



The Adult Learner Journal in Ireland: national and international platform for publication and debate in adult learning

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<http://www.aontas.com/pubsandlinks/publications/category/adultlearnerjournalthe/>

Keywords

Adult learning; publication of research; linking research and practice;

Summary

This case looks at how a journal can promote dialogue between theory, research, policy and practice in adult and community learning. The case study examines the Adult Learner, an Irish Journal which is published annually by AONTAS, a public funded body which provides support to the adult and community sector in Ireland. AONTAS provides financial support for publication of the journal which is published both online and in paper form. The journal encourages individuals to submit and publish articles and reviews on subject related to adult and community learning. There is both a theoretical / research section and a practice section. For example, some of the articles report on findings from research projects while other focus on theoretical discussions based on topics of relevance to adult learning. Others provide case studies and reports about action research projects in the community. The journal provides a forum for sharing ideas and experiences from different perspectives and encourages different groups - researchers, policy makers, practitioners, students etc; to read and learn from each other's different perspectives. Some of the contributions also seek to bridge the gap between policy and practice. There are also opportunities for individuals to contribute and publish critical commentaries on contributions to past journals.

General background

AONTAS <http://www.aontas.com/> is the National Adult Learning Organisation of Ireland which is a voluntary membership organisation. It exists to promote the development of a learning society through the provision of a quality and comprehensive system of adult learning and education which is accessible to and inclusive to all. The members of AONTAS who now number almost 600 comprise individual, organisational and associate (overseas) members. AONTAS promotes the importance of adult and community education as a key part of lifelong learning. The organisation works to support the work of its members through the provision of information, lobby campaigns, organising networking opportunities for members and representation at national level etc;



Through its policy work AONTAS lobbies to influence the development of policy in relation to adult education. Over the course of the current AONTAS Strategic Plan, AONTAS policy work will focus on accreditation, learner supports, adults and higher education and adult education and citizenship. Views and feedback from membership inform the policy work of the organisation

AONTAS provides an information referral service to adult learners and the general public, collects data on developments in the sector and undertakes research. AONTAS endeavours to work in partnership with other relevant organisations and Government Departments, and from time to time engages in specific projects designed to support the work of different sectors of the membership. AONTAS also represents the interests of adult learners at a number of important fora. Membership is open to all organisations, groups and individuals involved in the promotion or advancement of adult education.

Objectives and Purpose

The Adult Learner is a journal publication of AONTAS focusing on adult and community education and founded in the mid 1980s. It aims primarily to serve the needs of the adult education community in Ireland by providing a forum for critical reflection on practices of teaching and learning. The journal aims to continue to make knowledge, research and writing accessible to the widest possible audience and emphasises the implications of critique for practice. The journal has a long established practice of giving priority to subject matter that addresses disadvantage, social exclusion, equality, workplace learning and the study of the teacher/student relationship. Community education, literacy, citizenship and access issues are also of importance in the journal.

While much of its contents is focused on Ireland, the journal also publishes papers relevant to those working in other countries and other educational contexts

The journal is published by AONTAS which has an editorial committee overseeing the publication of the journal. The editorial committee is composed of individuals working across different sectors including the universities in Ireland and the UK and the Irish Adult Education Officer's Association. Adult Education Officers are appointed to each of the 26 Vocational Educational Committees in Ireland. They contribute to the management, integration and on-going development of adult education in Ireland.

Currently the Adult Learner has an editorial committee of 9 people from universities and the Adult Education Officer's Association, with secretarial support provided by AONTAS.

Much of the work carried out for the Adult Learner is of a voluntary nature. Those submitting papers, articles and reviews do not receive any financial reward. The work submitted is read by at least two experts in the field of study who decide whether a) to accept it for publication, or b) accept it subject to modifications or c) reject it for publication and suggest how it might be submitted again in the future or recommend another way



forward such as submission to another journal or newsletter. Where appropriate, the work is returned to the writer for modification. The editorial board meet 3 time per year. In these meetings they agree procedures for submission of articles, book reviews and other contributions and review the material submitted for publication.

AONTAS provides financial resources for the publication of the journal (about €5,000 per annum.) It also provides secretarial support to meetings and the ongoing work of the journal.

Links between research and practice

The journal combines insights from research and practice by encouraging:

1. The publication of academic papers in a refereed section. Papers engage with critical debate and analysis ideas on concepts, theories and/or practices of the field. Papers are often based on the findings from ongoing or recently completed research.

They may be policy or practice focused and provide a forum for adult and community educators to become involved in critical analysis of policy and practice. They can also suggest ways for informing and improving the work of the sector.

2. The journal also includes shorter practice papers and case studies which share examples of good practice and exchange ideas about what works in various programmes, experiments in innovations and learning contexts. The papers engage in a critical analysis of the practical aspects of adult and community education.

3. The journal has book reviews and other materials and resources on a range of topics including teaching and learning resources of interest to adult and community education participants.

The Journal is published each year in hardback and online on the AONTAS website (available since 1999).

<http://www.aontas.com/pubsandlinks/publications/category/adultlearnerjournalthe/>.

The journal provides a forum for the interchange of knowledge and ideas in the field of adult learning. The specialist knowledge and experience generated in the design, delivery and management of adult learning is used to inform changes in adult education and skills policy processes and content in Ireland and in recent years articles written by those working in other countries have expanded the knowledge base.

The Adult Learner provides an example of a journal which is cross sectoral and which speaks to a wide range of professionals working in the field of policy, practice and research in adult learning.



Useful links

The Adult Learner <http://www.aontas.com/pubsandlinks/theadultlearner.html>

AONTAS Research Reports <http://www.aontas.com/policy/researchprojects.html>

AONTAS Publications <http://www.aontas.com/pubsandlinks/publications.html>

Adult Education Officers' Strategic Framework: strategic framework -2016

<http://www.aeoa.ie/assets/files/2011%20AEOA%20Strategic%20Framework.pdf>

AONTAS website <http://www.aontas.com/>