Initial Education for Teachers and Trainers Working in Adult Education and Training

There are no specific qualifications required for Adult Education tutors in Ireland. In the case of Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses provided by Further Education colleges, there is now a requirement that teachers on these programmes must be registered with the Teaching Council and all new registrants from 1 April 2013 must have a suitable degree and teaching qualification. However, in general, the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme and Senior Traveller Training programmes are provided by qualified post-primary teachers, the majority of whom hold full-time positions. A post-primary teacher in Ireland must hold a suitable degree and a suitable teacher-training qualification. A suitable degree is a degree or equivalent award from a State recognised university or similar third level college which is adequate to enable the holder to teach to the highest level (in the case of the majority of subjects, this is Leaving Certificate, higher level) at least one subject from the post-primary schools curriculum. The duration of such a degree programme must be at least three years of full time study or equivalent. A suitable teaching qualification is a teacher-training qualification directed towards the 12-18 age range from a State recognised university or similar third level college. The duration of such a programme must be at least one year of full-time study or equivalent. The most common teaching qualification is the Higher Diploma in Education which is awarded on successful completion of a one–year full-time course. Ten new teacher education programmes specifically designed for the Further Education sector have been accredited by the Teaching Council in 2013.

There were over 3,300 volunteers providing adult literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages tuition in 2010, almost 70% of all tutors operating in the adult literacy programme. Paid tutors are likely to hold a higher education qualification, including a specific adult literacy qualification. Community education tutors may or may not hold a higher education qualification – much will depend on the subject area. Part-time self-financing evening classes are delivered by a range of staff including qualified post-primary teachers doing extra work, professionals who hold down day jobs in their professional area and a range of people with particular skills and experience in the subject area they are teaching such as crafts, personal development and hobby/leisure activities.

In general, the lack of a distinct ALE career structure with specific qualification requirements and the limited number of full-time positions is reflected in the status of ALE tutors/teachers throughout the country. The majority of entrant tutors/teachers are older than entrants to teaching in other sections of education and training and many find themselves teaching adults through chance rather than through any clear-cut decision to pursue a career as an adult educator.

As outlined above a number of third level institutions provide qualifications for adult literacy organisers and adult literacy tutors. The Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) provides courses as part of the adult literacy accreditation project which has been in existence since 1996. The following
programmes are currently delivered: Higher Certificate in Arts in Adult Education (NFQ Level 6), Bachelor of Arts (Ordinary) in Adult education (NFQ Level 7) and Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Adult Education (NFQ Level 8). A number of Higher Diploma and Postgraduate Diploma/Masters in Teaching & Learning in subjects such as Adult and Continuing Education and Further & Higher Education are also available.