

Scriven, Mary, 2010, *An Investigation into the Experiences of Adults who return to education and an exploration of the Profile of these Adults to see if it has changed over the last forty years.*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Overview: This *ex post facto* research project set out to explore some of the experiences of adults who 'return to learning having concluded initial education or training' (Department of Education and Science 2000, P.27).

Study Population: The adult students targeted in this project are studying in two Colleges of Further Education and one Institute of Technology. For the purposes of this project the participants surveyed were all over twenty-three years (Central Applications Office 2008, p.4), as this is the age, in Ireland, when students are recognised as 'mature adults' by the Department of Education and Science and are eligible to gain entry to college either by the traditional academic path or through the mature adult route.

Research Questions: This piece of research investigated the following five issues, viz.

1. initial educational standard of the adult who is returning to education
2. the social background of the adult students
3. the factors , both internal and external which encourage the student to return to education
4. the financial circumstances of the adult who returns to education
5. the change, if any, in the profile of the adult student cohort over the last three decades.

Literature Review: The selection of relevant literature reviewed acknowledges the importance of lifelong learning in today's society and the consequences for those that could be described as the 'knowledge poor' (Field 2008)

Research Instruments: In addition to the questionnaires, three informal interviews with members of staff of each participating college were employed in the collection of data.

Conclusions: Overall, the experiences of the respondents in all three colleges were similar, with marginal differences appearing between males and females.