning support. Support, in terms of teaching and learning approaches, varies enormously between institutions. All express commitment to an inclusive, supportive environment for non-traditional mature students. In some cases a dedicated Mature Students' Officer has been appointed. Support is available around both academic and personal issues, accessible on a drop-in basis or by appointment. Mature Student Mentors, one from each department are put into place in some institutions. In other institutions support is piecemeal or on an ad hoc basis – mature students receive the same teaching experience as traditional students and there is no system of mentoring in place. No particular cognisance is taken of the diverse learning needs of non-traditional adults. Awareness raising/training for academic staff on the specific needs of mature and/or disabled students is not always put in place.

Spatial issues. Some institutions have organised outreach courses, particularly foundation courses, in order to reach potential mature students who live a distance from an educational institution. However Ireland's small, low-density population militates against the success of such programmes.

6. Ideas from literature/experience

Entry routes Dissatisfaction with entry routes has been highlighted in various reports, (Inglis and Murphy, 1999; Lynch 1997; Report of the Action Group on Access to third level, 2001). Institutional/departmental criteria for acceptance and/or reasons for unsuccessful applications are felt to be neither consistent nor clear.

Gaining entry. Of those that applied to one major institution in 1997, only 6% (one in seventeen) were accepted onto a full-time undergraduate course. Inglis and Murphy identified such barriers as competition for places and lack of clarity surrounding the measurement of necessary qualifications. An anomaly was noted that, in contrast, 84% achieved entry onto an identical, night-time, fee-paying degree course., an anomaly which can create negative perceptions of this course and of the institution itself as a place for full-time mature students. The Commission for the Points System 1999 makes the case for a standardised, transparent entry system and a more open dialogue between third level institutions and the mature student/applicant. In defence (off the record) some Access Officers admit that their access information must be framed in suitably nebulous terms as a protection against any adversarial advocacy group who may be seeking a test case.

Access Courses. Clancy (1999) argued for a review of access courses in order to standardise entry requirements both within and between institutions.

Financial issues: The White Paper on Adult Education (2000) has suggested improvements to government funding of part-time education. One of the recommendations was that mature students who fit the criteria of a social welfare means test should receive free tuition on part-time courses. To date this provision has not been implemented. If implemented, however, it would not be broad enough to encompass the needs of some groups such as the married women already referred to (Lynch 1997). Lynch asserts that the numbers of women affected by financial constraints are greater than the numbers of men.

Childcare. Many recent reports have highlighted the lack of childcare support as a barrier for mature students (Inglis and Murphy, 1999; AONTAS Millennium Conference, 2000; Skilbeck, 2000). There are approximately 128,000 lone parent-headed households in Ireland; 85% of these are headed by a woman (Open, 1997). Studies on retention rates invariably show that the difficulties experienced by mature students who do not finish a degree course are more related to personal/social issues than to issues related directly to the content of their courses.

Conclusion.

Much work has been done to identify difficulties encountered by students with a disability and mature/non-traditional students in the higher education sector. Many studies provide clear recommendations for improvements.

However, there is a compelling need to address the needs of an additional group. This is the growing number of international students pursuing higher education at institutions in Ireland.

PORTUGAL

Introduction

Portugal is revising its legislative framework for Education; this has resulted in the new *Framework Law for Education*, recently approved in Parliament (20th May 2004). It has a downstream effect on existing legislation for HE organization, funding, autonomy, evaluation and assessment. Although the *Framework Law for Education* has not yet been promulgated by the President of Republic, this document has been prepared in anticipation of its approval, paying special attention to Articles addressing HE.

The Government aims to align the country's Education System with that of other European countries by expanding compulsory education; the compulsory period will be increased to a total of 12 years (instead of the existing 9 years). For Higher Education, the aim is to create a positive environment for the implementation of the Process of Bologna, in Portugal.

1. The structure of Higher Education in Portugal

The Portuguese Constitution contains the cultural rights and responsibilities of citizens and the State, regarding Education, Culture and Science, in several articles:

- Art. 76 – “University and access to higher education” – access to Higher Education should be developed in accordance with equity of opportunities, the need for qualified professionals and the enhancement of the educational, cultural and scientific status of the country. The same Article also establishes that universities have statutory, pedagogic, administrative and financial autonomy, with corresponding responsibility for the quality of education provided;

The term HE, in Portugal, embraces both Universities and Polytechnics. However, the main impetus to Polytechnics only arrived in 1977, with the introduction of Decree Law n° 427-B/77, of 14th October, when polytechnic education was expanded to include the training of qualified professionals in technological areas and for the education sector.

The new *Law 2004* seeks to establish the differences between *Ensino Universitário* and *Ensino Politécnico*, as:

- *Ensino Universitário*, to promote research and knowledge creation, aiming to provide a wide basic scientific preparation, based on a firm technical and cultural training. It encourages a high individual autonomy towards knowledge and its application, enabling access to a professional career (Art. 18, n° 3)
- *Ensino Politécnico*, to educate students to understand and to look for solutions of practical problems, for which a solid technical and cultural, training is required. It guarantees a relative autonomy regarding applied knowledge in support of professional activities and active participation in their development. (Art. 18, n° 4).

From here it can be seen that the mission and the functions of polytechnics differ from those of the universities; they (the polytechnics) should be strongly associated with the development of and the economic activities in the regions where they are based [Simão, 2002:117].

According to article 75° of the Portuguese Constitution (*Constituição da República Portuguesa*):

1. The State shall establish a network of public educational institutions to meet the needs of the whole population.
2. The State shall recognise and supervise private and co-operative education, in accordance with the Law.

According to the new *Law 2004* (Art. 20) the HE system in Portugal comprises three study cycles:

- the first awarding the degree of *Licenciado*;
- the second awarding the degree of *Mestre*;

- the third conferring the degree of *Doutor* (para 1.).

One innovation of the new *Law 2004* recognises (para. 7) that HE institutions have the right to organise courses not awarding an academic degree, namely the *Cursos de Especialização pós-secundária* (Post-secondary specialization courses), within the framework of scientific and pedagogical autonomy, of HE institutions.

Nevertheless and as stated in para 8 of the same Article, these courses are to be organised by Units of Credit, aiming to facilitate student mobility. It is also foreseen that HE institutions can recognise and accredit non-formal qualifications for this effect.

Articles 21, 22 and 23 broadly characterise the structure and the duration of the courses/programmes of study conferring the degrees of *Licenciado*, *Mestre* and *Doutor*.

Article 26 addresses *Post secondary education*. It states that post secondary education, is a system of life long learning, through *Courses of Specialization (Cursos de Especialização)*, aimed at improving the vocational education of secondary level students and providing certification for employment in one or a group of professions. Furthermore, post secondary education can be delivered both at institutions of secondary education, as well as in HE institutions, and can be based on partnerships between these institutions and entrepreneurial organizations.

Summing up, the new *Law 2004* opens up new ways to access Higher Education, as explained in Section 4.

2. Funding of Higher Education sector

Law n° 37/2003, of 22nd August (*Lei de Financiamento do Ensino Superior*) was approved to provide the framework for HE funding; it supplants the previous Law n° 113/97, of 16th September. It establishes that the funding of HE develops according to objective criteria, performance indicators and standard values, to enable benchmarking regarding quality and excellence of teaching, learning and research.

As previously, funding of the HE public sector is tripartite – shared between the State, the institutions and the students (Art. 3)

In this context, for the *LIHE* project, the important aspects of this *Lei de Financiamento do Ensino Superior* include:

- The basic funding of HE institutions is linked to objective criteria of quality and excellence, standards values and performance indicators, taking into account the Evaluation reports of each institution (Art. 4);
- Students will have to pay a fee (*propinas*); this is established by University Senates or by the *Conselhos Gerais* of the Polytechnic Institutes (Art. 17); the amount of the fee depends on the nature of the course and its quality. It is indexed-linked to the national minimum wage, updated by the Consumer Price Index, produced by the National Institute of Statistics; this is different from the previous Law of Funding of HE (Law n° 113/97, of 16th September) where undergraduates at State universities had to pay a fee which was universal and established by the government;
- There is also a limit to the number of years students can take to finalise their degrees (*prescrições*) (Art. 5); in the case of a *Trabalhador-Estudante* (worker student) (see 5. 1) or part time student, the total number of years to successfully complete a degree is doubled;
- The *Acção Social* (Social Support to students in HE) will take place through grants, subsistence and residence support, support to cultural and sporting activities, as well as specific support to handicapped students (Art. 20).

3. Admission/ Access to Higher Education in Portugal

In Portugal, as in other countries, there is:

- traditional access to HE; in the present circumstances, this is still the main route through which the majority of adults, currently attending HE in Portugal, are accessing Universities and Polytechnics.

- non-traditional access to HE (national "*Exame Extraordinário de Avaliação de Capacidade para Acesso ao Ensino Superior*"/formerly known as "*ad-hoc*" examination).

The new *Law 2004*, in Article 19, establishes that access to Higher Education is open to candidates who have successfully completed secondary education or equivalent and who can demonstrate capacity for attendance of a programme of studies (para. 1). The same article establishes equal opportunity of access to HE for anyone over the age of 25 years who, although not having concluded secondary education or any training that may be considered as equivalent, can demonstrate capacity for attendance of the selected plan of studies (para. 2).

The process to assess the capacity of candidates to attend or to return to higher education institutions and for the selection and ranking of the candidates to each programme of studies falls within the responsibility of HE institutions (para. 3). However, the Government may establish quantitative restrictions, of a global nature, for access to HE (*numerus clausus*), in the public interest, to guarantee the quality of education or to fulfil international agreements established by the State; this applies to HE public institutions as well as private and corporative ones (para. 4) Para. 5 of the same article establishes that the State should create the conditions that guarantee to citizens in general the possibility to attend Higher Education, eliminating discrimination due to economic, regional inequalities, or social disadvantage.

Another means of access is provided by the new *Law 2004*, Article 26 (Post secondary education, referred to above in 2.4) in its para. 5, which states that, individuals with a Diploma of "post-secondary education" - *Diploma de Especialização pós secundária* - have the right to accreditation of the training obtained while studying for this Diploma, whenever they wish to enrol in Higher Education and for studies progression. The evaluation will be made by the Higher Education institution to which they apply and that evaluation will recognise the totality of that training when considering access to the chosen HE programme of studies. This provision, within the new *Law 2004*, creates a new avenue for mature students to access HE.

4. Non Traditional Students

The lower age limit of the mature student, in Portugal, is 25 years. There are special examinations for access to HE, for students above 25 years who do not hold the formal diplomas of the traditional education system. This exam aims to facilitate Access to Higher Education of those candidates, who do not have a course of secondary education or equivalent, do not have a HE degree but can demonstrate that they have the minimum level of knowledge required to attend a specific higher education programme of studies and have the capacity and maturity that will qualify them as candidates for Higher Education (Art. 1, p. 911).

Article 2 states that passing the exam allows a candidate to register in an institution of Higher Education in a specific programme of study, for which the exam has taken place.

The conditions for admission to the exam are as follows:

- The candidate must be 25 years of age or above;
- Not have a course of the secondary level or equivalent;
- Not have another Higher Education degree (Art. 4).

The examination consists of:

- Portuguese language examination – to evaluate the capacity to interpret and express, together with the cultural level of the candidate; this is a unique test at national level – Candidates are marked as "Admitted"/" Not Admitted" to the next phase, which is a Specific test according to the programme of studies the candidate intends to follow;
- Interview;
- Specific test (Art. 7).

The candidate who has passed this exam can apply to attend the programme of studies in the year of approval and in the four subsequent years (Portaria nº 106/2002, Art. 22).

Portugal, accepting institutions reserve some vacancies for these students. These quotas for non-traditional students are fixed by the higher educational institutions themselves [DL nº 393-B/99 of the 2nd October, Art. 5].

The new *Law 2004* opens new avenues for work experience and non-traditional courses to be recognised as qualifying for access to HE. Nevertheless, there is not yet, in Portugal, the tradition for HE institutions to create opportunities for access by providing courses leading to qualifications that would entitle students to enter Higher Education. However, the new *Law 2004*, opens up the possibility for credit accumulation in different activities, in order to obtain a HE degree or diploma. It is expected that these innovations will be regulated in the near future.

5. Learning and Teaching approaches with non-traditional students

Generally speaking, non traditional students in Higher education, at present, in Portugal are in the minority. As a consequence, Learning and Teaching approaches with non-traditional students have not been the object of research nor of practice. This has been confirmed by research performed, by the Portuguese team, so far (May 2004), encompassing a literature review and contacting researchers that are doing research on Higher Education practices and policies, in the country.

Even so, in the interests of further research, we have identified the following activities that may have a bearing on *LIHE*, whilst not addressing mature students specifically:

- Universidade do Minho – Departamento de Ciências da Educação – Professor Leandro de Almeida [URL: <http://www.iep.uminho.pt/>]
- Universidade de Aveiro – Departamento de Ciências de Educação - Professor José Tavares] [URL: <http://www.dce.ua.pt/>]
- Universidade Nova de Lisboa – Faculdade de Ciências Médicas (Faculty of Medical Science - Departamento de Educação Médica; Professora Patrícia Rosado Pinto) - *Problem – based learning (PBL) – Aprendizagem por Resolução de Problemas* [URL: www.fcm.unl.pt/departamentos/dem/materiais.htm] - *PBL* has been applied in the teaching of Pathophysiology, since 1992, as a single-discipline innovation in the traditional medical curriculum of Faculdade de Ciências Médicas, in order to realise the following objectives: motivating learning, structuring knowledge in a clinical context and developing self-learning skills. In 1994, a computer simulation, specially designed for *PBL*, was introduced; since 1997 they have been using computer simulations but still following the *PBL* format of small group work. This has been a joint initiative between the Pathophysiology and the Medical Education Departments of the Faculty.
- Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas (FCSH) – Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, (Departamento de Ciências da Educação – Professor António Candeias) - A PhD thesis is being produced on the subject of the *Higher Education Teachers Training Program*. A new HE Lecturers’ training program was devised at the FCSH. The impact of the program, which aims at helping Lecturers to make their teaching more student centered, is being evaluated (*Programa de Aperfeiçoamento dos Ambientes de Ensino Aprendizagem- PAAEA*, at FCSH/UNL).

Although all of the above research, to inform practice, is not focusing specifically on non-traditional students, it has been included here as it gives another insight into the present state of the Portuguese national situation, regarding innovation in Learning and Teaching practices in HE. Obviously, some of the knowledge created within these projects can inform future developments in the country, regarding learning and teaching methods for non-traditional students.

6. Ideas from experience: *Trabalhador estudante* (literally “Worker Student”)

In order to facilitate attendance at lectures, a special regime has been established through Law no. 116/97 of 4th of November. This Law, which is applicable to students at any level of the education system, aims also to facilitate participation of a citizen who is both working and studying and who has applied for this regime. It seeks to promote equity for knowledge and competence acquisition to maximize personal and professional potential.

This legislation regulates working hours, time off to prepare for examinations and other progress evaluations. Furthermore, *trabalhadores estudantes* are allowed some flexibility, regarding the number of subjects they sit, in each examination period.

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SPAIN

1. Brief structure of Higher Education (including policy)

Nowadays Higher Education in Spain is legislated by the law named LOU 6/2001 from December 21st 2001 invalidating the prior law from August 25th 1983, Organic Law for the University Reform. It was not until 1996 that responsibility for universities was transferred Autonomous Regions in Spain, so that the current Spanish education system operates as a decentralized model.

LOU claims to establish the highest degree of greatest self-government for universities and an increase in commitment from the autonomous governments, introducing an external mechanism for quality assessment and promoting (student) mobility. The law is supposed to extend to private universities the requirements already demanded of public ones, taking into account that both have the same objectives. University studies are organised in cycles and use the credit as a measure of class hours. A credit is equivalent to 10 class hours. The successful completion of 180 credits (over 3 academic years) corresponds to Diploma, Teaching, Technical Architect or Technical Engineer qualifications. The successful completion of 300 credits (over 4 or 5 academic years) corresponds to a Bachelor's, Architecture or Engineering degree. Doctorate programmes have a minimum of 32 credits and are required in order to obtain an official doctor's degree.

2. Funding of HE

In Spain there are private and public universities. Public universities are not free, students have to pay a minimum fee about 900 Euros a year, while the registration in a private university will involve expenditure of about 9000 euros a year.

The central government using the General Budget promotes a system of general grants and fellowships in order to remove the socio-economic obstacles that could stand in the way of access or continuity in the HE. But there is no special funding for non-traditional adults in HE. There is also a system of grants for students with disabilities in order to facilitate access and development in HE. In Spain the funding of HE can come from Central Government, Autonomous Region Governments or from private organisations.

3. Admissions procedures / policy

The admission process for non-traditional students in HE involves the university entrance examination for over 25s. This exam consists of two parts, a common exam, which is the same for all candidates and a specific exam, selected in accordance with the programme to which the candidate seeks admission. The common examination seeks to evaluate the candidate's maturity and his/her suitability for university studies; his/her reasoning ability, comprehension and written expression in either of the two official languages of Catalonia; and his/her knowledge of a foreign language for university studies. The purpose of the specific examination is to evaluate the capacities and aptitudes that relate to a candidate's ability to successfully pursue studies related to the entrance option at the chosen university. The university entrance exams for over 25s are not open to students who have passed COU or Batxillerat LOGSE, 2nd level Vocational Training, a Vocational Module 3, an Advanced Training Cycle, or equivalent programmes in areas of specialisation linked to the programme to which the candidate seeks admission.

4. Non-traditional students

In the Catalan Autonomous Region by law only 3% of places in official programmes are reserved for students admitted to university on the basis of their results in the university entrance exams for over 25s.

University entrance examination for over 25s

	Exam registration	Attendance to the exam	Pass
<u>From 25 to 29 years old</u>	885	795	196
From 30 to 34 years old	722	643	183
From 35 to 39 years old	355	315	98
From 40 to 44 years old	182	169	44
From 45 to 49 years old	131	125	33
From 50 to 54 years old	62	55	13
From 55 to 59 years old	26	25	6
From 60 or more	18	16	3
Total	2381	2143	576

(March 2001, DURSI)

Number of people at over 25s examination

	Exam registration	Exam attendance	Pass	University registration
Total	2381	2143	576	550*

(March 2001, DURSI)

*The university registration can be passed exams in years before.

The statistics show that there is no incentive nor specific policies to promote access of non-traditional students to HE.

5. Learning and teaching approaches with non-traditional adults

At CREA we support the use of a social model of adult education focused on learning rather than instruction. Dialogical learning¹¹ is based on seven principles: egalitarian dialogue, cultural intelligence, transformation, instrumental dimension, creating meaning, solidarity and equality of differences.

On the one hand, from the perspective of the social model, the aims of education are education for change and the accreditation of learning and knowledge that people have acquired throughout their lives. It is a model that understands learning as a process of transmitting contextualised forms of knowledge. On the other hand, people who are studying are adults, with a wealth of experiences that they can bring to the development of a class. Students are not unthinking receptors of the teachers' explanations, rather they adopt a critical attitude and contribute all of their experiences to the class.

Referring to the curriculum the scholastic model deals with a decontextualised curriculum separate from social needs, and therefore, without any utility for preparing people to be competent in everyday life. In contrast to the social model, in the scholastic model, the teachers define the needs and design the curriculum in terms of what suits them, not based on what people need outside the classroom.

CREA is actively involved in the participation of the Triornadas (three day conference) in which we meet researchers and teachers of the university, facilitators and educators, participants or students of adult education in order to work together for a Democratic Adult Education. In the three day conference people from all over the country participate actively, each day is for one specific group: researchers, educators and participants. Those are moments for sharing experiences, learning from the others and exchanging opinions about how we want to develop democratic adult education.

6. Ideas from literature / own experience

¹¹ See FLECHA (2000) *Sharing Words*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

At CREA we work on our research through a dialogic perspective and dialogical methodology.

Dialogic Perspective

The social practices to overcome inequalities are based on dialogue. The most important social theories in the different fields today (Habermas, Bruner, Freire, Beck, Touraine, Eco, Chomsky, Sen) have an orientation that is more and more dialogical. CREA, with the cooperation of the majority of these authors, has elaborated an interdisciplinary dialogical theory that orients our research.

Dialogical methodology

Research carried out through an ongoing dialogue with the very people and groups that are studied provides more scientific results and greater social applicability. For this reason, authors like Habermas state that there is no sense to the methodological disparity between researcher and researched. The differences between them are the arguments they provide, which depend on their personal, social and professional trajectories. Our dialogic research methodology has been endorsed as the most appropriate for carrying out international research projects.

The communicative practice achieves scientific practice by the democratization of the knowledge, keeping present the voice of the participants, the people or citizens that ultimately are the ones that act and transform the society. (for further details, see literature review)

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SWEDEN

1. Structure of HE and policy

Two comprehensive reforms in 1977 and 1993 have reshaped the higher education system in Sweden during the last thirty years. The reform of 1977 brought all post upper-secondary education together in one system called higher education. That reform also entailed that volumes, location and the organizational structure were regulated in a rather detailed way by the central government. The reform of 1993 reduced the detailed regulations in this respect. The later reform also implied a greater freedom for students to choose different courses by themselves and to combine them into a degree.

Sweden has a system of credit points where one week of full time study is equivalent to one credit point. A full academic year starts in August and ends in June, usually amounting to 40 credit points. A Master's degree is obtained by gaining at least 160 credit points of which 80 must be in a major subject, including at least one thesis of 20 credit points or two of 10 credit points. A Bachelor's degree is obtained by gaining at least 120 credit points of which 60 must be in a major subject and including a thesis of 10 credit points. A university diploma is obtained with at least 80 credit points.

All universities and some university colleges offer a number of their courses as correspondence courses. Since 93/94, 5% of the total numbers of courses are offered as correspondence courses. The number of the full time equivalent students who are involved is almost 17% and is growing fast. About half of them are older than 35 years of age. There are 'Learning Centres' in 84% of the municipalities to support distance learning (Universitet & högskolor).

In recent time there is an extensive emphasis on Lifelong Learning in Sweden not only in Higher Education, but also in the whole education system. This is based on a continuing argument about the need for well-educated citizens and to integrate people with different ethnical, social and gender background, as well as disabled people, into society in order to achieve the principle of equality. There is a need to adapt higher education to the increased heterogeneity of student backgrounds and goals. One consequence has been that issues such as the development of learning and teaching in Higher Education are highlighted (SOU 2000:47, SOU 2001:13).

2. Funding of HE

In 2004 there are some 50 institutions of higher education in Sweden. There are 13 universities and 23 university colleges run by central government, private interests run the rest ((Universitet och högskolor, 2004). Higher Education is free of charge for all students in Sweden. It is possible for students to obtain state support to finance their studies until the age of 40 and for a maximum six years of study. After the age of 41 study support is reduced and after 51 years of age there is no longer any possibility of support. Study support is offered partly through a grant and partly through a voluntary loan, with the division 1/3 and 2/3.

3. Admission procedures/policy

To be eligible for higher education one needs to fulfil general and course eligibility requirements, the latter vary depending on the subject area. General eligibility is attained by completing an upper secondary school programme and obtaining a pass grade or better in courses comprising at least 90 per cent of the upper secondary credits required in the programme or by providing proof of an equivalent level of knowledge. Applicants who are at least 25 years old, who have been employed for four years and who have a command of English and Swedish equivalent to that obtained by completing an upper secondary programme are also considered to have general eligibility.

The traditional route is through upper secondary school (80% of the new students), but for those who did not complete their upper secondary education, there is still a possibility of acquiring it through Komvux (municipal adult education) (10% of the students have this background) and The Folk High School (residential adult education institution). An important route for adults to find their way into higher

education is also a university aptitude test. Since 1992 the test has been open to everyone and it takes place twice a year. In autumn 2003, 72 000 individuals did do the test in comparison with the total number of new students the same autumn which was 83 300 (Universitet & högskolor, 2004). Applicants who are older than 25 years of age and who have been working for four years or more can add credits for this experience to the result of the aptitude test, irrespective of what kind of experience it is.

To recruit new student groups the government has allocated 180 million Swedish kronor for measures for educational support to new groups in HE. One of the measures that has been developed is the setting up of 70 different projects whereby it is possible for students to enter higher education without having to meet formal eligibility requirements other than in Swedish and English. Since 2002 as an example there is a new formalised route which is called "College education" lasting for one year. It is cooperation between higher education and municipal adult education and the purpose is to make it easier for new groups to enter higher education. The year is divided in two parts as a rule starting with one semester on municipal adult education and one semester at the university or university college. So far it is a small-scale activity with only about 20 students at each educational centre per year. Since 2003 there is another new route to entrance which is called "real competence". That means that working life and life experiences can be assessed as competence and qualifications. 4000 applicants applied through this but only about 25 students of those were accepted the autumn 2003 (Universitet & högskolor, 2004).

4. Non-traditional students

There has been an extensive increase of students in Sweden during the last decade. Between 1988 and 2003 the number of students rose by over 50 per cent. In 2001, 340,000 students were studying in Higher Education - how many of these are non-traditional students is not possible to define. In official documents but with another definition of non-traditional students there is more than 50% of them. What we can establish is that during the last thirty years Sweden has seen a rising number of older students and therefore one of the political goals in Sweden today is that 50 per cent of a generation shall start their studies in Higher Education before the age of 25. In the year 2002/2003 this goal was almost reached when 48 per cent started at higher education before the age of 25. But still over 30 per cent of new students every year are older than 25 year of age and 50% of all students are older than 25 year. It can also be interesting to notice that the number of students in the age group 50-59 have raised with 200% since 1990 and is now almost 1% of total age population which means about 12 000 students (Universitet & högskolor, 2004).

Another group of non-traditional students are people with some kind of disability. In Sweden, during the year 2003, 2698 students, less than 1% of the total number of students, applied for and were allowed study support because of some kind of disability. This is a growing number every year, but still a small number.

Non-traditional students can be defined in different ways. In this project age, ethnicity, and disabilities are some of the definitions. Another definition of non-traditional that might be a new issue in Sweden in the immediate future is gender. In the study year 2002/2003, 62 per cent of the examined were female. Some study programmes such as Teachers Training and Nurses training have as many 70 to 90 percent women examined. Even in traditional male areas such as engineer education the number of women's exams has risen 27 per cent in longer periods of study and 29 per cent in shorter study. The earlier mentioned goal of younger students' entrance into higher education has already been reached when it comes to women, with over 55% of the women under 25 years continuing their to Higher Education level, while the same figure for men is only 41 ((Universitet & högskolor, 2004).

5. Learning and teaching approaches with non-traditional adults

Teaching arrangements in higher education institutions vary from lectures attended by many scholars to individual tutorials. The most common teaching arrangements are through lectures, lessons and seminars. Despite the fact that that adults have been an extensive group of students in Sweden for over thirty years, there has been no special attention paid to learning and teaching approaches related to non-traditional students. The student groups are usually mixed with both young and adult students and no particular

considerations are taken towards non-traditional students. There are however courses run in the evenings with the purpose of attracting part-time students.

During the last decade some departments and/or teachers have been interested in problem-based learning (PBL and PBI), and have also been practising it in different programmes and courses. In some regards those methods have potential to consider the experiences the students already have and might therefore be viewed as examples of approaches that consider some non-traditional students' needs.

Despite the fact that there are 70 implementation projects initiated to focus on the development of learning and teaching in Higher Education, few of them are focused on learning and teaching processes. Most projects are focused mainly on entrance and admission procedures. Four different projects in co-operation between Folk High Schools and Universities or University Colleges have learning and teaching processes as their main theme.

Since January 2003 there has also been a demand on universities and university colleges to educate teachers in Higher education in pedagogy, i.e. pedagogical training for academic teachers. Although there have been courses in pedagogical training previously, they have differed in content, depth and extent, but most importantly they have been run on a voluntary basis. Newly from this year, lecturers, associate professors and professors, in order to receive tenure, should have completed a training course for academic teachers corresponding to ten weeks of full time work. This type of education is also planned, at least partly, to take place in postgraduate programmes.

6. Ideas from literature/own experiences

Agnieszka and Christina have been teaching non-traditional students for a number of years. Between 1987 and 1993 Agnieszka was engaged at the only programme for adult educators in Sweden at Linköping University, south Sweden. The programme is meant for folk high school teachers and leaders of study circles. At Stockholm University both Agnieszka and Christina are teaching non-traditional students, who are not separated from traditional students. This is the specificity of Department of Education where part-timers and full-time students read together. This means that the groups are heterogeneous and there is a demand for more critical way of handling the process of learning. Innovative ways of organising seminars and lectures, as well as examination characterise our way of teaching. In addition we run special commissioned competencies courses for active adult educators. There we developed (on the basis of Agnieszka's Linköping experience) on life history approach in teaching.

Both Agnieszka (Chair) and Christina (Secretary) are engaged in adult education Seminar at Stockholm University. Researchers, students and professionals are active in this seminar. The last initiative that the Seminar is occupied with is the collaborative book project for educators on different levels who deal with non-traditional and mature students. Agnieszka is also responsible for the Social Movements and Liberal Adult Education Forum - open for practitioners - at the Department of Education, Stockholm University.

Some key publications about non-traditional students in Sweden

Bergendal, Gunnar (1976). *På väg mot en ny högskola*, Stockholm: Liber Läromedel.

Bilaga till regeringsbeslut (2001-11-08). The appendix to the Government decision. Stockholm. Sweden

Bron, Agnieszka and Agèlii, Karin (1997) Mature students' access to Stockholm University. In: Hill, S., Merrill, B. (eds.) *Access, Equity, Participation and Organisational Change*. Papers from the first seminar of the ESREA Access network, Leeds, March 1996. Coventry: University of Warwick, pp. 11-14.

Bron, Agnieszka and Agèlii, Karin (2000). Sweden Non-traditional Students in Sweden: From Recurrent Education to Lifelong Learning. In: *Higher Education and Lifelong Learners. International Perspectives on Change*. Hans Schuetze and Maria Slowey (eds.) London: Routledge/Falmer, pp. 83-100.

Bron, Agnieszka & Lönnheden, Christina (2004) Higher Education for Non-traditional students in Sweden - A matter of inclusion. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*. Vol. 7 Tohoku University, Japan (forthcoming).

Dahllöf, Urban (1997) *Reforming Higher Education and external Studies in Sweden and Australia*.
Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell.

Högskoleverkets årsrapport (2003) Stockholm.

Högskoleförordning (2003) Stockholm.

Murray, Mac (1988). *Utbildningsexpansion, jämlikhet och avlänkning*, Göteborg: ACTA Universitatis Gothoburgensis.

Universitet & högskolor (2004).Högskoleverkets årsrapport 2004. Stockholm: Högskoleverket

SOU 2000:47, Mångfald i högskolan, Stockholm.

SOU 2001:13, Nya villkor för lärandet i den högre utbildningen, Stockholm.

Internet: looked up in January and June 2004.

Barrows & Kelson, <http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/pbl/info.html>

<http://www.hsv.se>

http://utbildning.regeringen.se/inenglish/pdf/heo_jan03.pdf

http://www.rekrytering.gov.se/Rekrytering_asp/projekt2_rekrytering.asp#Högskolor%20/%20Universitet

<http://www.netuniversity.se/>

UNITED KINGDOM

1) Structure of Higher Education

Since the 1960s the UK university system has been expanding. Before the Robbins Report 1966, the structure consisted of Oxford, Cambridge and the civic universities such as Leeds and Manchester built in the centre of cities. Following the Robbins reports several new 'green fields' universities were built on campuses outside the city centre such as Warwick, Sussex, Lancaster etc. Until 1992 England and Wales had a binary system of higher education: universities and polytechnics. With the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act the former polytechnics became universities. However, an informal binary system has remained in several ways. The former polytechnics have become labelled as the 'new' universities contrasted to the 'old' universities. Research activities are predominantly located within the 'old' universities while, with some exceptions, the 'new' universities are largely teaching institutions. Universities have considerable autonomy although there has been some policy shift in recent years towards some centralising tendencies. In recent years, and particularly under New Labour, widening participation, lifelong learning and social inclusion have been high on the policy agenda. The traditional undergraduate student enters university at the age of 18, taking a three year degree course. Postgraduate Masters', MPhils and PhDs are taught on both a part-time and full-time basis.

Universities are now assessed and placed in league tables for a range of factors such as research, teaching, staff-student ratio, widening participation efforts etc. However, the Research Assessment Exercise is regarded as the most important, conferring status. This is a peer review of research which ranks departments by 1 –5* grade (5* being the highest grade). Funding is dependent on the outcome of this exercise. The 'top' research universities are the old universities.

Generally the old universities remain largely institutions for younger, middle class students although a few have longstanding part-time programmes for adults and contacts with a range of community and voluntary organisations. In contrast some new universities have geared their structures and policies to meet the needs of local adult students.

2) Funding of HE

In October 1998 tuition fees were introduced for the first time. Shortly before this the grant system for student support was altered as student loans replaced means-tested student grants provided by the Government through local authorities. The introduction of tuition fees and student loans has made it more difficult financially for mature students and working class 18 year olds to study reflecting a contradiction in the Government's widening participation strategy. Universities are allocated a hardship fund to assist students struggling financially. At Warwick mature students are the highest users of this fund. In some cases of low level income fees are waived.

The recent White Paper indicates that the fee system will shortly be changed whereby students will pay their fees upon completion of study. However, the Government will also be allowing universities 'the freedom to set their own tuition fee between £0 and £3000' (2003: 76). Elite universities are likely to set fees at the highest rate. The threshold for paying back student loans will also be raised.

Universities which demonstrate that they have widened participation for disadvantaged/ non-traditional students groups are allocated extra funding. This consists of:

- a. a small percentage of their annual government grant provided they deliver agreed widening participation targets
- b. funding for special initiatives – these have recently focused mainly on increased partnership working with schools and colleges but in the past have also involved some special initiatives with adults

3) Admission procedures/policy

Since the late 1970s entry qualifications have broadened particularly for adult students. To qualify for entry as an 18 year old, a person must obtain the school leaving qualifications: A levels or vocational

qualifications at the equivalent level. 'A' level passes are graded and students have to obtain so many points for entry – the amount of points required varies by university and department. Applications are made centrally through UCAS (the Universities' Central Admissions System). Adult students can now enter by a number of routes such as Access credits (following the completion of an Access course which is a preparation course for HE), vocational qualifications, APEL and, in some cases, without qualifications, as long as they can demonstrate capability of study. For example it is possible to enter the 2+2 and part-time degree programmes at Warwick in this way. Applications are looked at and decided upon at departmental level.

The Open University is traditionally open entry ie it does not require any prior qualifications for entry to its distance learning courses for adults and it has recently developed a range of introductory 'Openings' courses and programmes for non-traditional students

4) Non-traditional students

Widening participation policies have increased the number of adult students taking degrees. However, adults are not evenly distributed across the system. Most are located in the new universities where in some cases adults consist of over 80% of the student undergraduate population while many of the old elite institutions may have as few as 10% or under. This has employment implications for adult students as new universities are regarded as lower status institutions by employers. Most adult students are women. Nationally adult undergraduates consist of about half of the undergraduate population. Many, particularly in the new universities, are working class. There has been recent new legislation on disability which extends access rights and funding for both full-time and part-time disabled students.

Further education colleges (post-compulsory, 16+ institutions) now provide higher education programmes through partnership arrangements with, generally, local universities. The partnerships may be based on validation, franchises or a 2+2 arrangement whereby the curriculum and management is jointly shared although the university is the lead partner. Many adult students prefer to study HE in FE as the colleges are local, more structured towards teaching adults and less daunting than large university campuses (this approach has been particularly successful in Scotland and is now being promoted further in England and Wales). In 2001 the Government introduced a new degree aimed at non-traditional adults: the Foundation Degree. These combine an academic curriculum with a more vocational approach linked to work-based learning. A key aspect of these degrees is that they are negotiated with employers and are more practical/employment oriented than traditional degrees. Generally these are delivered part-time over 3 –3 ½ years (2 years full-time) and it is a qualification at sub-degree level in its own right and mainly taught in FE colleges. However, a requirement is that progression to honours level has to be available for those who wish to do so.

Adult students can study full-time or part-time at degree level. Part-time degree programmes are usually aimed specifically at adult students and are often a more broad-based degree. Some institutions offer other specific degrees aimed at adult students such as 2+2 degrees. These are jointly taught and managed with partner FE colleges. The first two years are spent at a college with years 1 and 2 being equivalent to year 1 of a traditional 3 year degree programme as these degrees are aimed at adults who have been out of the education system for a long time and who may have few or no qualifications.

Some universities still have a Continuing Education or Lifelong Learning Department or Centre which offers or manages across a university a wide range of programmes for adults such as professional training courses or pre-degree courses like Open Studies/ Extension Studies which now have to be accredited. The latter provide a pathway onto degree programmes.

5) Learning and teaching approaches with non-traditional adults

Normally adult students study alongside younger students. For example, adults who enter university with an Access qualification often study in the same lectures and seminar groups as younger students so there are no specific teaching strategies for adults. Pre-degree courses and some specific degree courses will be adult only and it is this situation where the needs of adult learners are taken into account. Increasingly

'Study Skills'/'Studying in HE' modules are offered at the beginning of degree programmes for non traditional students, often mainly adults students. This is always the case for Foundation Degrees.

A key aspect of adult learning is the negotiated curriculum. Such an approach is intended to take account of the experience, knowledge and interests which adults have already accumulated over their life course. Of course, in Higher Education how much room there is for negotiation depends on how tightly constructed (and accredited) the curriculum is. For example, there is often more scope (and enthusiasm) for curriculum negotiation in extension studies and less in mainstream undergraduate degrees, although even these usually have some element of choice, of modules and often of dissertation topics. Postgraduate, especially part-time degrees often have more scope for negotiation as they build on and make use of students' professional and/or life knowledge

Learning approaches geared to adults include:

- seminars more than lectures, a more dialogical approach
- a focus on experiential learning
- project-based approaches
- work-based learning including group problem-solving
- reflective learning, linking theory and practice, for example, using diaries or critical learning logs
- action learning sets, where groups work together to address/solve common problems
- other peer group learning approaches/support systems
- mentoring

Higher education programmes in the FE colleges also employ teaching strategies aimed at non-traditional adult students.

6. Ideas from literature/own experiences

Both Barbara and Rennie have been teaching non-traditional adults in Universities for a number of years. The Universities of Warwick and Southampton, although 'old' universities, both have a history of doing outreach work with groups of non-traditional adult learners from women's groups, minority ethnic groups, unemployed groups, community groups. Much of this work was conducted as part of a very broadly-based extension studies programme which included special funding for work with non-traditional students. However as there has been increasing government/funding pressures over the last 5 -10 years to mainstream and accredit these programmes, this has limited the scope for more radical outreach approaches and for more dialogical and experiential approaches to learning and teaching.

Barbara and Rennie have both been active members of a national network of academics called the Education Equality Network which is particularly concerned with the needs and interests of non-traditional students and Widening Participation and both have been involved in a range of local, regional and national projects and conferences in this area.

Some key publications include:

* Pam Coare and Rennie Johnston, eds, (2003 forthcoming) *Adult Learning, Citizenship and Community Voices*, Leicester, NIACE

- includes contributions from Barbara and Rennie

* Julia Preece, Anne Marie Houghton (2000) *Nurturing Social Capital in Excluded Communities*, a kind of higher education, Aldershot, Ashgate - in-depth, well-theorised analysis of an adult education initiative with non-trad students in HE

* Jane Thompson, ed, (2000) *Stretching the Academy: the politics and practice of widening participation in Higher Education*, Leicester, NIACE

- a radical challenge to mainstream approaches to HE – reviewed by Rennie

* Julia Preece et al, eds (1998) *Beyond the Boundaries: exploring the potential of widening provision in higher education*, Leicester, NIACE

- covers a range of projects with adults, first chapter by Rennie

For further key publications, see literature review