

Adult Education - Who does a nightcourse?

Over 300,000 people are enrolled in a nightcourse in Ireland in 2006. We decided to find out who are these people, and why did they choose a further or adult education course...

The further education sector in Ireland is booming. With more and more people of all ages returning to education for a variety of reasons, it often seems like half of Ireland is taking some class of a course. *Aontas - the National Association of Adult Education* - estimate that each year over 300,000 adults participate in education in Ireland each year.

The *Aontas* statistics break down the 300,000 total into approximately 150,000 people in nightcourses or evening classes, 30,000 students enrolled in PLC programmes, 50,000 in community education schemes and the rest taking part in various literacy schemes, vocational training schemes, *Youthreach* programmes and distance learning courses. So who are these people?

Maybe the most obvious group of people who enrol in further education courses each year are school leavers or young people who for whatever reason aren't attending a university or IT. *VECs* and further education colleges offer a wide range of post leaving cert courses that are designed to prepare students for work by giving them specific skills and training to help them compete in the jobs market. These courses can also act as a taster or stepping-stone to other third level qualifications at ITs, universities or other colleges. Other students decide to take a year 'out' to think about their future while gaining a general qualification in a broad area such as IT or business.

VECs also cater for a large amount of people taking community education and basic adult education courses. These people might not have had an opportunity to complete their formal education when they were younger, and might now be looking to gain an approved qualification in subjects ranging including basic literacy and numeracy, Junior and Leaving Certificate subjects and practical IT or business skills. Government schemes such as the '*Back to Education Initiative*' are available to assist people who wish to get take a community education course.

Many people are also attracted to *VEC* or further education colleges to gain a new skill or qualification to help with their career prospects. Professional development is all the rage in the twenty-first century and people are taking control of their own careers in much greater numbers these days. A nightcourse can give you the extra skills, professional training, work experience, industry contacts and insider know-how to allow you to take your career onto the next level. People aiming to gain promotion in their present job, on the lookout for a more challenging role in a new company, or even thinking about setting up their own business on their own, all use *VEC* courses to get where they want to go.

Another group of people like the idea of taking a course for reasons which are not necessarily career or professional based. Adult education covers courses that are informative and enlightening, but maybe not as demanding as strictly professional courses. Many people decide to take a nightcourse to pursue a hobby or learn new skills, to relax and de-stress after a long day at work/at home, to add a little creativity or fun to their lives, to explore a subject as a taster to future learning, or just because they really like the subject and want to learn more.

People looking for good value for money for their course are also attracted to the VEC / further education sector. Many courses offered by VECs or further education colleges are heavily subsidised, which means the course fees are low, nominal or sometimes there is no cost at all. For example unemployed people who are taking part in the Back to Education Initiative can have their fees paid for them. Employed adults looking to take a nightcourse - whether in IT skills, French or cooking - can find that the VEC courses cost less than those offered by private colleges

© 2007 AONTAS

AONTAS The National Association of Adult Education
2nd Floor, 83-87 Main Street, Ranelagh, Dublin 6, Ireland
Tel : (++ 353 1) 406 8220/1
Fax : (++ 353 1) 406 8227
Email : mail@aontas.com
<http://www.aontas.com/>

<http://www.clareadulteducation.org/>

<http://www.ncge.ie/>

<http://www.cgvec.ie/>

<http://www.countygalwayvec.com/>

<http://www.clarevec.ie/>

http://www.ennisvtos.ie/links_clare_vec.html

<http://www.gmit.ie/lifelong-learning/index.html>

http://www.nuigalway.ie/careers/students/courses_night.html

<http://www.nightcourses.com/>