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**LEGAL BASIS ON ADULT EDUCATION IN IRELAND: DISCOURSE  
REVIEW**

This article examines the main legislation documents and describes the legal basis on adult education in the Republic of Ireland. The author gives the short characteristic of some basic reports and determines the establishment and development of adult education in the country according to the education government policy reports.

*Key words:* adult education, legal basis, government policy, vocational education, lifelong education.

**Problem formulation.** In the 21st century, the rapid pace and complexity of economic, technological and cultural changes require women and men to adapt and re-adapt throughout their lives – all the more so in the context of globalization. These developments not only highlight the importance of continuous learning in general; they also demand that adults keep on acquiring more information, upgrading their skills and reexamining their values. The critical role of adult education in the development of society has long been recognised. Since the First International Conference on Adult Education in 1949, UNESCO member states have dedicated themselves to ensuring that adults are able to exercise the basic right to education. Later Conferences in Montreal (1960), Tokyo (1972), Paris (1985) and Hamburg (1997) reaffirmed this right, and proposed ways of making it a reality. In 1976, the UNESCO General Conference approved the Nairobi Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education (UNESCO, 1976) which enshrined governments' commitment to promote adult education as an integral part of the educational system within a lifelong learning perspective. Over the course of these 60 years the landscape of adult education has evolved [4].

Adult education is one of the most innovative, dynamic and challenging areas of education. It can bring a new dimension of freedom and enlightenment to learning.

Bridging different educational barriers enables a large number of individuals to access vital information which is used to further their skills and knowledge.

**Analysis of recent achievements and publications.** Adult education on the national level is examined by L. Vovk, B. Yevtukh, M. Levchenko, V. Lugovyi, L. Sigayeva, L. Shynkarenko, L. Tymchyk. Common European adult education framework is investigated by N. Avshenuk, V. Andrushchenko, T. Desyatov, N. Mukan, S. Sysoyeva. The development of adult education in the foreign countries is researched by M. Borysova (Canada), V. Boyko (Great Britain), V. Davydova (Sweden), O. Fuchyla (Belgium), S. Kovalenko (England), O. Ogiyenko (Scandinavian countries), I. Sagun (Germany).

The modern tendencies of foundation and development of adult education in Ireland are studied by K. Maunsel, T. Owens, N. Farren, T. Fleming.

**виділення не вирішених раніше частин загальної проблеми, яким присвячується означена стаття.** The understanding of the role of adult education is still changing and developing. From being seen as promoting international understanding in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, adult education is now seen as a key in the economic, political and cultural transformation of individuals, communities and societies in the 21st century. Adult education is still considered to be a subject to a wide range of research and interpretations on the international level. The shift from education to learning also constitutes an important change in conceptualising the field of adult education. So, the examination and analysis of legal basis on adult education in Ireland (as a high-developed state) is a great interest and value for the development of adult education in Ukraine.

**The objective of the article** is to provide a discourse review and case study of legal basis on adult education in Ireland. On the basis of the objective of the essay the following tasks are distinguished: 1) to give a short characteristic of the legislation papers on adult education in the Irish Republic; 2) to examine the role of policy reports in the development of adult education in the country;

**The statement of the fundamental material.** The main governmental organizer of adult education is the Department of Education and Skills. The

department is responsible for promoting equity and inclusion, ensuring quality outcomes for lifelong learning; planning for education that is relevant to personal, social, cultural and economic needs; and enhancing the capacity for delivery, policy formulation, research and evaluation. Other related departments include the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Gaelic communities), Department of Social Protection and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation [3, 5].

Broadly, adult education has taken a role in many legislation and policy documents. One of the earliest pieces of education legislation in the newly independent Republic of Ireland was the Vocational Educational Act of 1930, which established local committees to control vocational education in each county and major city. The first concern of these vocational education committees (VECs) was to create technical schools that would provide a less-academic alternative to the existing secondary schools. Children who struggled academically could learn woodworking and mechanical drawing (in boys' technical schools) or home economics, shorthand, and typing (in girls' technical schools) [7, 3].

A significant state intervention in adult education policy was the appointment of the advisory body on adult education in 1969. The Committee on Adult Education (1969-1973), submitted its final report, *Adult Education in Ireland*, (known as the "Murphy Report") in November 1973. The Report dealt in some detail with a range of issues, including formulating a broad definition of adult education, and providing statistical details on the number and socioeconomic background of participants [5, 39].

The Green Paper (1998) marks the start of a wide-ranging consultation process and debate on the future of adult education in Ireland. This is the first Green Paper on Adult Education in the history of the State. It sets out the role of adult education as a vital component in a continuum of lifelong learning, and outlines the contribution the sector can make to promoting economic competitiveness and employment, addressing inter-generational poverty and disadvantage, supporting community advancement and helping to the challenges of change [5, 2].

The Paper maps the development of adult education in Ireland to evolve in order to maintain quality, relevance and responsiveness in a changing world, and proposes a frame work and agenda for change and development.

The Green Paper sets an agenda for a strategic and comprehensive approach to opening up the adult educational sector. It suggests that this approach should be guided by an overall national commitment to lifelong learning. It makes its case on the contribution which education can make to tackling poverty and exclusion; to dealing with the increasing problem of skill shortages and skill obsolescence and to enhancing the quality of intellectual, social and cultural life of the individual and of the society at large [5, 3].

Government policy on adult education in Ireland is set out in the White Paper Learning for Life published in 2000. This White Paper outlined the rationale for investing in adult education, and covers the promotion of adult success to further and higher education sector, enhancing workplace learning, strengthening supporting services such as staff development, national accreditation, guidance childcare, and the provision of a coherent framework for national and local era-based co-ordination. The recommendations cover issues such as financial support for adult learners (e.g. reducing fees for part time learners who are unemployed), and ensuring good guidance is available for adults wishing to reenter the educational system [1].

The White Paper followed by the Report of the Task Force on Life Learning in 2002. Both documents are core reference texts in the move towards a more coherent policy in vocational education and training and adult learning provision. The White Paper reflected on the role of adult education in society and, in setting out principles, policies and strategies, built on a very wide consultation process. For the first time, the State extended its educational commitment to include the population which has left the initial educational system. In particular, government policy undertook to give particular attention to disadvantaged groups and persons with low educational attainment. Policy outlines in the White Paper were augmented by The Task Force on Lifelong Learning, which was established by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment in collaboration with the Department of education and Science. Eight

Government Departments with relevant responsibilities were represented on the Task Force, along with education, training, social partner, community and voluntary interests and industrial development agencies. The Task Force on Lifelong Learning concentrated on the five themes of:

- developing and implementing a National Framework of Qualifications;
- ensuring Basic Skills for all;
- providing Comprehensive Guidance, Counseling and Information;
- addressing delivery, access and funding measures;
- providing better opportunities for workplace learning, and learning for workers [2, 9].

In addition to those there have also been several important pieces of legislation which have an impact on the delivery of adult education, namely: The Educational Act (1998), The National Qualification Act (1999), the National Development Plan (2000-2006), National Skills Strategy (2007) and the National Plan for Social Inclusion (2007) [1].

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, which led to the establishment of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), was passed in 1999. The main objective of the NQAI was to establish a national framework of qualifications for all educational levels. The NQAI is not an awarding body. Two award Councils have been set up under the provisions of the Act; the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). These two councils make national certification available for all education and training in the State other than provided in the primary and post-primary sectors, the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and the universities [2, 10].

The social partnership agreement, «Towards 2016», the National Development Plan 2007-2013 and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 also highlight priority areas which are being targeted by the Government. The principal objectives of the measures and programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science in the area of further and adult education are:

- to meet the needs of young early school-leavers;
- to provide second-chance education for people who didn't complete upper secondary education;
- to provide vocational preparation and training for labour market entrants and re-entrants.

The main providers of these services are the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) [8, 10].

**Conclusion and the prospects of the above research.** Following the adoption of the Vocational Educational Act in 1930 and the appointment of the Committee on Adult Education at the beginning of the 1970s adult education began to establish and grow slowly. The Murphy Report (1973) and more recently the Green Paper (1998) set a more systematic development and progress for adult education in the Irish Republic. The White Paper represented a significant evolution in adult education and its policy perspective was confirmed when the National Development Plan (2000-2006) was published which set as a priority the 'continued investment in education and training and, in particular, through developing a strategic vision for lifelong learning' [6].

A number of specific initiatives on adult education were introduced over the last few years in Ireland and every of them have a small but significant impact on access to adult education development and buildout.

Owing to the mentioned educational documents Irish adult education has gradually moved from being a field in which there were few facilities to where there are a number of adult education centres. So, every policy report has its contribution in the national establishment and development of the adult education. The more developed legal basis the system of adult education has, the more favourable opportunities are for the future progress and elaboration of adult education.

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ОСНОВНІ ДОКУМЕНТИ В СФЕРІ ОСВІТИ ДОРΟΣЛИХ ІРЛАНДІЇ:  
КОРОТКИЙ ОГЛЯД

У даній статті розглянено основні документи законодавства в галузі освіти дорослих в Республіці Ірландія. Подано коротку характеристику деяких з них і проаналізовано розвиток освіти дорослих за нормативно-правовою базою Ірландії.

*Ключові слова:* освіта дорослих, освіта протягом життя, нормативно-правова та законодавча база, професійна освіта

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## ОСНОВНЫЕ ДОКУМЕНТЫ В СФЕРЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ ВЗРОСЛЫХ ИРЛАНДИИ: КРАТКИЙ ОБЗОР

В данной статье рассмотрены основные документы законодательства в области образования взрослых в Республике Ирландия. Подана краткая характеристика некоторых из них и проанализировано состояние системы образования взрослых согласно нормативно-правовой базе Ирландии.

*Ключевые слова:* образование взрослых, образование на протяжении жизни, нормативно-правовая и законодательная база, профессиональное образование.