



IRISH VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
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PILOT FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATIONAL PROVISION FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS,
REFUGEES AND MINORITY LINGUISTIC GROUPS



AN IVEA WORKING GROUP REPORT



VOLUME I: LIFELONG LEARNING



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DEFINITIONS: LEGAL TERMS

Asylum seeker	A person who arrives independently in the State seeking to be granted protection under the Refugee Convention.
Refugee	A person who has been recognised as needing protection under the Refugee Convention. In the Convention, a refugee is defined as someone who: has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion; is outside the country they belong to or normally reside in and is unable or unwilling to return home for fear of persecution.
Leave to remain	Leave to remain is granted at the discretion of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform as an exceptional measure to allow, on grounds outlined in Section 3 of the Immigration Act, a person who does not fully meet the requirements of the Refugee Convention but may still need protection to remain in the State.
Programme refugee	A person who has been given leave to enter and remain by the Government, usually in response to a humanitarian crisis, at the request of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
Refugee Convention	United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951).

DEFINITIONS:

Terms referring to people and practices as used in this document

Bilingual	Bilingualism refers to the phenomenon of competence and communication in two languages. A bilingual individual is someone who has the ability to communicate in two languages alternately (Lam, 2001). Most bilingual speakers will have learned two languages in the family from native speakers since infancy.
English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	ESOL is primarily concerned with developing speaking and listening skills in functional language for everyday use. Programmes are learner centred and based with attainable short-term goals. Preparing learners for independence, ESOL takes account of educational/employment aspirations. ESOL also incorporates communicative language techniques for mixed levels and cross-cultural approaches which recognises a learner's other languages/cultures.
Ethnic minority	Ethnic minority is a generic term used to describe people who are identifiably different to the ethnic majority because of their ethnic origin (including language or religion).
Interculturalism	Interculturalism: "acceptance not only of the principles of equality of rights, values and abilities but also the development of policies to promote interaction, collaboration and exchange with people of different cultures, ethnicity or religion living in the same territory...interculturalism is an approach that can enrich a society and recognises racism as an issue that needs to be tackled in order to create a more inclusive society" (NCCRI, 2001:6).
Integration	"Integration means the ability to participate to the extent that a person needs and wishes in all of the major components of society, without having to relinquish his or her own cultural identity"(Working Group on the Integration of Refugees in Ireland, 1999).
Minority Linguistic Group	Minority linguistic group is used to describe people who were born in, or have family origins in countries where their mother tongue is a language other than English.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Terms referring to people and practices as used in this document

ACELS	Advisory Council for English Language Schools: ACELS was set up by the Department of Education and Science to regulate the English language teaching sector in Ireland and to promote standards
AEO	Adult Education Organiser
ALO	Adult Literacy Organiser
BTEI	Back to Education Initiative: national DES initiative to provide opportunities for young people and adults to return to learning
CDB	County/City Development Board: New structures established in January 2000, CDBs bring together, for the first time, the key players at local level to engage in a process of long-term planning for each county or city for the next ten years. The Boards are representative of local government, local development bodies (Area Partnerships, LEADER groups, and county/city enterprise boards) and the state agencies and social partners (employers and business, farming, trade union and community and voluntary sectors) operating locally. The primary function of the CDBs is to draw up a comprehensive Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development within the county/city, and to oversee the implementation of the Strategy
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DES	Department of Education and Science
EO	Education Officer
FETAC	Further Education Training Awards Council: a national statutory award body for further education and training
IILT	Integrate Ireland Language and Training: established by the DES under the aegis of Trinity College to co-ordinate language support for refugees and others with legal residency
ITÉ	Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (Linguistics Institute of Ireland): The principal function of the Institute is the provision of research and advice services to all organisations dealing with language issues

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Terms referring to people and practices as used in this document

IVEA	Irish Vocational Education Association: the IVEA acts as the national representative body for the 33 Vocational Education Committees.
LYNS	Learning for Young interNational Students: LYNS is a national executive committee, established jointly by JMB and ACS, dealing with educational issues of international students in voluntary secondary schools, community and comprehensive schools
NALC	National Adult Learning Council: an executive agency of the DES established to oversee the implementation of the White Paper on Adult Education
NCGE	National Centre for Guidance in Education: an agency of the DES that supports and develops guidance practice in all areas of education
NCCRI	National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism: a partnership organisation established by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to develop actions against racism and act in a public policy advisory role
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate: Introduced in 1985, the PLC programme provides appropriate education/training to prepare individuals for work and higher education
RIA	Reception and Integration Agency: established by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the RIA is responsible for co-ordinating reception and integration for asylum seekers, together with refugees
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: an international UN agency mandated to co-ordinate international actions and responses for the protection of refugees and other displaced persons
VEC	Vocational Education Committee: Ireland's 33 VECs are statutory bodies responsible for the provision of a wide range of education, training and support services to all sectors of the community. VEC education and training programmes include second level, adult, community and second chance education (V.T.O.S.), post-leaving certificate programmes, prison education, traveller education and a variety of E.U. funded and co-operative training programmes
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme: Supported by the European Social Fund, VTOS is a targeted intervention by the DES to assist unemployed adults progress into education, training and employment

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Each VEC should make provision for adult refugees, asylum seekers and minority linguistic groups through its Lifelong Learning service. IVEA recommend that provision is located within the Community Education programme and that the day-to-day management of the service be the responsibility of the Community Education Facilitators, when appointed. The Community Education Facilitators will report to the appropriate manager as determined by each individual VEC. This recommendation will ensure that the target group has access to the full range of VEC lifelong learning services and provision is not confined to literacy. These services include both delivery services and support services.
2. While the Department of Education and Science increased ALCES budget funding in 2001 to provide for special needs groups, including refugees and asylum seekers, IVEA recommend that the Department either:
 - ring-fence this money within the ALCES budget line
 - or
 - make a specific allocation to VECs for special needs groups
3. IVEA recommend the following initiatives be undertaken for all staff:
 - Anti-racist and cultural awareness training programmes be developed and delivered to all staff (managers, tutors, support staff, frontline staff) in consultation with organisations with expertise who are already active in this area of work, and involving target groups in the design and delivery of programmes.
 - Specific training programmes for specialist areas be developed e.g. women, survivors of torture, unaccompanied minors.
 - Information sessions be provided for staff on asylum policy and process, working with groups with special needs etc.
 - Accredited training programmes be developed for staff which could be undertaken on a modular basis.
4. Staff development and training for educationalists working with the target groups should take the following form:
 - Specialised training to allow educationalists to develop new areas of expertise (English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Literacy for ESOL etc.).
 - Information sessions on new areas of knowledge e.g. legislation, equality, refugee women, torture survivors and separated children.All training should be accredited.
5. Tutors need to acquire a broad range of skills to enable them to tutor asylum seekers and refugees. Existing tutors with only a TEFL background need to be updated on current ESOL methods, trained in adult education theory, literacy, some didactic skills and interculturalism. Tutors with only a literacy background also require similar training with the addition of linguistics. Situated within an adult learning framework, Annex II outlines specialised subject areas for future training to enable tutors to work with minority linguistic groups.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

6. IVEA recommend that two (2) hours per day on three (3) days per week over a period of six (6) weeks would be the most appropriate format for courses. IVEA recommend that VECs provide an allocation of twelve (12) hours per group per six-week course (12 hours out of 36 to be dedicated to mother-culture/intercultural supports). In terms of the size of each class, IVEA recommends a maximum number of fifteen (15) students and a minimum number of four (4) students. In rural areas where the number of students requiring access to courses is lower a degree of flexibility is acceptable.
7. Planning programmes and analysing needs involves four steps:
 - Finding out about a learner
 - Analysing goals
 - Diagnostic assessment of a learner's current language skills
 - Negotiating a programme of work

Following an initial interview, assessment should take place in a non-threatening environment. Information required includes: aspirations/aims, analysis of aims, prior learning, perceived needs and assessment of needs. Working in co-operation with the learner and analysing goals, courses should be broken down into short manageable targets. Diagnostic assessment of new learners enables tutors and second language learners to establish what skills they have at a fixed point in time. As yet there is no standardised ESOL assessment framework in Ireland which can evaluate a learner's literacy and language skills.

8. Operating in collaboration, practitioners from a broad range of fields need to come together to devise tools for initial and ongoing assessment of ESOL learners. A similar approach was adopted in the UK. A model assessment framework needs to be flexible given the diversity of learning experiences and linguistic abilities of asylum seekers and other minority linguistic groups and practical use for each service provider. In addition, the IVEA recommend an assessment framework be devised for placement in Adult and Further Education (Adult Literacy, ESOL, VTOS and PLC). The IVEA, in consultation with relevant bodies, will develop such a framework.
9. The working group recommends the following categorisation of levels. The levels detailed below (and in Annex 3) are approximate TEFL levels adapted for ESOL provision:
 0. 'False' Beginners
 1. Elementary
 2. Pre-Intermediate
 3. Intermediate
 4. Upper-Intermediate
 5. Advanced

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

10. IVEA recommend the following principles for materials' design:

- Materials need to be targeted towards beginners and onwards
- The approach must be needs based
- Materials should be action based and mainly communicative (listening and speaking skills)
- Subject areas must reflect thematic situations that are relevant to newly arrived asylum seekers and minority linguistic groups: self-identification, looking for accommodation, children and schooling, parental care, hospitals etc.
- The materials need to incorporate the 'teachability hypothesis' with clear progression for students
- Worksheets must be photocopyable and tutor guidelines should be included

11. IVEA recommend an integrated approach to teaching combining language, literacy and mother-culture-intercultural supports as provided for in the White Paper.

IVEA expert practitioners recommend that one-third of course time be given to mother-culture/intercultural supports as such supports constitute a vital component of the education programme.

12. IVEA recommend the following initiatives be put in place for learners to underpin the educational initiatives. Expert practitioners view the following support programmes as vital:

Information needs:

- Information sessions on rights and entitlements of different groups
- Information sessions on services available (statutory and non-statutory) and on how systems work-health services, education services, social welfare services, legal services etc
- Information services on local facilities

These sessions may be organised and delivered in conjunction with local agencies and organisations

Basic Information Technology (IT) skills:

- The Cultural Awareness and Social Inclusion programme should be used to enhance language skills and personal effectiveness. IVEA recommend that, in as far as possible, state accreditation should be available for all courses.

Cultural orientation programme

- Orientation training and information on Irish culture - history, social customs, music, sport etc. FETAC modules may be offered through the BTEI initiative and non-accredited programmes through the VEC Community Education programme
- Development of links with Local Sports Partnerships, Women's groups and other organisations in order to facilitate membership of the target groups. Community Education Facilitator could act as liaison person.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

13. IVEA recommend the following recreational programmes
 - A variety of programmes may be offered through the Community Education programme, in the form of a series of classes, taster workshops etc. Local community education groups and support groups should be encouraged and facilitated to promote contact of the target groups with Irish people through provision of funding and other support to organise classes and workshops e.g. arts and crafts, music, yoga, dance. Programmes may also be organised which cater for target groups only, by themselves or by support groups
 - Community-based intercultural awareness initiatives can be supported through the Community Education programme e.g. series of seminars on world religions, workshops on interculturalism. Such initiatives can be organised directly by VECs or through appropriate locally-based organisations (and funded by VECs).
 - Anti-racism programmes and initiatives may be developed through links with groups which are already active in challenging racism and prejudice e.g. Traveller, disability and development education groups. Many of these groups have already developed appropriate training programmes which can be adapted as necessary; this may be done by involving target groups in the design of specific modules and in delivery of the programmes. VECs should facilitate and support the development and delivery of new programmes aimed at increasing understanding and acceptance of asylum seekers, refugees and all minority ethnic groups in local communities.

14. In addition to mother-culture support services, the delivery of a successful education programme at all levels requires the provision of the following additional supports:
 - Translation services
 - Childcare
 - Psychological services/counselling (personal effectiveness/coping skills)
 - Information services
 - Learning Resources
 - Educational/Career guidance

Note to the reader: In the context of this document, "IVEA", "IVEA Working Group" and "Working Group" are interchangeable.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of linguistic minorities arriving in Ireland. This culturally enriching development poses a number of challenges to Irish political culture and governance, particularly to the education sector. Fortunately, Ireland is in a position to learn from the experiences of neighbouring European States who have met these obligations with varying degrees of success in earlier decades.

Members of the IVEA Working Group have researched the challenges posed to the Irish education system on a national and international basis. Ensuring opportunity of access, adult education practices in the VECs are underpinned by a commitment to equality, diversity of choice and empowerment of the individual. Historically, the VECs have tackled poverty and social exclusion through specialised services/initiatives targeting marginalized communities. Meeting the needs of asylum seekers, refugees and other minority linguistic groups presents a considerable challenge to the vocational sector. However, the working group's findings suggest it is imperative that the Adult and Community Education sector effectively addresses educational provision for new communities to prevent economic deprivation and social fragmentation.

Following an emergency resolution of IVEA Congress 2000, a specialist working group was established to examine the potential opportunities and resources needed to cater successfully for the educational needs of asylum seekers and refugees. The working group later extended its brief to include non-English speaking migrants ('minority linguistic groups').

Membership of the specialist working group is comprised of educationalists and researchers with a keen interest in or expert knowledge of educational provision for asylum seekers, refugees and other minority linguistic groups. Members are drawn from a wide geographical catchment area, reflecting the dispersal and settlement of the target group population throughout Ireland.

Members of the IVEA specialist working group:

- Luke Murtagh, Co. Tipperary North Riding VEC – Chairperson and CEO
- Sarah Kavanagh, IVEA Head Office – Working Group Co-ordinator
- Moya Corry, Co. Kildare VEC – Principal and Educationalist
- Cróna Gallagher, Co. Donegal VEC – Adult Education Organiser
- Rachel Hegarty, City of Dublin VEC – Language Tutor and Lecturer
- Marie Humphries, Whitehall College of Further Education – TUI Representative and Educationalist
- Frank Nash, City of Cork VEC - Public Representative and Educationalist
- Karl Quinn, Co. Clare VEC – Co-ordinator and Language Tutor
- Tanya Ward, City of Dublin VEC – Research and Development Officer

The research conducted by the working group during 2000/2001 resulted in a report with detailed findings and recommendations. **The IVEA Policy on Educational Provision for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and other Non-nationals** was presented to IVEA Congress 2001 and unanimously adopted. The policy outlines broad parameters for the delivery of educational services to the target group by the VECs.

1. INTRODUCTION

During 2001/2002 the working group focused on preparing a framework for implementation of IVEA policy. The present document contains a recommended framework for the delivery of services within the Adult and Community Education sector.

Responding with limited resources, historically the VECs have attempted to meet the educational needs of migrant and refugee groups. While innovative and progressive in character, the VECs must continue to develop and enhance existing provision in a co-ordinated manner. In the long-term, if VECs fail to meet the needs of the target group the Department of Education and Science will delegate the task to other agencies.

The IVEA recognises the importance of supporting VECs in meeting the needs of the target group and VECs are invited to implement the suggested framework on a pilot basis in 2002/3. IVEA will revise guidelines, incorporating VEC and learner feedback, to ensure that the scheme fully meets the needs of learners and providers.

1.1 SUGGESTED FRAMEWORK

The IVEA will provide guidelines on the following areas of VEC activity:

- Second Level
- Adult and Community Education
- Further Education (including PLC/VTOS sector)

Concentrating on the area of lifelong learning, the present document focuses on Adult and Community Education.

The following key concepts underpin service delivery in each of the three areas:

- Preparing the school/lifelong learning community for dealing with the target group
- Integrating the group into the school/lifelong learning programme
- Providing language and cultural supports to enable participation
- Following the mainstream curriculum in the school/lifelong learning programme if appropriate
- Providing support services

The IVEA intends to meet with the Department of Education and Science to seek agreement on additional resourcing, including staffing, to enable VECs to deliver the proposed service.

2. LIFELONG LEARNING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Government White Paper on Adult Education – Learning for Life (2000) represents an important new departure in education policy in Ireland. The White Paper seeks to accommodate difference based on three central principles:

- 1) Lifelong learning as a systemic approach
- 2) Equality
- 3) Interculturalism

2.1.1 Lifelong Learning as a Systemic Approach

Lifelong learning, as defined in the White Paper, refers to adult learning in a multiplicity of sites including: schools, conventional education institutes, training centres, homes and community groups. "It also requires progression between learning sites based on parity of esteem between providers; the development of methods of assessment of learning independently of the context in which such learning occurs; the need to provide the requisite infrastructural supports to the learner in the form of guidance and counselling; the provision of childcare and transport and appropriate mechanisms of accreditation and assessment".¹

This has particular significance for asylum seekers and refugees. They are a group of learners who regularly attend programmes in a multiplicity of learning sites, most of which are in community-based settings. These initiatives are often crucial to ensure participation from individuals who may not be able to attend mainstream institutions e.g. cultural constraints and lack of childcare facilities can be determining factors for participation. Co-ordination and support required for community based learning from the VECs can be considerable. The White Paper further recognises the necessity of tackling educational disadvantage in a systematic way and proposes that lifelong learning encompasses the individual's education from "the cradle to the grave".

2.1.2 Equality

A number of tentative steps have been taken by the Irish Government to accommodate an intercultural and diverse Ireland. The ratification of EU Treaties and Directives, the Good Friday Agreement and the Partnership Agreement 2000 set the context for new initiatives in all sectors including education. Recent legislation, such as the Employment Equality Act, 1998, prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and traveller community. The Equal Status Act, 2000, further prohibits discrimination (with certain exceptions) regarding access to education on these nine grounds. The White Paper marks the first time the DES has made a pledge to promote equality in all sectors of education. For example, there has been an allocation of IRE19.6m (€24.9m) for several equality initiatives.

¹ Department of Education and Science White Paper on Adult Education Learning for Life, 2000: 32

2. LIFELONG LEARNING

The White Paper defines equality in terms of:

*Equality of access, participation and outcome for participants in adult education, with pro-active strategies to counteract barriers arising from differences of socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity and disability. A key priority in promoting an inclusive society is to target investment towards those most at risk.*²

2.1.3 Interculturalism

Learning for Life recognises the new environment of an intercultural and diverse Ireland and defines interculturalism as:

"... the need to frame educational policy and practice in the context of serving a diverse population as opposed to a uniform one, and the development of curricula, materials, training and in-service, modes of assessment and delivery methods which accept such diversity as the norm. This refers not only to combating racism and encouraging participation of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in education, but also to a recognition that many minority groups such as travellers, people with disabilities, older adults, participants in disadvantaged areas may have distinct needs and cultural patterns which must be respected and reflected in an educational context. It also envisages a more active role by adult educators in the promotion of Irish language and culture".³

The White Paper singles out refugees and asylum seekers as a single category requiring special provision. It mentions the government is **interested in exploring the scope for providing a national programme through the VECs** and other further education providers. Highlighting the need for research in this, it also proposed discussions should be held with relevant stakeholders to assess the recommendations from the study in relation to funding, co-ordination of staff and the implementation of arrangements.

The White Paper recognises the learning rights of asylum seekers. For asylum seekers with the right to work it states:

- Free access to active labour market programmes such as VTOS or PLC if over 21 and six months registered as being unemployed, on the same basis as other participants.
- Access to free ESOL tuition through the Back to Education Initiative.⁴

For all asylum seekers:

- Free access to adult literacy, English language and mother culture supports.⁵

The letter of sanction issued to VECs in relation to the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) defines literacy and language supports as follows:

"Literacy embraces 'the integration of reading and writing, listening, speaking, and mathematics or numeracy for everyday life. Personal development, improving self-esteem and confidence are an integral part of the process, as well as the use of basic ICT skills. The key objective is empowerment to facilitate the target group to actively participate in social, civic and economic life, to communicate effectively, and to develop the skills of learning to learn'".

²Ibid: 13. ³Ibid. ⁴Ibid: 173. ⁵Ibid.

2. LIFELONG LEARNING

2.2 DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE WHITE PAPER

Since the publication of the White Paper, major progress in adult education has been made. The DES have issued letters clarifying the legal situation of minority linguistic groups in regard to access to Post Leaving Certificate, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) and Youthreach programmes. In January 2001, the Government announced that it would establish a National Adult Learning Council (NALC) as an executive agency of the Department of Education and Science. The Council will advise on policy, promote co-ordination and liaison, engage in research, staff development, support international co-operation and essentially implement the recommendations from the White Paper. There may be a possibility that designated staff with responsibility for asylum seekers, refugees and other minority linguistic groups may be appointed.

The Minister also announced the approval of 35 Community Education Facilitators. Directed by existing ad hoc adult education boards (before the introduction of Local Adult Learning Boards), the Facilitators will be expected to support and develop new community-based learning groups and centres. Assistance with accessing funding, sharing good practice, networking, forming partnerships and monitoring quality will also be part of their role. The Facilitators will work with a number of designated disadvantaged groups for example, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and other groups who have difficulties accessing education.

Other measures from the Department of Education and Science include:

- An increase in the adult literacy budget by 21.5%.
- Back to Education Initiative providing 6,000 part-time places for Post Leaving Certificate (PLC), Youthreach, Traveller, and VTOS programmes.
- Extension of the Adult Education Guidance Service.
- Appointment of two Co-ordinators of Further Education Development.
- A computerised Further Education Management Information System.
- National Materials Development Project for teaching English to Asylum seekers, Refugees and other Non-nationals.⁶

Nonetheless, a policy vacuum exists with regard to educational provision for asylum seekers, refugees and other minority linguistic groups. In an effort to tackle this issue in a systematic way, the IVEA Working Group has formulated a suggested best practice model to:

- Be implemented on a pilot basis by VECs over a specified timeframe (one year) with a view to recommending a finalised framework upon consideration of VECs reports
- Provide an outline for the Department of Education and Science of the needs and responsibilities of the vocational sector in regard to educational provision for the target group

⁶ Adapted from forthcoming report from City of Dublin VEC and County Dublin VEC by Ward 2002 entitled "Asylum Seekers in Adult Education: A Study of Language and Literacy Needs".

3. NATIONAL STRUCTURES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

There is a wide range of agencies, statutory and voluntary, involved in the provision of services to refugees, asylum seekers and minority linguistic groups. Because the situation in this area developed so rapidly and to such an extent over the last number of years, it appears that services were introduced on an ad hoc basis in order to deal with the issue.

In order to bring greater efficiency to existing services IVEA recommends that a national co-ordinating body be established comprising all agencies, both statutory and voluntary, with a brief to ensure that services are delivered in the most efficient way possible and to eliminate overlapping of services.

The IVEA recommends that the co-ordinating body be operated on three levels: **national, local and community.**

ANNEX I contains details of the IVEA policy on a co-ordinating structure.

IN PURSUIT OF THIS POLICY IVEA HAS INVOLVED ITSELF IN THE FOLLOWING INITIATIVES:

3.2 EDUCATION CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE: IVEA/DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

The IVEA and the Department of Education and Science (DES) have agreed to establish an Education Co-ordinating Committee. This Committee will meet several times a year to facilitate liaison between the Department of Education and Science (Further Education Section, Second Level Section and the Social Inclusion Unit as necessary) and the IVEA, and provide a single contact point for VECs.

The existing IVEA Working Group will continue its work and feed into the Education Co-ordinating Committee in terms of policy, management and delivery issues. This group will be expanded to include representation from the refugee/asylum community.

3.3 INTEGRATE IRELAND LANGUAGE AND TRAINING PROJECT (IILT) (formerly the RLSU)

The DES under the aegis of Trinity College Dublin established the Refugee Language Support Unit (RLSU) in 1999. The unit was responsible for co-ordinating language support for refugees and others with legal residency. In the White Paper, the Government noted its intention to expand the role of the RSLU to include asylum seekers. The DES provided a grant to develop language-teaching materials for work with adult asylum seekers, together with other non-nationals and for training on materials use. A Steering Committee was set up by the DES to oversee the development of these materials and includes representatives from NALA, the IVEA and the City of Dublin VEC. The RLSU has since changed its name to Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT) and is a campus company of Trinity College Dublin.

3. NATIONAL STRUCTURES

The IVEA is represented on the Steering Committee of the IILT Materials Development Project by Mr. Luke Murtagh CEO, Ms. Tanya Ward, a member of the IVEA working group, represents City of Dublin VEC on the Steering Committee. IVEA will endeavour to have its materials development recommendations taken on board by the IILT through this representation.

3.4 RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE VEC SECTOR

Following a recommendation for further research in the White Paper on Adult Education (2000), the City of Dublin VEC in association with Co. Dublin VEC initiated a project on the language and literacy needs of asylum seekers entitled *Asylum Seekers in Adult Education: A Study of Language and Literacy Needs*. The study was commissioned to compile (i) a profile of the asylum seeking population in Dublin, (ii) assess language and literacy needs with a view to formulating an integrated community-based approach, (iii) evaluate current language/literacy provision for asylum seekers and other minority linguistic groups, paying particular attention to: co-ordination and referral between agencies; networking and information exchange; learning sites; childcare; teaching programmes and materials; targeted interventions; outreach centres; accreditation and the role of European initiatives.

This study is presently being undertaken by Ms. Tanya Ward, Research and Development Officer, City of Dublin VEC and will be published in Autumn 2002. Previously, Tanya has worked for the Irish Centre for Migration Studies, the Irish Refugee Council and the Irish Council for Civil Liberties and is a member of the IVEA working group.

3.5 CO-ORDINATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL: IVEA, OTHER AGENCIES AND PROVIDERS

3.5.1 Introduction

The IVEA Working Group has established contact and bilateral co-ordination with other agencies and providers at national level with a view to discussing policy positions and sharing information, including the Irish Refugee Council (IRC) and the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI). The IVEA is co-ordinating with other managerial authorities through Learning for Young interNationals (LYNS); Ms. Moya Corry acts as IVEA representative on two LYNS sub-committees. The Working Group will continue to broaden the scope of its national co-ordinating procedures in the future.

3.5.2 Education Working Group on Awareness Programme in Anti-racism and Interculturalism

The working group is comprised as follows:

- Chairperson: Ms. Breda Naughton, Reception and Integration Agency
- Representative of the Equality Authority
- Representative of the Irish Traveller Movement and Citizen Traveller Campaign.
- Representative of the National Consultative Council on Racism and Interculturalism
- Two representatives of the NCCA

3. NATIONAL STRUCTURES

- Two representatives of the CDU
- Representative of the FE Section of the DES
- One-two representative(s) of the DES Inspectorate
- One representative of IVEA (Mr. Luke Murtagh CEO)

The role of the working group is to promote and stimulate enhanced awareness of education providers at every level of the system of equality, anti-racism and interculturalism issues and to make recommendations on awareness initiatives in the education field.

3.5.3 National Council for Curriculum & Assessment (NCCA) - Interculturalism and the Curriculum Steering Committee

The aims of the Steering Committee are:

- Research how the essential primary and post-primary curriculum can be mediated to reflect an intercultural society
- Develop guidance for schools in curriculum and assessment issues
- Support integration of students from diverse cultural backgrounds into the Irish education system
- Enhance the intercultural educational experience of Irish students
- Make recommendations to the ongoing review of the primary and post-primary curriculum.

Mr. Luke Murtagh CEO represents the IVEA on this Steering Committee.

4. STRUCTURES AT LOCAL LEVEL

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As outlined in Annex 1, IVEA recommends the co-ordination of services at community, local and national level. After undertaking a research study of this area, IVEA concluded that County/City Development Boards provide the most appropriate structures to facilitate local, community and national co-ordination. The CEO of each VEC is a member of the respective CDB and should therefore be in a position to encourage the co-ordination of delivery of services. VECs are the main providers of educational services to adult asylum seekers, refugees and other minority linguistic groups. While refugees are entitled to adult education services on the same basis as nationals, asylum seekers only have the right to language and literacy provision and mother-culture supports. In addition, in some VECs asylum seekers are provided with access to counselling and psychological services. Funding for such programmes is through the Adult Literacy & Community Education (ALCES) and Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) budgets. Each VEC is responsible for the allocation of ALCES funds.

Initially the services provided by VECs concentrated on the provision of literacy services, but it quickly became evident that:

- a) the majority of clients do not require literacy services per se
- b) a much wider range of educational services was required, including language, information, cultural awareness, assessment, counselling and psychological services and recreational programmes.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Each VEC should make provision for adult refugees, asylum seekers and minority linguistic groups through its Lifelong Learning service. IVEA recommends that provision is located within the Community Education programme and that the day-to-day management of the service be the responsibility of the Community Education Facilitators, when appointed.

The Community Education Facilitators will report to the appropriate manager as determined by each individual VEC. This recommendation will ensure that the target group has access to the full range of VEC lifelong learning services and provision is not confined to literacy. These services include both delivery services and support services.

4. STRUCTURES AT LOCAL LEVEL

4.2 DELIVERY OF SERVICES BY VECs

4.2.1 Introduction

The following recommendations have been compiled based on the research and expertise of working group members and are informed by the experience of practitioners who have joined the working group.

In January 2002 the working group decided to expand its membership to include experienced ESOL practitioners. New members were sought from ESOL programmes in urban and rural areas. Two ESOL tutors with extensive experience in the delivery of services to the target group, Ms. Rachel Hegarty from City of Dublin VEC and Mr. Karl Quinn from Co. Clare VEC became members of the working group.

4.2.2 Funding

RECOMMENDATION 2

While the Department of Education and Science increased ALCES budget funding in 2001 to provide for special needs groups, including refugees and asylum seekers, IVEA recommend that the Department either:

- ring-fence this money within the ALCES budget line
- or
- make a specific allocation to VECs for special needs groups.

The IVEA intends to meet with the Department of Education and Science to seek agreement on additional resourcing (including staff) to enable VECs to deliver the proposed service.

4. STRUCTURES AT LOCAL LEVEL

4.3.2 Training

Facilitating educational provision for refugees and asylum seekers demands a two-tiered approach, targeting both language tutors and all other staff members (including management, teaching and non-academic staff).

RECOMMENDATION 3: ALL STAFF...

IVEA recommend the following initiatives be undertaken for staff:

- Anti-racist and cultural awareness training programmes be developed and delivered to all staff (managers, tutors, support staff, frontline staff) in consultation with organisations already active and expert in this area of work, and involving target groups in the design and delivery of programmes.
- Specific training programmes for specialist areas be developed i.e. women, survivors of torture, unaccompanied minors.
- Information sessions be provided for staff on asylum policy and process, working with groups with special needs etc.
- Accredited training programmes be developed for staff which could be undertaken on a modular basis.

RECOMMENDATION 4: LANGUAGE TUTORS...

Staff development and training for education staff working with the target groups should take the following form:

- Specialised training to allow educationalists to develop new areas of expertise (English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Literacy for ESOL etc.).
- Information sessions on new areas of knowledge e.g. legislation, equality, refugee women, torture survivors and separated children.

All training should be accredited.

4. STRUCTURES AT LOCAL LEVEL

ANNEX II contains recommendations for subject areas for future tutor training.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Second language teacher education...

Tutors need to acquire a broad range of skills to enable them to tutor asylum seekers and refugees. Existing tutors with only a TEFL background need to be trained in adult education theory, literacy, didactic skills and interculturalism. Tutors with only a literacy background also require similar training with the addition of linguistics. Situated within an adult learning framework, Annex II outlines specialised subject areas for future training to enable tutors to work with minority linguistic groups.

4.3 LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL AWARENESS PROGRAMME

4.3.1 Introduction

Given the transient nature of the target group, IVEA recommends that courses be short in duration (6 weeks). Three months frequently proves too long as anecdotal evidence shows that up to 45% of students leave before completing a three-month course. Practitioners recommend that a minimum of two hours per day on three days per week is necessary for the target group to maximise the benefit of the courses. As mother-culture/intercultural supports are a vital part of the education process for the target groups, IVEA recommends that a module be incorporated into all courses. To make a real impact one-third of course time should be dedicated to mother-culture/intercultural supports.

4. STRUCTURES AT LOCAL LEVEL

4.3.2 Key Recommendation

RECOMMENDATION 6:

IVEA recommend that:

- two (2) hours per day, on three (3) days per week, over a period of six (6) weeks would be the most appropriate format for courses.
- VECs provide an allocation of twelve (12) hours per group per six-week course (12 hours out of 36 to be dedicated to mother-culture/intercultural supports).
- in terms of the size of each class, IVEA recommend a maximum number of fifteen (15) and a minimum number of four (4) students. In rural areas where the number of students requiring access to courses is lower, a degree of flexibility is acceptable.

Courses should be cyclical in nature beginning with one induction day and then running for six weeks followed by a break of one week then the cycle should resume again. It is essential to have cohesive guidelines for all VECs to allow for the possibility of students moving from the catchment area of one VEC to another without missing out on course work. Research shows that target group students are moved/move frequently thus missing out on educational provision. A coherent and uniform course structure in all VECs will allow students to maximise the learning experience being offered to them by the vocational sector.

4.4 ASSESSMENT AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

4.4.1 Introduction

Planning programmes to meet the needs of learners involves a number of steps which relate to initial enrolment and record keeping; carrying out a needs analysis in conjunction with new adult learners and an initial assessment of skills. Initial enrolment and record keeping are important aspects of organising and co-ordinating education programmes. Detailed attendance records are required for future analysis and to track the progress of learners.

4. STRUCTURES AT LOCAL LEVEL

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Planning programmes and analysing needs involves four steps:

- Finding out about a student
- Analysing goals
- Diagnostic assessment of a student's current language skills
- Negotiating a programme of work.

Following an initial interview, assessment should take place in a non-threatening environment. Information required includes: aspirations/aims, analysis of aims, prior learning, perceived needs and assessment of needs. Working in co-operation with the learner and analysing goals, courses should be broken down into short manageable targets. Diagnostic assessment of new learners enables teachers and second language learners to establish what skills they have at a fixed point in time. As yet there is no standardised ESOL assessment framework in Ireland which can evaluate a learner's literacy and language skills.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Operating in collaboration, practitioners from a broad range of fields need to come together to devise tools for initial and ongoing assessment of ESOL learners. A similar approach was adopted in the UK. A model assessment instrument needs to be flexible given the diversity of learning experiences and linguistic abilities of asylum seekers and other minority linguistic groups and practical use for each service provider.

In addition, the IVEA recommends an assessment framework be devised for placement in Adult and Further Education (Adult Literacy, ESOL, VTOS and PLC). The IVEA, in consultation with relevant bodies, will develop such a framework.

5. SYLLABUS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Incorporating the language experience approach, the working group will develop syllabi for each level in 2002/3. Syllabi will be mainly communicative, action based and will reflect the refugee/migration experience.

RECOMMENDATION 9: ESOL LEVELS...

The working group recommends the following categorisation of levels. The levels detailed below (and in Annex III) are approximate TEFL levels adapted for ESOL provision:

0. 'False' Beginners
1. Elementary
2. Pre-Intermediate
3. Intermediate
4. Upper-Intermediate
5. Advanced

It is envisaged that this categorisation will be replaced once a new national ESOL assessment framework is devised.

Practitioners have found that ESOL categorisation is essential to meet the language needs of the target group. Working group practitioners have devised two model syllabi for:

- False Beginners/Level 0, and
- Intermediate.

ANNEX III contains these model syllabi.

6. MATERIALS

6.1 Introduction

Materials provision in Ireland is very poor for ESOL. To remedy this situation, the DES has provided grant aid to Integrate Ireland to develop materials. City of Dublin VEC in association with Co. Dublin VEC have also initiated a materials development project.

RECOMMENDATION 10: PRINCIPLES FOR MATERIALS' DESIGN...

- Materials need to be targeted towards beginners and onwards
- The approach must be needs based
- Materials should be action based and mainly communicative (listening and speaking skills)
- Subject areas must reflect thematic situations that are relevant to newly arrived asylum and minority linguistic groups: self-identification, looking for accommodation, children and schooling, parental care, hospitals etc.
- The materials need to incorporate the 'teachability hypothesis' with clear progression for students
- Worksheets must be photocopiable and tutor guidelines should be included.

These models are expected to come into circulation in the period Winter 2002/Spring 2003.

7. MOTHER-CULTURE/INTERCULTURAL SUPPORTS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the underlying principles of equality and respect, refugees, asylum seekers and minority linguistic groups should feel valued, visible and socially included in adult learning sites. To this end, the provision of mother-culture supports is an integral part of language and learning.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

IVEA recommend an integrated approach to teaching combining language, literacy and mother-culture-intercultural supports as provided for in the White Paper.

IVEA expert practitioners recommend that one-third of course time be given to mother-culture/intercultural supports as such supports constitute a vital component of the education programme.

7. MOTHER-CULTURE/INTERCULTURAL SUPPORTS

7.2 CULTURAL AWARENESS AND SOCIAL INTERACTION PROGRAMMES FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES AND OTHER MINORITY LINGUISTIC GROUPS: SUGGESTIONS FOR PROVISION BY VECS

RECOMMENDATION 12:

IVEA recommend the following initiatives be put in place to underpin the educational initiatives. Expert practitioners view the following support programmes as vital:

Information Needs

- Information sessions on rights and entitlements of different groups
- Information sessions on services available (statutory and non-statutory) and on how systems work - health services, education services, social welfare services, legal services etc.
- Information services on local facilities.

These sessions may be organised and delivered in conjunction with local agencies and organisations

Basic IT Skills

- The Cultural Awareness and Social Inclusion Programme should be used to enhance language skills and personal effectiveness. IVEA recommends that, in as far as possible, state accreditation should be available for all courses.

Cultural Orientation Programme

- Orientation training and information on Irish culture - history, social customs, music, sport etc. FETAC modules may be offered through the BTEI initiative and non-accredited programmes through the VEC Community Education programme
- Development of links with Local Sports Partnerships, Women's groups and other organisations in order to facilitate membership of the target groups. Community Education Facilitator could act as liaison person.

7. MOTHER-CULTURE/INTERCULTURAL SUPPORTS

7.3 HOST COMMUNITIES

7.3.1 Introduction

IVEA recommends that local support groups be established at community level.

ANNEX I contains details of this policy.

Host communities have a vital role to play in the integration process. The interaction of host communities and target groups is an enriching and important process for both groups. One successful mode of interaction among host communities and the target group is through recreational programmes which prove enjoyable, beneficial and educational for all those involved.

RECOMMENDATION 13: RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMES...

- A variety of programmes may be offered through the Community Education programme, in the form of a series of classes, taster workshops etc. Local community education groups and support groups should be encouraged and facilitated to promote contact of the target groups with Irish people through provision of funding and other support to organise classes and workshops e.g. arts and crafts, music, yoga, dance. Programmes may also be organised which cater for target groups only, by themselves or by support groups.
- Community-based intercultural awareness initiatives can be supported through the Community Education programme e.g. series of seminars on world religions, workshops on interculturalism. Such initiatives can be organised directly by VECs or through appropriate locally-based organisations (and funded by VECs).
- Anti-racism programmes and initiatives may be developed through links with groups which are already active in challenging racism and prejudice e.g. Traveller, disability and development education groups. Many of these groups have already developed appropriate training programmes which can be adapted as necessary; this may be done by involving current target groups in design of specific modules and in delivery of the programmes. VECs should facilitate and support the development and delivery of new programmes aimed at increasing understanding and acceptance of asylum seekers, refugees and all minority ethnic groups in local communities.

8. GENERAL SUPPORT SERVICES

In addition to mother-culture support services, the delivery of a successful education programme at all levels requires the provision of the following additional supports:

- Translation services
- Childcare
- Psychological services/counselling (personal effectiveness/coping skills)
- Information services
- Learning resources
- Educational/Career guidance

The IVEA, through the Education Co-ordinating Committee, involving the Department of Education and Science, intends to seek the resources necessary to put these support services in place.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 SUMMARY

- The increase in the number of linguistic minorities in the State poses a number of challenges to the Irish education system.
- The vocational sector must embark upon a systematic programme of educational provision for minority linguistic groups now to prevent future difficulties.
- To this end IVEA established a specialist working group following a resolution of Congress 2000 to examine this area.
- The working group is composed of educationalists and practitioners from across the vocational sector and from a wide geographical catchment area.
- The initial research of this working group was published in 2001 and presented to IVEA Congress 2001 where the Report was unanimously adopted.
- The policy indicates the broad parameters within which an educational service should be provided by VECs to the target group.
- During 2001/2002 the working group researched and devised a pilot framework of educational provision for refugees, asylum seekers and minority linguistic groups in the Lifelong Learning sector for all VECs.
- The working group feels that because educational provision for refugees is a new service, it is important to support VECs by making recommendations on the service delivery. If the IVEA does not do this, eventually other agencies will take on/be given the task by the Department of Education and Science.
- The working group invites all VECs to implement these recommendations on a pilot basis during 2002/2003 and to provide feedback so that we can prepare a more rounded set of recommendations to be implemented in 2003/2004.
- **The following key concepts are important for service delivery in each of the three areas:**
 - Preparing the school/lifelong learning community for dealing with the target group.
 - Integrating the group into the school/lifelong learning programme.
 - Providing language and cultural supports to enable participation.
 - Following the mainstream curriculum in the school/lifelong learning programme if appropriate.
 - Providing support services.

The IVEA intends to meet with the Department of Education and Science to seek agreement on additional resourcing (including staff) to enable VECs to deliver the proposed service.

- The IVEA Working Group will gather feedback from all VECs during the implementation of the pilot scheme and necessary adjustments will be made to suit emerging conditions.

ANNEX I

NATIONAL STRUCTURES

There are many agencies working in the area of service provision for asylum seekers, refugees and minority linguistic groups including Local Authorities, Regional Authorities, Health Boards, various Government Departments, FÁS, VECs, primary and secondary schools etc., as well as a large number of voluntary bodies, drawn from all sections of society. An enhanced and efficient service demands an over-arching co-ordinating structure. Such a structure is both necessary and desirable.

Over-arching Co-ordinating Structure

- There is a wide range of agencies, both statutory and voluntary, involved in the provision of services to asylum seekers and refugees. Because the situation in this area developed so rapidly and to such an extent over the last number of years, it appears that services were introduced on an ad hoc basis in order to deal with the issue.
- In order to bring greater efficiency to existing services it is vital that a national co-ordinating body be established comprising all agencies, both statutory and voluntary, with a brief to ensure that services are delivered in the most efficient way possible and to eliminate overlapping of services.
- There are many agencies working in this area including Local Authorities, Regional Authorities, Health Boards, various Government Departments, FÁS, VECs, primary and secondary schools etc., as well as a large number of voluntary bodies, drawn from all sections of society. Much of their work is done quietly and efficiently. To all of them the introduction of a co-ordination service would be of tremendous help in delivering a more efficient and improved service.
- **The IVEA recommend that the co-ordinating body be operated on three levels: national, local and community:**
 - A National Co-ordinating Committee should be established with the purpose of linking all relevant national agencies in both the co-ordination of services and the formulation of policy. The IVEA therefore calls on the Government to set up a National Co-ordinating Committee which would incorporate all the relevant Government departments and state agencies.
 - At local (regional or county) level, Local Co-ordinating Committees which include representatives from a wide range of relevant and interested statutory, voluntary and community organisations should be established to co-ordinate formulation of policy and delivery of services at local level and to feed into the National Co-ordinating Committee.
 - Community Support Groups aimed at co-ordinating services at community level and providing practical support and information to individuals would be of benefit to the asylum seeker/refugee communities and also to host communities. These support groups could link back to the Local Co-ordinating Committees.

ANNEX II

SUBJECT AREAS FOR TUTOR TRAINING

- Adult education perspectives and theory
- Minorities in adult education
- Assessment of second language learners
- Didactic skills (how to teach skills): learning styles, classroom management, peer teaching, syllabus and curriculum design
- Linguistics: Second/new language acquisition, language pedagogy, pronunciation and intonation, English grammar, bilingualism, learner autonomy
- Theory and practice of teaching literacy
- Cultural awareness, mediation skills for working in an intercultural environment

Adapted from Ward, T. (2002) Report for the City of Dublin VEC and County Dublin VEC.

ANNEX III

TWO MODEL SYLLABI FOR MODULAR SIX WEEK PROGRAMME

Two members of the IVEA specialist working group, Ms. Rachel Hegarty and Mr. Karl Quinn have extensive experience of working with the target groups. Together they have devised the following model syllabi for the recommended six-week programme:

MODULE ONE FOR FALSE BEGINNERS

Pre-class: needs assessment and placement test

Timetable: three two-hour sessions per week

Week One

School orientation, learning contract and class guidelines

Vocabulary: self-introduction, greetings and school English

Reading: forms

Writing: filling in forms

Grammar: to be

Intercultural: the globe game

Week Two

Vocabulary: seasons, weather, days of the week and time

Conversation: the weekday game

Reading: seasons in Ireland

Writing: describing seasons in the mother culture

Grammar: to have

Intercultural: seasons and weather in the mother culture

Week Three

Vocabulary: health and body English

Conversation; doctor dialogues

Reading: medicine bottles

Writing: filling in medical forms

Grammar: simple present positive

Intercultural: telling folk tales

Week Four

Vocabulary: house English

Conversation: on the telephone to the landlord

Reading: my dream house

Writing: my dream house

Grammar: present simple negative and question

Intercultural: houses in the mother culture

Week Five

Vocabulary: food English

Conversations: restaurant and supermarkets skits

Reading: menus

Writing: shopping lists

Grammar: present simple cont. positive

Intercultural: international recipe game

Week Six

Vocabulary: family

Conversation: questions about the teacher's family

Reading: my family

Writing: my family

Grammar: present simple cont. negative and question

Intercultural: changing definitions of families

ANNEX III

MODULE ONE FOR INTERMEDIATE

Pre-class: needs assessment and placement test

Timetable: three two-hour sessions per week

Week One

School orientation, learning contract and class guidelines

Vocabulary: self-introduction and school English

Reading: the Irish school system

Writing: sick note for kids, PTA concerns

Grammar: auxiliary verb

Intercultural: classroom norms in mother culture

Week Two

Vocabulary: internationalisation

Conversations: the geography of globalisation

Reading: an introduction to Ireland

Writing: an introduction to home countries

Grammar: present simple vs. present continuous

Intercultural: the globe game

Week Three

Vocabulary: health and body English

Conversation: having a baby in Ireland

Reading: living a stress-free life

Writing: a healthy lifestyle

Grammar: past simple vs. past continuous

Intercultural: folk cures

Week Four

Vocabulary: housing

Conversation: ringing up landlords

Reading: Evening Herald and other property pages

Writing: filling in a Shared Ownership application

Grammar: modals of obligation and permission

Intercultural: homelessness in Ireland and mother cultures

Week Five

Vocabulary: Directions

Conversation: directions game; say, record and play back

Reading: Lonely Planet directions plus punctuation

Writing: home directions and punctuation self-correction

Grammar: modals of ability, probability and advice

Intercultural: directions by pubs

Week Six

Vocabulary: family

Conversation: single parent family debate

Reading: Gingerbread pack

Writing: definitions of family

Grammar: future forms

Intercultural: traditional family units

notes

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