

Soilse Drug Rehabilitation Programme

# **The role of education in developing recovery capital in recovery from substance addiction**

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## **1. Introduction and policy context**

This report is derived from an analysis of data from 20 in-depth interviews with individuals in recovery from substance addiction; the data was collected as part of a wider study that explored how people recover from drug addiction and how they manage the process of social reintegration. This report focuses on the role of adult education in the process of addiction recovery; specifically looking at academic education rather than vocational education.

Recent policy developments at national level have focused on promoting the use of education in addiction recovery and this report represents a first-step investigation into the role of education in addiction recovery as no other study can be located that has explored this topic. The Working Group on Drugs Rehabilitation (2007) recognises that accessing education is an essential step in the continuum of care for recovering drug users. In line with the recommendations outlined in the report of the Working Group, a National Drugs Rehabilitation Framework has been published by Doyle and Ivanovic (2010). This Framework has been constructed to enhance the provision of rehabilitation services to current and former drug users and includes a role for those responsible in meeting the education needs of participants. According to the authors of the Framework, 'The provision of rehabilitation pathways is a shared responsibility of the education, training and employment sectors alongside the health, welfare and housing sector, non-governmental organizations, communities, families and the individual themselves'. The EU Drugs Strategy 2005-2012 and the EU Drugs Action Plan 2009-2012 encourages member states to support recovering drug users to access education so as to improve their chances of achieving social reintegration. According to the Alcohol and Drug Research Unit of the Health Research Board (2009) at least a fifth of all cases reporting for treatment for problematic substance misuse in 2008 were early school-leavers. Haase and Pratschke (2010) reported that substance use is more common (with the exception of alcohol) among early school leavers than among school attendees.

## **2. Methods used to undertake the study**

This report is based on data that was collected as part of a wider study that explored how people recover from substance addiction and how they manage the process of social reintegration. Social reintegration has been defined by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) as the provision of and access to housing, training, employment and education (Verster and Solberg; 2003).

Data was collected using in-depth interviews with 20 individuals who reported to be in recovery from drug addiction. The interviews lasted between 90 and 120 minutes and each was audio-recorded. Individuals were accessed through the Soilse drug rehabilitation programme. Interviewees were asked to talk about their early school experience, the family home, their community, their substance use and their addiction, their engagement with treatment and recovery and their experience with education, employment and sustaining accommodation during their recovery.

The overall study was undertaken using the principles and methods of Grounded Theory. During the initial coding of the data, it became apparent that education was emerging as a valuable experience among interviewees while in recovery. To explore this experience in-depth and establish the meaning and value attached to education by interviews, it was decided to analyse the data related to their education experience using the framework of recovery capital as developed by Granfield and Cloud (1999).

### **2.1 Ethical approval**

Ethical approval for the overall study was granted by the Ethics Committee in the Drug Treatment Centre Board

### **3. Profile of people interviewed for this study**

All of the 20 people interviewed self-reported to be in recovery for substance dependence and all claimed to be abstinent and not using any mind-altering substances. For most interviewees in this study, their family upbringing and early school experience was set within a social context of poverty and disadvantage; most were early school-leavers and some had poor literacy and numeracy skills and modest formal educational achievements. Nearly all the people interviewed had experienced repeated episodes of family conflict in the home, often against a background of alcohol abuse among their parents. Their narratives suggest that they drifted into addiction from various experimental episodes with drugs. Official treatment programmes such as methadone, detoxification and residential rehabilitation played a modest part in their recovery. They were caught in the dilemma of 'multiple recoveries'; they were not just recovering from addiction but also from a lifetime of exclusion, emotional turmoil and a 'fractured identity'. All of the people interviewed had progressed through the Soilse rehabilitation programme.

#### **4. Achievements of Soilse as a model of best practice in drug rehabilitation**

Soilse was piloted in 1992 and following evaluation was mainstreamed in 1994. The overarching vision of Soilse is;

*To break the spiral of addiction, dependency and social isolation and motivate recovering drug users to realise their potential*

Since its inception Soilse has established itself as a model of best practice and was recognised as such in the 1996 First Report of the Ministerial Task Force to Reduce Demand for Drugs. In 1994, Soilse represented Ireland as a Model of Excellence in the European Social Fund (ESF) Horizon conference in Barcelona. In 1999, the HYPER magazine which was pioneered and published by participants won an international award for innovation and design (1999).

Soilse has always been dedicated to working with participants to improve their educational capital and assist them to enjoy the benefits of a full education. As part of this work, Soilse joined forces with the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee (CDVEC) in 2001 to establish a dedicated career guidance service. In recognition of their efforts to improve the educational opportunities for participants, in 2008 Soilse received the Dublin and region STAR award from Aontas, the Irish National Adult Learning Organisation, for both innovation in practice and teamwork in adult education. (2008). Further recognition was bestowed on Soilse in 2009 when the Soilse's Return to Learning project was selected as a finalist in the EBS/NALA Adult Continuing Education (ACE) Awards. The project supports recovering drug users in their progression to further education and many of the 20 people interviewed in the study covered in this report benefitted from attending the RTL programme in Soilse. In 2010, Soilse's Career Guidance Service won the Dublin Regional STAR Award from Aontas and in 2011; Aontas again awarded Soilse the Dublin Regional STAR award for its Service User Involvement initiative.

## 5. The literature context

### 5.1 Searching for relevant studies

Seven databases; CINAHL , Psychology and Behavioural Sciences collection, SocIndex, PsychINFO, EMBASE and PubMed were searched using search terms including recovery capital, social capital, addiction and education. Only eleven studies were identified as being potentially relevant and these were downloaded and screened and are included in the review of the literature below. No studies exploring the role of education in addiction recovery or in the development of recovery capital were located.

### 5.2 Reviewing the literature

The purpose of this review is threefold; (i) to describe the concept of 'recovery capital' and trace its emergence in the substance addiction recovery field, (ii) identify the empirical evidence base underpinning the application of 'recovery capital to the study of addiction recovery and (iii) explore the literature on 'recovery capital' to see how education has figured as a component part.

According to Cloud and Granfield (2008) recovery capital is the sum of resources necessary to initiate and sustain recovery from substance misuse. There are four dimensions to recovery capital;

1 **Social capital** = the sum of resources that each person has as a result of their relationships, support from and obligations to groups to which they belong

2 **Physical capital** = tangible assets such as property and money that may increase recovery options

3 **Human capital** = personal skills and education, positive health, aspirations and hopes; key aspects of human capital, and will help with some of the problem solving that is required on a recovery journey.

4 **Cultural capital** = values, beliefs and attitudes that link the individual to social attachment and the ability to fit into dominant social behaviour

Granfield and Cloud (1999) introduced the construct of 'recovery capital' in their study of 46 individuals that overcome substance dependence without the aid of formal treatment or recourse to self-help groups. According to Granfield and Cloud these people experienced 'natural recovery'. The analysis of Granfield and Cloud in this study is based on the work of Pierre Bourdieu who developed the construct of social capital. According to Bourdieu (1986:51) 'social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, or in other words, to membership in a group...'

The attributes of the 46 people that Granfield and Cloud recruited through chain referral and newspaper advertisements included 28 males and 18 females; 25 reported having experienced addiction to alcohol and 21 experienced addiction to cocaine powder, crack cocaine, methamphetamines or heroin. A minority experienced problems with a combination of substances. The mean number of years addicted was 10.9 and the mean length of time from cessation of addiction to interview was 6.5 years.

The people interviewed for the study were well educated; with most having attended college and several had obtained degrees. Most were employed, before, during and after their addiction experiences, some in professional occupations and others self-employed business people. None of the sample displayed major mental health problems and according to the authors, none were embedded in the 'street' subculture that surrounds substance use. In addition, many feared their substance use would be revealed to their work colleagues, thus jeopardising their job, career and the status and respect bestowed by colleagues. They also reported membership of professional societies. According to Granfield and Cloud, these personal and social assets enabled these people to initiate and sustain their attempts to



overcome substance dependence without recourse to formal treatment or mutual-aid support; in effect these assets represented a form of recovery capital.

### **5.3 Reappraising the relationship with alcohol and drugs**

In a subsequent paper, again using data from interviews with the 46 individuals who overcame substance dependence without formal treatment or self-help groups, Cloud and Granfield (2004) examined the personal and social strain that interviewees talked about and which in most cases precipitated reflection on their relationship with alcohol and drugs. According to the authors, interviewees spoke about being confronted by friends about their substance-using behaviours, about being arrested, experiencing financial difficulties, difficulty locating and holding jobs, concerns with their health and impaired personal functioning. Collectively, the emergence and persistence of such problems contributed to what Cloud and Granfield call 'a general existential angst' which in most cases led to a reappraisal of the interviewees' relationship with alcohol and drugs.

According to the authors, most of the interviewees also experienced turning-points in their lives which intensified the strain they were experiencing with using alcohol and drugs, and, which contributed to them feeling that their current lifestyle was unsustainable. Such turning-points included the death of a family member from substance related conditions, the birth of a child and the realisation that their nurturing ability around their children was impaired; the latter was particularly acute among the women interviewed. The personal and social strain experienced by the people interviewed and often intensified by turning-points in their life, appeared to signal an unsustainable lifestyle and engendered sufficient motivation to cease their use of substances.

In a subsequent paper which presented an analysis of the data derived the in-depth interviews with the same 46 people, Granfield and Cloud (2001; b) outline the conditions that facilitated what they termed 'natural recovery' and which represent the components of recovery capital which these people brought with them into their recovery. They point to the degree of stability that interviewees brought with them into substance use and how the maintenance of this

stability enabled them to escape the worst excesses of their addiction and reduce their personal and social deterioration. Relative stability was maintained by maintaining regular and stable work lives and avoiding lengthy involvement with the criminal justice system. None displayed major mental health problems and none were embedded in the 'street' subculture that surrounds substance use.

Granfield and Cloud (2001; b) point to the presence of 'ideologies', among the 46 people as constituting a form of social capital. For example, many talked of the obligations they felt to others such as family, friends and work colleagues and how these perceived obligations acted as an incentive to cease and sustain their substance use. According to Granfield and Cloud (2001; b; 1557) '...individuals with obligations to others possess increased motivation to act in particular ways. Those who do not possess or fail to recognise their obligations to others are free to violate personal trust...' In effect, the desire not to disappoint significant others, can act as a key driver towards behavioural change.

Interviewees managed to maintain relationships, at least in some form, with non substance-using family and friends, and according to Granfield and Cloud, this type of social capital facilitated their exit from substance dependence. Interviewees claimed that without the help and emotional support of family and friends, they may well have remained dependent on substance use. Granfield and Cloud point out that although the capacity of these relations may have been strained during the years of active addiction, importantly, they were not breached. Consequently, the interviewees were able to draw on this social capital as a key resource in their efforts to initiate and sustain their cessation of substance use. According to Cloud Granfield and Cloud (2001:1560) '...these intimates frequently provided something much more important than a sympathetic ear and good advice. They offered individuals a sense of belonging...'

Interviewees were also assisted to locate and sustain meaningful employment through their relations with friends who provided a network of contacts and opportunities that opened occupational doors and facilitated the pursuit of career aspirations. According to Granfield and

Cloud (2001: 1561) 'being embedded with a structure of social relationships that were capable of providing resources such as access to meaningful employment was critical to respondents' eventual recoveries...[and]...facilitated their re-commitment to the conventional world of work...'

#### **5.4 Overcoming substance dependence and maintaining recovery**

Cloud and Granfield (2004) reveals a number of strategies that these 46 people used to cease their use of substances and sustain their cessation of substance use; namely, the use of alternative activities, their reliance on existing non-drug using friends and family members, developing new networks of non-drug using friends and avoiding drugs, users of drugs and associated social cues around substance use.

Alternative activities included (re) developing a spiritual element in their lives by engaging with religion, returning to education, immersing themselves in their work and career, volunteering and taking an active part in their community. These activities were the basis on which interviewees constructed new meaning in their lives and were instrumental in sustaining their cessation of substance use. According to Cloud and Granfield (2004:191) '...these pursuits act not merely as substitutes or replacements for addiction, but rather, represent avenues to new meaning and epistemologies through which an individual can compose a self that is incomparable with excessive alcohol and drug use'.

Equally important in their attempts to sustain their cessation of substance use were the building of new relationships and the support from existing one. In some respects, their engagements with alternative activities were closely linked with their capacity to build new relationships with non-drug using individuals. According to Cloud and Granfield (2004: 191) 'active involvement in these alternative pursuits allowed some respondents to enact significant relationships with non-drug users and avoid others who were connected to the drug scene, thereby making their conversion to a conventional life easier'. Support from existing non-drug using friends and encouragement from partners and their children were also cited as important forces in enabling interviewees to sustain their cessation of substance use. Interviewees also

severed connections with they knew to be excessive users of substances; women in particular cited this decision as important as in some cases they were introduced to substance use by male partners and their relationships were often based around activities associated with excessive substance use.

According to Cloud and Granfield (2004) interviewees talked about the rewards they experienced when they ceased to use substances, these included improved relationships with spouses, children, parents and siblings, improvements in their levels of attachment to and involvement in their community and the wider society, increased self-esteem, improved financial status and becoming more honest and trustworthy. According to Cloud and Granfield (2004: 194) ‘...all [interviewees] found their personal transformations affirming and deeply rewarding’.

According to Cloud and Granfield (2004: 194) ‘...the process of self-resolution, as illustrated by our respondents, rarely occurs in isolation. Instead, personal transformation is a social product that is greatly influenced by the situational social context in which an individual is located...their motivations, cessation strategies, opportunities to change, and their ultimate success at recovery were largely a product of their social interactions with others and the related social capital derived from these relationships...’

According to the authors, these personal attributes i.e. good education, sustained employment, and membership of a professional society along with the environmental and contextual conditions i.e. fear of disclosure and the capacity to build renewed structure in their lives, draw on non-using supportive networks and draw space between themselves and the ‘drug world’ constituted a set of formidable resources. According to Cloud and Granfield (2001:97) ‘such attributes and conditions can be seen as resources, or forms of capital, that increase an individual’s capacity to recover. We refer to the aggregate of such capital as ‘recovery capital’.

## **5.5 Implications for formal treatment arising from the study of people who experience natural recovery**

Cloud and Granfield (2001) suggest that formal treatment services could benefit from having some awareness of the degree of recovery capital available to people with addictions. They suggest that people with little recovery capital availing of out-patient treatment services may benefit from a combined approach of case management and cognitive behavioural therapies or counselling and people with smaller amounts of recovery capital and availing of in-patient treatment could benefit from protracted aftercare. Clients with large amounts of recovery capital may be suitable candidates for less-intrusive interventions such as brief interventions.

White and Cloud (2008) reiterate the points raised by Cloud and Granfield and urge policy makers and practitioners working in the field of addiction recovery to consider a shift in emphasis from pathology to a renewed focus on resilience and recovery. White and Cloud argue that addiction treatment programmes can benefit from increasing their involvement with the families and communities that recovering individuals are embedded within; a recognition of the assets that can facilitate recovery from addiction.

Lyons and Lurigio (2010) suggest that substance abuse treatment programmes in the criminal justice system should recognise the important relationship between abstinence and recovery capital. The paper discusses the concept of recovery capital and the dimension of social capital and suggest that ex-prisoners appear to benefit from initiatives in the criminal justice system that promote the development of recovery capital by linking them with mentors and supports to ease the transition to reintegration. Lyons and Lurigio see recovery capital as both an incentive for recovery and a means of sustaining addiction recovery. They argue that 'recovery capital is both a cause and a consequence of abstinence from alcohol and substance use: recovery capital fosters sobriety and, and sobriety generates more recovery capital...' Lyons and Lurigio (2010:446)

Lyons and Lurigio (2010:448) distinguish between bridging social capital among dissimilar people and bonding social capital among similar people in the context of drug treatment, this

is a useful distinction and draws attention to the supportive role that can be played by people more advanced in their recovery journey and which can assist the newcomer.

'a relationship between an individual new to sobriety and one in long-term sobriety is bridging; the latter person has experiences, resources and personal connections that the former does not. Indeed, people in long-term sobriety typically combine bridging and bonding social capital. They empathize with newly recovering individuals but are further along in their own recovery process. Therefore, they have substantial bridging social capital to extend to fledglings in the recovery process...'

For some practical pointers on how services and communities could contribute to recovery-orientated objectives, Davidson et.al. (2010) discuss the role of recovery support services in helping individuals and communities to build recovery capital and Campbell et.al. (2011) highlight the benefits of promoting the use of Serenity Cafes as locations for recovery orientated groups.

## **5.6 Recent empirical studies examining the role of recovery capital in addiction recovery**

Laudet and White (2008) recruited 312 individuals through local newspaper advertisements and posters placed in community facilities in New York. The sample was mostly inner-city ethnic minority members whose primary substance use was crack or heroin. The sample was interviewed at baseline and one year later. The sample was divided at baseline into under 6-months in recovery (28%), 6-18 months in recovery (26%), 18-36 months in recovery (20%) and over 3 years in recovery (26%). In recovery was defined as length of time from the last time that any illicit drug was used. The study tested the hypothesis; does higher levels of recovery capital prospectively predict sustained recovery, higher quality of life and lower stress one year later. The domains under study, the components of recovery capital hypothesised as predicting subsequent outcomes were social supports, spirituality, meaning of life and religiousness and 12-step affiliation. Laudet and White (2008: 40) concluded that;

'the main hypothesis that greater levels of baseline recovery capital prospectively predict better outcomes was generally supported: for the full sample, recovery capital added a significant percentage of explained variance in all three outcome domains after controlling for baseline level of the domains under study, and the full model reached statistical significance for each of the outcomes'

Best et al. (2011) assessed recovery and quality of life outcomes among 107 individuals recovering from alcohol addiction and 98 from heroin addiction. All participants had not used their primary substance in the preceding 12 months of the research. Participants were recruited through recovery groups and advertisements in the local press and the sample was built up using snowballing techniques. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. Longer time since last use of main substance was associated with significantly better quality of life at time of interview. On-going engagement with meaningful activities was associated with better day-to-day functioning and was the single most powerful predictor of overall quality of life. Those engaged in employment, training, volunteering and household duties were happier and functioning better than those not engaged in these activities. The second most powerful predictor of quality of life was being involved in supportive recovery networks embedded in local communities which included 12-step groups. Laudet et.al. (2006) also reported that social supports, spirituality/religiousness, life meaning and 12-step affiliation enhanced quality of life among 353 individuals in recovery who were recruited in New York whose primary substance of use was crack cocaine and heroin.

## 6. Study findings

### 6.1 Social Capital

According to Cloud and Granfield (2008: 1973) 'social capital can be seen as the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance recognition'

Engaging with adult education can improve social capital by opening up opportunities to develop new networks of friends that are outside the confines of the addiction recovery network.

One of the greatest challenges facing people in recovery from substance addiction is making and sustaining new friendships that are outside of the supportive recovery networks. Engaging with adult education can create opportunities to meet new people and establish new friendships. This interviewee describes the important role that education played in helping to make new friends and how this experience became central to their recovery.

*... [education] introduced me to people that I would never have met before, it gave me a whole new circle of friends, am, yeah, a whole new lifestyle, most of me life revolved around education and if I wasn't in lectures, I was outside talking about lectures and I was y'know, in studying, talking to people in me class and socialising with them. Y'know, reading different books and looking at different movies y'know, me whole life kinda revolved around education. I see it as, imperative to my recovery, y'know; it is a huge part of my recovery...*

Networks of friends are sustained by reciprocal acts of kindness and sharing things in common. This interviewee described how being part of this new network of friends enabled him to volunteer assistance to his friends; an act of kindness described by him as mentoring. He also highlights the importance of witnessing shared experiences with friends that are outside the recovery networks and how this helped him to fit in with a new circle of friends.



*...Then I went to the psychology course and I was there with a bunch of kids who had just left school at 17 and 18, am I kind of found that a bit difficult as well but because I had spent a year in college, I kind of, y'know, not, I didn't stick to meself.. but I found the people really nice y'know, completely different to my expectations y'know. Am, and I suppose a lot of them would have come to me for advice about different things, y'know, living in Dublin, y'know stuff like that, how to get around the college, I found I was, y'know, I was a little bit of a mentor to some, a friend to some and it was a great experience, y'know, I'm friends with them now, y'know, we talk all the time and they're, y'know, I am looking for work at the moment so we have a lot of things in common y'know, it's a world away from recovery and stuff y'know, it kinda, it's just life, y'know and I find that I have that in common with them and maybe it has taken this long to just, y'know so many things in common with just regular people y'know. Yeah, I have no problem fitting in with people anymore like which is great. (Int 6)*

In addition, the following extract demonstrates how it is important for people in addiction recovery to receive support from friends in college that can legitimise their learning potential and reduce their doubts that their performance may be below what is required. These reciprocal relations that develop on the college campus are invaluable tools in sustaining new and emerging networks of friends.

*I had tutors as well and I use them, outside support as well, I have friends in college that are tutors as well in Trinity College and they helped as well. I used all the sorts of supports I could, am, then me experience with it is that sometimes I get confused and sometimes, I get y'know, especially when I am putting essays together and things, I get confused like putting it all down, am I doing the right thing, is this the right way y'know, will it pass and things and then you go and show someone and they say "that's great", do y'know that sort of way. It's something to do within myself?*

When individuals are engaged in active addiction, they inhabit a sub-culture of other addicted people and when they engage in treatment and rehabilitation services, they remain in close

proximity to people with addictions. These experiences can often contribute to a perception among people in recovery that addicts, both active and recovering, are somehow different. Such perceptions are often reinforced by vitriolic media coverage that portrays addicts as unsavoury characters; negative reinforcement can also arise from their lives of inadequate socialization and intensely stigmatizing experiences due to their addiction. Taken together, such experiences and perceptions can create a sense among people in addiction that they are indeed different from non-addicted people. Exposure to new networks of friends outside of the recovery networks is useful in breaking down these perceptions of difference as explained by this interviewee.

*...My fear [in college] would have been around people that aren't addicts, because I have been cocooned in a society of all addict people and then I am going to college, I found it difficult for maybe two weeks and some people are exactly just like us even though they are not addicts, like y'know, you realise that it's not just addicts and normal people, we are all just the same*

Recovery from substance addiction can sometimes be constrained by fear and anxiety and encountering similar experiences among their college peers who were not in recovery had a transformative effect on a number of interviewees. In effect, realizing that their peers in college experienced similar fears and anxiety, not only contributed to the development of new friendships but also helped to normalize these feelings among people in recovery. This normalization of uncomfortable emotions can serve as a vital component in recovery by changing perceptions among people that their experiences and feelings continue to render them as different from so-called normal people. This girl went onto explain how her close friendship with one of her college peers revealed to her that fear and anxiety can touch anyone, regardless of whether they experienced addiction.

*...Being in college, just being in college, like one of me best friends is actually a non addict, like in college, we spent the whole year together and we're still great friends now...me and this girl would have great chats, and I'd be saying "you're like an addict but you are not, like y'know, cos she'd be in the depths about everything about fear and anxiety and all love and*

*stuff like that. I didn't think, because where I grew up, we didn't talk about feelings or anything, so for me like, she is a bit younger than me as well and that, y'know people have the same fears and the same y'know. You don't really have any [feelings] when you are on the drugs or drink.*

The following account further illustrates how important it is for people in recovery to meet with people outside recovery networks; the college environment is an ideal site for such encounters as the stress of education seems to release similar emotional distress in their college peers that people experience in addiction recovery.

*... going into a college where y'know, it's just normal people whatever, y'know, em, like it's a big experience, and just to kinda see that y'know, as crazy as people in addiction are, as crazy as their heads can get sometimes, y'know, people outside really aren't any different, y'know that way. Em, which was good to see, everyone kinda has their faults and stuff like that and nobody is perfect. I think, I don't know, you kinda start to accept yourself a little more, y'know that way, just kinda dealing with, just normal people whatever like.*

We can see from the previous accounts that individuals in recovery can perceive themselves to be emotionally inferior to their college peers, however, this perception can change when they interact with their peers and realise that there is little difference in the emotional experiences of all people. In addition, some people in recovery can enter college with a perception that they are inferior learners, and, this can mean they seek to hide their perceived learning deficits. However, as this account demonstrates, this perception can also be more imagined than real and the value of the college campus is that it provides space for this perception to be laid bare, challenged and ultimately changed through real life experience.

*Frightening, loads of fear, I thought everyone else in the class was better than me. I actually remember trying to take notes and hiding them...hiding in case people saw my writing and that is just lack of confidence – but then I started to realise like – now hang on I am good enough to be here – when I started answering things and the tutor was talking and no one*

*else was answering do you know what I mean and I would ask questions and in the break you know someone that I had on a pedestal would say that thank God you asked because I wasn't never going to ask and I hadn't a clue what he meant. And then I was going – yeah I am not completely different from these people and then getting my first results in my first assignment – 85% it was like ah here and no one else got near it in the class...*

Some people in recovery for substance addiction and who come from disadvantaged backgrounds may not think they are capable of going to university. They may, at some level, perceive too much social space between their world and the world of third-level education. Such a view may be held on legitimate grounds and in the case of most of the people interviewed for this study, these grounds included having had a negative experience with their early schooling and being brought up in households and communities that put minimal value on education.

When individuals in recovery continue to hold these views, they are prevented from accessing and gaining social capital. Exposure to the college environment and to other students can go a long way to changing perceptions and reducing the real and/or imagined social space. The following extract demonstrates how exposure to students with similar background characteristics can change these perceptions and inspire someone in addiction recovery to return to education.

*... I went to an open day in trinity for the Access programme, and just listening to people who were doing, who had done the course, they sounded the same as me, maybe not coming from an addiction background but coming from a similar background to me and had done the course and were now in university and I went and applied for it y'know and I was taken on. Am, yeah and then, I did that year, em, and then applied for psychology in Trinity and was accepted onto that course as well so, so that's where I went.*

Being part of college life provides an opportunity for people in addiction recovery to compare and contrast not just their academic ability as measured by grade results, but also their

motivation to learn and their interest in the subject. This opportunity can provide a much needed boost to people who may be struggling to 'fit in' with their new experience, if they realise that they appear to be more engaged with their subject in contrast to their student peers. The following extract illustrates how this student was able to make such comparisons and how their observations confirmed to them that they were engaged in meaningful activity.

*Brilliant, I was doing a diploma in Counselling Intervention Skills and eh, brilliant, before that I done a certificate in Maynooth. It was great, I had a great time but i was interested, there was a lot of people, actually there was a lot of people my age but eh, certainly for me, they were trying to get out of the class where as I wanted to be staying in, I'd be glad to stay for the next two hours like. I wanted to learn, I was hungry for it, more it went on, it was coming very clear to me, like in that sense, I don't know what it was, was it life experience, but eh it was just the whole lot, very interesting. I just really tried.*

## 6.2 Physical Capital

According to Cloud and Granfield (2008:1973) 'physical capital, typically referred to as economic or financial capital, includes income, savings, property, investments and other tangible financial assets that can be converted to money'. In effect, Cloud and Granfield are speaking to capital that bestows financial stability and can be converted to a comfortable lifestyle.

None of the people interviewed in this study claimed to be holders of financial capital assets like those named above, indeed, most would have grown up in socially and economically disadvantaged homes and communities where the accumulation of financial capital was not evident. However, by returning to adult education, many did possess or were on the way to acquiring a much sought after asset that could assist them to acquire financial assets; a recognised formal educational qualification which some had acquired during their recovery from addiction and others were pursuing having enrolled in adult education. The link between acquiring a college degree and securing employment is recognised by this female interviewee.

*... a degree out of trinity is recognised anywhere, y'know that yourself, yeah, cos like, we were told, I know like, I'll get a job quicker out of trinity, it's something on my CV, Trinity College ... yeah, why not reach for the stars?*

Educational qualifications in the form of a diploma and/or a degree represent a type of physical capital; they are tangible assets and provide the recipient with a means of exchange for improving employment opportunities which in turn can lead to improvements in income and living standards. Some of the people interviewed had returned to education while in recovery from addiction and had acquired a degree and/or a diploma, while others had just begun their pursuit of education with the firm aspiration that they wanted to acquire educational qualifications to improve their life chances.

Most of the people that were interviewed for this study had left school without acquiring any formal educational qualifications, and in some cases, they left school with underdeveloped numeracy and literacy skills. However, some had acquired at least a junior certificate from their early school experience and a small number had managed to acquire their leaving certificate before leaving formal education. One interviewee did manage to acquire the leaving certificate but did not immediately progress to college education; he managed to return to adult education while in recovery from addiction and acquired a degree in history and politics. In the following extract, he recalls his time as a mature student.

*...I went to college for a year and did an access course in UCD which was pretty good. Em and then I got, em, permitted to enter a three year degree which I entered in, that would have been 2002 and I graduated in 2005...Em, I lived on cornflakes two or three days a week but I got part time work where I could, I went to college, did the college work, I was still really struggling with, em, trying to find a purpose in life and a sense of self and a sense of belonging in this fucking world...I really struggled with it and I really struggled with the college work...but it got progressively better, the mistakes became fewer...*

The above extract illustrates a number of factors that are important in understanding the role of education in addiction recovery. This man's experience as a mature student of living on cornflakes and juggling part-time work with full-time college study is similar to the experience of most under-graduate students. Such activities are undertaken by students as part of a trade-off; short-term sacrifices for long-term gains. It is important that people in addiction recovery have such experiences as the underline the message that physical capital, in the form of educational qualifications can rarely be legitimately achieved without hard work and some element of personal sacrifice.

Another factor that needs to be highlighted here is the degree of overlap that can exist between the different dimensions of capital that one can acquire through education. As this man points out his pursuit of education was also entangled up in his search for meaning in life

and for a sense of his 'self'; these elements are closer to what we term 'human capital', a resource that will be explored in more detail later on.

In the following extract this man continues to talk about his education and what it means to him; he also demonstrates how he intends to use his primary degree to undertake post-graduate study; thereby converting the physical capital gained through his primary degree to a higher form of capital.

*'Education for me is vital. I really struggled with getting the essays in, I normally do them the night before, I find it very hard to study for exams, somehow I always manage to get a 2.1...I never fail any exams or essays and it does take a massive determination there in me and there's hope to do a PhD over the next few years...'*

This man was aged 37 when interviewed and had left school when aged 17; he had acquired his junior certificate but left without completing his leaving certificate. He recalled a difficult experience in school;

*...i didn't feel comfortable in school, I was always in sort of the lower classes, eh, always outside the door, always getting into trouble, basically I wasn't happy with me and who I was and that's how I acted out,*

He recalled how he used drugs over the course of 16 years during which he developed his addiction to heroin; he recalled how his addiction impacted on his life and how he finally stopped using the drug;

*...it [the addiction] destroyed me. I was in prison; I was in all the places that I had been and then it came to an end where I couldn't get anything anymore out of drugs, they stopped working on me...*



He finally managed to get his addiction under control; albeit after a number of unsuccessful attempts and when interviewed he claimed he was no longer using any narcotic substance. He returned to adult education during his recovery and had acquired an academic qualification; he also found employment and was considering his career options which would further improve his human capital.

*I went working with the community on Sheriff Street and em, worked with kids there, I was working there for a while, and I found out that working with kids just wasn't for me...I started working in a place out in Ballyfermot called the Ballyfermot Star and I went and worked there as a support worker, like a key worker, helping with the lads and doing all the paper work and this year, I went to Trinity College and I just recently got my diploma in addiction studies in Trinity college so yeah.*

Despite having overcome some major obstacles to bring his addiction under control which in itself was an achievement, he talked about his return to education as occupying a higher status and how he had plans to continue his education and increase his opportunities to pursue further academic qualifications.

*My biggest achievement? Going to trinity College, going on to get a degree and eh, I have it in me heart that some day that I am going to go on and get a Masters, now, even though I hate studying, I hate the studying and the writing and all that but I going to someday go for it, y'know that sort of way...This year, I'm going to, September, I am going to Ballyfermot [to study social care] and then I am going to Trinity next year hopefully to get the degree in Social Work... why not reach for the stars?*

Another interviewee who was aged 29 when interviewed and had left school at 16 without completing his leaving certificate. Like most of the people interviewed in this study, he used many different drugs throughout his life including heroin which he started using when aged 16 and continued for ten years. He had recently acquired a qualification in holistic therapies and when he talked about this experience, he contrasted it with his earlier experience in school;

*...I done em a two year course in holistic therapies, yeah like a massage therapist, acupressure, em sports massage, aromatherapy, hot stone, Indian head massage... it was a really good experience yeah, em, just kinda doing something that you have a bit of an interest in, just kinda shows you. It's like "yeah Jesus, I can learn like, I can take stuff in" y'know what I mean. It was just like as I said when I was in school, none of this stuff actually stimulated me like cos I had no interest in geography, no interest in history, religion, any of that stuff, y'know what I mean. Em but I had an interest in this, kinda proved myself wrong.*

This man illustrates the degree of physical capital that himself and his peers in this study were acquiring, not only was he gaining valuable work experience, but he was also actively planning his career and talked about returning to college to pursue further academic qualifications.

*... I'm actually working at the moment...in a gym up beside me so it will probably be only for the next month or two y'know, then I am probably going to go on and do more college... em, physiology and health science... I was just looking for other courses to do, I just kinda wanted to get into the, em, more sports side of things, not as in teaching it but just kinda treating people with sport injuries and that y'know so*

Another man who was interviewed was different from most of the other people interviewees. He acquired his leaving certificate and recalled having had a positive experience in school. However, he drifted into using drugs in his teenage years and quickly developed an addiction to heroin. During the interview, he explained how he seen education as his gateway to acquiring meaningful employment and recalled how he put a lot of planning into this career choice.

*...I remember coming into recovery thinking y'know, I am 30 now and what kind of a job can I get... I wanted to educate myself and give meself the best opportunity when I do go into employment, to go in and do something that I enjoy, y'know and I found, y'know that to do that I would have to educate myself and that's why I am doing what I am doing today... ...I*

*did the tap programme, you picked four subjects out of eight and I did law and politics and sociology and psychology. Em, I did a couple of other, a career guidance course and even politics... I picked psychology because it suited me best y'know...there is a lot of it that I really enjoy, more for the best part I enjoy it and I've done quite well so far so... the assignments I found very difficult, I still do, I still haven't found like, my style y'know, y'know I am working on it...*

Another man was aged 39 when interviewed and had left school at age 15 without any formal qualifications and with underdeveloped literacy and numeracy skills. He recalled his time in school as unsettling, with frequent episodes of being stigmatized due to his learning difficulties, he also described levels of dysfunction in this family. When asked what his ambition was when he left school, he recalled that;

*...I looked forward to going on the dole [unemployment benefit] at 18, that was my highlight, y'know...*

When he left school he became enmeshed in the local alcohol culture and would consume large amounts of alcohol on a nightly basis. In his mid-20s he began to use a number of different drugs and his addiction quickly escalated, time spent in prison, in psychiatric hospitals and being homeless occupied most of his life from then. Following many failed attempts to detox from substance addiction, with the assistance of Soilse he finally managed to bring his addiction under control and claimed to be drug-free when interviewed. Despite his earlier experience with school his lack of ambition while growing up, he acknowledged that education would improve his chances of finding meaningful employment and he now was beginning to set his ambitions high with aims to achieve academic qualifications at the highest level.

*I just knew myself that I wanted to get educated... That said I still can struggle with it but to have a job, further my career or my life you need to have an education, you need to know basic stuff, spelling, I can read anything, it's just spelling that gets me, education is very important to live a contained and fulfilled life... I went on to UCD to do Drugs Counselling*

*Intervention Skills; I got a certificate in that. I got accepted into a diploma last year, I couldn't get the funding to do it, so that was a bit of a setback but I can do it this year and get the funding to do it. I know I am capable of doing things, today...I'd love to go on and do the diploma, you know, degree, PhD (laughs hard)...*

This woman left school at age 14 without acquiring any qualifications. In recalling her early school experience, she recalled aspects of her family life which she felt adversely impacted on her young life.

*...em I always felt very different in school and out of place because of where I came from and me Da drank a lot so we never had any money...*

She began to consume alcohol and use cannabis and ecstasy at a very young age and progressed to heroin in her early teens.

... When I was 15 I met a fella and he was on heroin and that's when I started taking that...

Following after many attempts to address her addiction, she finally achieved abstinence from all mind-altering substances and claimed that, for her, total abstinence was the only solution to sustain her recovery. This woman was a single parent and providing for the future of her child was a major motivation to return to adult education.

*... I wanted to actually move on and make some sort of a life for me son so I decided to come here [to Soilse] and do education...i would like to work with children, eh, that's why I did youth and community but the more I am getting into it, I'd like to work in the community...I would like to go on and come more into the community like social work or something, you can go on to Maynooth if you get such a mark, then in another couple of years, you could work in the community then.*

For many of the people interviewed in this study who had returned to education, Soilse was the gateway to opening up this opportunity. This woman recalled that when she engaged with Soilse to pursue her education, she also was lucky enough to meet with someone who helped her to overcome her lack of self belief.

*I came to Soilse to get to college. There was a really nice woman here [in soilse]...she helped me – she gave me confidence...it was like I didn't know myself. I didn't know who I was. I didn't know I was a nice person do you know what I mean...I think I just needed to be told...*

This encounter was vital to her recovery and in particular to her pursuit of education. When interviewed, she was studying for her degree and was adamant about the role that education was playing in her recovery and would continue to play for the foreseeable future.

*When I finished here I went to Inchicore and I did a year in Social Studies and I finished that and I just finished a year of Anthropology, Sociology and History so I done what I what I wanted to do you know... im now doing a degree in anthropology...education is the number one. That comes before anything including my family. I have to because like at the end of the day I have to come first. I know it is a horrible thing to say but my education it will come first before any you know but now it is going to come first.*

This man was aged 42 when interviewed and had left school at age 14 without any formal qualifications. His experience in school was one of fragmented learning and he, like many others in the study had been placed in what was called a remedial class for children with learning difficulties. When interviewed, he appeared enthusiastic about his return to adult education while in recovery and recalled his achievements as a mature student and how he had started from quite a low skills base.

*I done the return to learning here [in Soilse] last summer yeah before I started college in September...I have just finished my first year in counselling theory and intervention. Yeah, I have just finished with first class honours. I am doing that with Merchant's Quay and UCD. I*

*have just finished that first year and I am doing the diploma now this year. I have been accepted and am starting on September... Yeah and when I came to Soilse I could barely turn on a computer*

This woman was the youngest of six children and grew up in a dysfunctional family unit in an economically disadvantaged community. Education was not seen as a value among her family and despite being considered a bright girl by some teachers; she was not encouraged to learn by most of her teachers. She was seen as someone that preferred to 'act up' in class and cause disturbance and consequently spent most of her time consigned to the rear of the classroom out of sight of her fellow students. She recalled how she perceived her life chances when she left school;

*I had no aspiration to go anywhere career wise anything like I was never going onto to college or ... things like that you see weren't able to talk about at home it was the case of the sooner you can start work you go out and work and try and bring a few quid into the house. So I was never motivated to go and get a career. I was never told education is the way out; education is what you need to do. It is only sort of now I realise that.*

This woman like most of her peers in this study had undergone a dramatic shift in lifestyle during their recovery from addiction. She had moved from the young girl with little or no career ambitions to the adult with firm and resolute determination to return to education and to use this experience to critically engage with learning and achieve at the highest level. By her own account she was well on the road to realising these ideals and her efforts were not going unnoticed by the college authorities.

*Today is good, today is – I have gone back to college, gone back to learn again and this time I am actually am learning. I go in and sit at the top of the class and I want to learn and I want to actually achieve something from it. I got Student of the Year last year in my first year and I am awaiting my results tomorrow and then hopefully next year I will be going into third year, well I will be going to third year.*

### 6.3 Human Capital

According to Cloud and Granfield (2008:1974) 'human capital embodies a wide range of individual human attributes that provide one with the means to function effectively in contemporary society, to maximise individual benefits associated with membership in that society, and to attain personal goals. Examples of human capital include knowledge, skills, educational credentials, health, mental health, and other acquired or inherited traits essential for optimum negotiation of daily life'.

Education can play a key role in increasing the stock of human capital through empowering individuals in addiction recovery to function effectively in society. For example, one female interviewee talked about how she engaged with soilse to improve her education opportunities so that she would be in a stronger position to materially provide for her son, thus helping her to function effectively as a parent.

*... I wanted to actually move on and make some sort of a life for me son so I decided to come here [to soilse] and do education... he's the thing that keeps me going, to have a life, to have at least one parent there y'know, his grandparents are old as well and that's why I am doing college at the moment, in the future I'll have to be his main support and all like...*

This man recounted how returning to education had enabled him to improve his understanding of how his young daughter engaged with learning and how he was keen to transfer the value of education to her.

*... I work better with someone on a one to one...I can see it with me daughter she is following in my footsteps and her Ma's, she's not that great in school, y'know that sort of way, she is sort of, only recently we are after putting her into a special school this year where she can get more attention and more one to one work... some of the things that you learn in college like the things that keep kids from going on a bad road in life is education and sports. It's sort of;*

*if they can stay at that and do that, they'll do well in life, do y'know that sort of way. For her now to stay in education, y'know things like that?*

The theme of returning to education to enable improved functioning as a partner and a parent was continued by this man, who left school at age 13 with no qualifications. When asked 'what motivated you to return to college'? He replied;

*I suppose my son and my partner. I wanted to you know to be able to provide for them that was one of the key motivations and as well as that to achieve something. Yeah I just finished a degree in engineering, four years*

This girl also talked about learning in the broadest sense of her recovery and used the term to describe a number of changes which had brought further empowerment to her life and her sense of herself as an effective and competent human being. At the time of interview this girl was aged 29; she had left school at age 14 with little prospects of returning to education.

*I've learnt to actually like myself, I wouldn't say love meself but to actually like meself. I've learnt that I am a mother and I can be a good mother. I've learnt that if I put my mind to something I can do it as well...*

At the time of being interviewed, this woman had completed one year in college where she was studying Youth and Community studies. However, her experience with learning and adapting to the discipline of academic study was compromised during that year through underdeveloped education skills and years of drug use which adversely impacted on her ability to concentrate for required periods. In addition, it was not only the uncomfortable experience of what was occurring in the classroom that potentially threatened her experiment with education but also what was happening inside her when outside the college setting; in effect this girl was emerging from what may be called a form of chemical unconsciousness



*'it was actually very difficult because I hadn't been in one [a classroom] for years and like the amount of drugs that I had taken over the years, I didn't have much memory of being in a classroom anyway. And you feel like a new person anyway cos, eh, i found it very difficult to concentrate, em, take stuff in and me writing is still atrocious because it had been years... I'd have rather put an awful lot more into it [my education] but it's very difficult in recovery like, you realise how big the buildings are, actually around you, y'know so it's very difficult, it's like waking up and you're 27 or 29...'*

When her first year in college was completed she returned to Soilse and enrolled with their Return to Learning (RTL) course. The RTL course was designed by Soilse for participants in addiction recovery who are attending external educational institutions. The course simulates the college environment and tutors prepare participants for the demands of academic study. In the following extract, this girl outlines what this support means to her as she prepares for her second year in college.

*'I am just delighted that I'm just doing this back to education thing here because eh, your head is so all over the place and the first time, I didn't have me head all in it so like now that I have done a year in college and I'd a lot of help through college from here [soilse] as well, which was great like, [soilse] help you do assignments and stuff like that. I would have been lost without that and I wouldn't have got through the year... it's a two year course so I have another year...'*

Through her struggles with college life and recovery in general, and, through the intervention by Soilse and the RTL course, this woman acquired a great deal of human capital in the form of enhanced self belief in herself and her mission to improve her life and that of her child. In addition, and equally as important to her achieving her goals was the acquirement and development of a broad range of study skills that were necessary to sustain her second year in college and beyond. In the following extract, she identifies her strengths and weaknesses as a student and in doing so, signals the improvements in her study skills as examples of human capital gained.

*'The next year in college I am dreading it already... the assignments; I can do the studying for exams, I have a way of thinking of how to remember stuff, like I have me own little ways of doing that but assignments, it's just the English of how to word things and y'know all that kind of thing, a million things to do at once and it's hard to put it down, that's my fear...' (Int 4)*

Returning to education to improve career options is an element of developing human capital. This can also contribute to the acquirement of additional resources which are key to giving an individual a stake in society and improving their social functioning. This extract illustrates how this occurred for one interviewee.

*... I came here to Soilse seeking career guidance, went back to college for a year, finished that course, then took a year out, deciding what I was going to do...I've put an awful lot of time and effort into me recovery...I got a job then working with kids in Ballymun in a youth club...I just had me goals in me head, started to study, learnt how to drive, something I always wanted to do. Then I started to push for re-housing, I got me own house in October... I am going back to college in September. I am doing a diploma in Social Care. (Int 10)*

Some interviewees in this study, negative attitudes and beliefs about their ability to learn and achieve in education, had been ingrained in them from an early age by teachers and parents and were reproduced through many negative encounters as they grew up. In essence, they were conditioned to expect failure and often lived out this expectation through the many self-destructive decisions and choices they made throughout their addiction. Returning to education, provided the tools to re-examine these negative and self-defeating ingrained beliefs and replace them with new and emerging ideas that provided new meaning to their lives. The following extract illustrates the way in which education can contribute to individuals acquiring new ideas about themselves which are grounded in the cultural norms and expectations of being a mature student with renewed ambitions.

*...it's [education] a great tool. Am, y'know because I left school really early and when I got clean, it was like "Jesus, what am I going to do?" Am, because I always had this implanted into your head, y'know that you are stupid or am, y'know that you aren't smart enough to do something that you wanted to do or but eh, I think like going to these kind of places just to build you up slowly and am, just kinda introduce you back into y'know, like what they do here [in Soilse] and stuff and just to prepare you to go onto something else y'know like... (Int 9)*

Individuals can often engage in addiction recovery with a low capital base; this may include learning difficulties such as retaining information. Such conditions can make it difficult for them to learn and develop new attitudes and beliefs which are central to acquiring cultural capital. Through education and encouragement by others, individuals can develop resilience and confront these challenges, and in so doing, they may activate latent beliefs that education can serve as a cultural pathway out of poverty and disadvantage. This interviewee demonstrates the importance of receiving support from others.

*When I came here into Soilse, Soilse did an education programme so when I came here, they started asking me to do all this writing and this and that, as I said to you before my mind is never great at retaining information and me mind is never great at putting things together y'know that sort of way, but em, I wasn't great at computers, I wasn't good at anything, I'd no tools for education, I'd no tools for basic living y'know, but the education was am, it was hard getting into and it was hard in here and , eh, but as time went on I got a bit better...and people suggested things, that I read books, y'know and things like that, and I knew sort of, for me that the only way out of the poverty trap where I lived to was to go to education, y'know that sort of way...*

## 6.4 Cultural Capital

According to Cloud and Granfield (2008:1974) 'cultural capital embodies cultural norms and the ability to act in one's interest within those norms to meet basic needs and maximise opportunities. Cultural capital includes values, beliefs, dispositions, perceptions and appreciations that emanate from membership in a particular cultural group...'

When Cloud and Granfield talk about cultural norms they are implicitly referring to mainstream conventional norms that are pro-social and speak to social conformity. They authors recognise that constructing new systems of meaning is difficult for people in addiction recovery as people will often have developed alternative codes of meaning that were closer to their addictive lifestyle. However, it is important that people in recovery are provided with the opportunity to embrace conventional cultural norms so as to maximise their chances of sustaining their recovery.

Education is one way of (re) introducing people in recovery to a new or revised set of norms, that they may use to maximise their opportunities. For many of the interviewees, Soilse provided the conditions for individuals to reflect on their own internal value system, both about themselves and their place in the wider world. Interviewees were encouraged to see education as something that they could aspire to and achieve within, and this was pivotal to challenging existing values as illustrated by the following extracts from two of the interviewees.

*Soilse is so focused on more the education and kind of do you know and I suppose instilling the values – or helping you see again in the sense that the values that you had – like you probably already – always had I should say, you just didn't act...trying to rob somebody for drugs do you know that sort of way...i think. Soilse told me its more ability, self esteem and kind of you know – I think the staff here kind of let you know that you know that you are valuable and that you are worth it do you know what I mean. They don't let you walk on water around the place now and let you disrespect the place and like mollycoddle you neither that is not what I am saying. But they kind of help you see that you can do it and that you*

*have a right to education, that you – like you will do it and even through your struggles and you are well capable of doing it.*

*... so, am, yeah, from Soilse, I suppose I, am, they would have encouraged education and stuff like that, I'd never really looked at it till that stage, I'd always never wanted to go to university at all, y'know but I thought that I would be able for university because I was bright at school...I always enjoyed learning, like I always read during my addiction, read books, I loved reading books and learning stuff. I was interested in current affairs and stuff, I liked to keep me mind active, so I was here I kinda did some, I can't think of the name, social policy, y'know classes like that and I found it really interesting and I wanted to know more about the subject...*

The people interviewed in this study recalled their years of active addiction to illicit drugs and they openly spoke about the length of time and resources that they invested in maintaining their addiction on a daily basis. This activity has often been called 'a career' such is the level of decision-making that confronts an individual on a regular basis. For example, decisions around securing the financial means to buy enough drugs, sourcing the dealer, doing the deal, scoring the drug and planning the next hit. Occasionally or sometimes very often, these encounters are interrupted by unanticipated events such as intense police scrutiny of the local drug market, difficulty in getting finance and perhaps an unexpected shortage of drugs which means developing access to a new market. All this activity means that the individual must remain alert to the contingencies of the addicted life which means they must work very hard to maintain their addiction.

However, when individuals in recovery engage in education, they are confronted with the necessity to develop an alternative work ethic, one which is grounded in the norms and expectations of engagement with education. This work ethic demands that individuals learn new skills and a new discourse, that they develop discipline and perhaps more importantly that they develop a resilience that will sustain them through challenging times. These are all new or underused ideas, beliefs and attitudes that are central to the notion of cultural capital and

through education, individuals in recovery are presented with the opportunity to develop them within the cultural norms and expectations of education. The following extracts taken from two interviewees illustrate the importance of developing this new work ethic in education and how commitment to this ethic sustains the learning process.

*What I will say is that by the time I got to third year which was actually my fourth year because I did the access course, I'd improved a lot, y'know the standards of essays I was preparing were really good, I was doing all the work that was asked of me, I was attending most of the classes, so it was the whole thing was very much a learning experience in terms of the discipline, time keeping, procrastination, trying to come from it, trying to develop a work ethic, all that kind of stuff.*

*I suppose at that time, I, it's like the thing, I wasn't sort of, I wasn't in trinity college when I put in the work in Soilse, I was sort of willing, you know the thing, I was and I wasn't, I'd get bouts of it and then, but in Trinity College, I knew that I have to put in the work if I want to get things done, I want to see results, am, in me early school leaving I wasn't into putting in the work, I wasn't sort of, em, as I said it to you earlier I found it all confusing...*

A number of interviewees recalled the difficulties they experienced when exposed to the academic discourse that is frequently used in the college environment. This exposure to what may be termed another dimension of cultural capital can frighten individuals and if they are not supported to overcome their fears, they may opt out of education. Extracts from two interviewees, illustrates the nature of this challenge and how Soilse were in a position to anticipate this obstacle and help to overcome it.

*I applied to Trinity College...and they're all talking this language of, y'know all these words and all this sort of thing and theory, research and this and that, y'know all this sort of, talking about all these things, concepts and eclectic, y'know all this, y'know...I just found it very baffling but due again to the support I got in this place,[soilse]...there is an education officer that comes and helps you with your essays and helps you with things and from the work that*

*he gave me, I don't think I would have got through college if it wasn't for this place, for the support I got in this place.*

*...I remember we got our first assignment, I think it was on, em, the holistic, the work world of holistic health or something like that and we (laughs), he throws out this thing with like am, what was the, y'know the format that they have for the assignments, your heading and your references and bibliography and all this stuff. I was looking at it and like "what do I do with this, y'know, it was like, I have never done one of these things in my life y'know what I mean and it was scary y'know but em luckily again actually, this place [Soilse], one of the people that works here, Derek, he was good with this stuff and he kinda sat me down and went through it with me. It was grand like, y'know, that fear just kinda left me, it was like "Jesus, thank god I am not me own"...I had someone to help me with that stuff.*

Individuals who grow up in disadvantaged communities and develop addictions often live much stigmatized lives. These experiences often contribute to a sense of being from an inferior social class; one that is not meant to benefit from the experience of education. Such beliefs can be challenging to individuals engaged in addiction recovery and they are often only laid bare and challenged through direct exposure to the college environment. Extracts from two interviewees illustrate how returning to education in recovery can reduce the social space, real or imagined, that these individuals talked about.

*...I found it really hard when I first got to Trinity because am, I knew it was, I suppose y'know, growing up, I didn't see myself going to Trinity, it was always very y'know middles, upper middle class, and I was definitely not upper middle class, I suppose I had me own prejudice about what people were like in Trinity y'know, what people were like going to Trinity and blah blah blah, but when I did the TAP programme y'know, I met people that were very similar to me y'know, they'd come from similar backgrounds and stuff and em, yeah, it was great, TAP was great, we were all mature students so there were a lot of a lot of similarities between us and even people from different backgrounds and stuff, but we mixed altogether and it was nice...*

*... I went to an open day in trinity for the Access programme, and just listening to people who were doing, who had done the course, they sounded the same as me, maybe not coming from addiction background but coming from a similar background to me and had done the course and were now in university and I went and applied for it y'know and I was taken on. Am, yeah and then, I did that year, em, and then applied for psychology in Trinity and was accepted onto that course as well so, so that's where I went.*

It is important to recognise that there is room for overlap between the four dimensions of recovery capital. As Cloud and Granfield (2008: 1975) note 'cultural capital and human capital are uniquely interrelated, in that many of the attributes of human capital can be influenced by an acceptance of the pro-social norms of the dominant culture and support from one's environmental surroundings to acquire those attributes...'

To a similar extent, the findings in this study show that many of the attributes acquired under the dimensions of physical capital are close interrelated with other dimensions. For example, the actual acquirement of educational credentials or the pursuit of educational goals can contribute to the acquirement of human and cultural capital.

Nonetheless, the people that shared their experience of adult education in this study has demonstrated that education is more than a practical or alternative activity to substance use; it is an invaluable tool that enable people in addiction construct a new meaning to their lives and provides them with a sense of achievement and purpose. Such benefits are integral to the construct of recovery capital across all four dimensions.



## 7. Discussion

As far as can be ascertained, this is a first attempt to explore the meaning of adult education among people in recovery from substance addiction. Therefore it is not possible to directly discuss the findings of this study with comparative studies. Nonetheless, there are a number of important issues arising from the findings of this study that merit some discussion in the context of the emergence of recovery capital as a component of addiction recovery.

(Granfield and Cloud; 1999, 2001; Cloud and Granfield 2004) refer to the attributes and conditions that facilitated natural recovery from substance addiction among the 46 people they interviewed. They people were well educated; with most having attended college and several had obtained degrees. Most were employed, before, during and after their addiction experiences, some in professional occupations and others as self-employed business people. According to Granfield and Cloud the possession of educational credentials and employment histories among these people enabled them to manage their addiction within stable limits, retain important friendships and supports among professional colleagues and friends and retain some level of investment in their family life. In effect, despite their substance addiction, they remained embedded within a set of relationships and attachments to conventional life that accrued to them a level of social, physical, human and cultural capital.

In contrast, most of the interviewees in this study lived their lives in a social context of poverty and disadvantage; most were early school-leavers and some had poor literacy and numeracy skills and modest formal educational achievements. Nearly all the people interviewed had experienced repeated episodes of family conflict in the home when they were young, often against a background of alcohol abuse among their parents. Most of the interviewees had not enjoyed a history of sustained employment; however, some had worked in part-time low-paid jobs prior to an escalation in their addiction. Their narratives suggest that they drifted into addiction from various experimental episodes with drugs. Official treatment programmes such as methadone, detoxification and residential rehabilitation played a modest part in their recovery. They were caught in the dilemma of 'multiple recoveries'; they were not just

recovering from addiction but also from a lifetime of exclusion, emotional turmoil and a 'fractured identity'.

(Granfield and Cloud; 1999, 2001; Cloud and Granfield 2004) point out that the 46 people that overcame their substance dependence without recourse to formal treatment or self-help groups were greatly assisted by the network of pro-social relations and attachments that they managed to retain. They were also assisted by their sense of obligation to colleagues, friends and families to live up to conventional expectations and this perceived obligations were a major incentive for these 46 people to reappraise their relationship with alcohol and drugs. Similar comparisons were not evident among the interviewees in this study.

(Granfield and Cloud; 1999, 2001; Cloud and Granfield 2004) point to the key strategies that enabled the 46 people they interviewed to overcome their substance dependence, the use of alternative activities, their reliance on existing non-drug using friends and family members, developing new networks of non-drug using friends and avoiding drugs, users of drugs and associated social cues around substance use. The people accessed through Soilse and who were interviewed for this study used similar strategies to overcome their dependence, however, they accessed these resources both during and after they engaged with formal treatment. This was in contrast to the 46 people interviewed by Granfield and Cloud who had access to these resources without engaging with formal treatment.

(Granfield and Cloud; 1999, 2001; Cloud and Granfield 2004) describe the alternative activities that they 46 people engaged with; they (re) developed a spiritual element in their lives by engaging with religion, some returned to education, most immersed themselves in their work and career and some did volunteer work in their community. According to the authors, these activities were the basis on which interviewees constructed new meaning in their lives and were instrumental in sustaining their cessation of substance use. Some comparisons can be drawn with the people accessed through Soilse and interviewed for this study, they too talked about developing a spiritual element in their lives and some used mutual-aid groups like A.A. and N.A., some had experience with employment and voluntary work most had returned to

education. However, the contrast remains that the 20 people accessed through Soilse had developed these alternative pursuits through their engagement with formal treatment and self-help groups and the 46 people interviewed by Granfield and Cloud had immersed themselves in these activities without recourse to treatment or mutual-aid groups.

These comparisons and contrasts suggest that social, human, physical and cultural capital can be used as a resource to initiate and sustain efforts to overcome substance dependence without using formal treatment or self-help groups; in effect these capital resources can be referred to as recovery capital. On other hand, for people who are substance dependent and engage with treatment and self-help groups but have little in the way of such capital resources, they too can acquire social, human, physical and cultural capital by engaging with adult education, which for the 20 people in this study became feasible through their engagement with the Soilse drug rehabilitation programme.

Before concluding this discussion, it is worth pointing out again the dearth of studies on the role of education in developing recovery capital among people in recovery from substance addiction. This is particularly surprising, given the pivotal role played by education among the 46 people interviewed by Granfield and Cloud (1999); education gave them qualifications and opened doors to high-status occupations and professional societies and enabled them to retain important attachments to pro-social networks of supportive friends. The small number of recent empirical studies that has examined the role of recovery capital in initiating and sustaining addiction recovery and improving quality of life among former substance dependence people has not examined the role of education in any great depth. Indeed, the recent empirical studies by Laudet *et.al.* (2006), Laudet and White (2008) have primarily focused on social supports, spirituality, meaning of life and religiousness and 12-step affiliation while Best *et al.* (2011) does conclude that those engaged in employment, training, volunteering and household duties were happier and functioning better than those not engaged in these activities.

## 8. Conclusion

This study of 20 people in self-reported recovery from substance addiction has demonstrated the contribution that education can make in developing recovery capital, a concept used to illustrate the different resource dimension that can assist with recovery from substance addiction. Recovery capital is the sum of resources consisting of social, physical, human and cultural capital that is necessary to initiate and sustain recovery from addiction. Education can play a role on all four dimensions; it can improve social capital by opening up opportunities to develop new networks of friends outside the confines of formal treatment and self-help groups, it can improve physical capital by improving career options and job opportunities which can improve living standards and it can improve cultural capital by exposing people to new values, beliefs and attitudes and instilling a revised work ethic grounded in the demands of educational pursuits. Finally, education can contribute to recovery capital through improving human capital; empowering people to look after their health, become a more effective parent, reappraise in-grained negative belief systems, develop achievable goals and improve day-to-day functioning and personal efficacy.

Official treatment programmes can play a vital role in halting addiction and promoting recovery and can benefit people on a number of therapeutic levels. However, when people emerge from treatment, they need to transfer these benefits into day-to-day living and also navigate their way into and through real-life situations. Returning to adult education can enable people in recovery to build sufficient recovery capital to assist them on this journey and help them to ***reproduce their recovery on a day-to-day basis***. Drug policy and practice can be strengthened by giving renewed emphasis to the role of education in developing recovery capital among individuals in recovery from substance addiction. Finally, engaging with adult education while in recovery from substance addiction can open up opportunities for people that may provide them with rewards which they will not risk losing; legitimate income, sustainable housing, improved relations with family and a sense that they belong to a community. These are important components sustained recovery and their importance is neatly encapsulated in the writing of According to Neale (2002:219)

*'Recovery will only occur if drug users believe that abstinence has more to offer than addiction. Accordingly, recovering drug users must find a purpose in their drug-free lives. To this end, they need meaningful roles and activities that offer them self-respect and pride, and daily routines that do not involve criminal or drug using activities...the conditions that seem likely to facilitate successful rehabilitation are the same kinds of conditions that probably prevent drug misuse in the first place. That is, access to a decent income, adequate housing, employment opportunities; family relationships and being connected to community networks. These are key factors that motivate most non-addicted members of society'*

## **9. Recent expert group work on promoting the integration of recovery capital into established addiction recovery services**

In 2010, the National Treatment Agency (NTA) in the UK, requested Professor John Strang to chair an expert group to 'provide guidance to the drug treatment field on the proper use of medications to aid recovery and on how the care for those in need of effective and evidence-based drug treatments is more fully orientated to optimise recovery'. (NTA: 2011) The interim report recently provided by the expert group documents the nature of their work so far and includes a list of key elements of effective drug treatment based on carefully negotiated treatment plan between providers and patients. The group shares the view that 'the prescribing of any medication (and perhaps especially of OST) must not be allowed to become detached and delivered in isolation from other crucial components of effective treatment including psychosocial interventions and integration with mutual help-groups and peer-support as well as opportunities for patients to accrue social capital via employment placements, vocational training and volunteering are also advocated.

The group identified four key issues which require intensive consideration; (i) distinguishing between the proportion of patients who might be expected to rapidly recover with none or modest substitute prescribing and the proportion which may need long-term care, including substitute prescribing (this issue is being addressed by a sub-group of the main group, (ii) how can treatment help patients to build 'recovery capital', the social, physical, human and cultural resources seen as necessary to initiate and sustain recovery from addiction, (iii) how can recovery capital and its accumulation be measured, and (iv) how can treatment decide who receives what intervention, when they receive it and how is it best delivered? The latter three issues will continue to be addressed by the main body of the expert group.

Daddow and Broome (2010) have suggested that recovery capital can fulfil the function of an anchoring concept around which the recovery from substance addiction can be pursued by services and clients. In their recent report which seeks to place the recovering person at the centre of the response system they argue for 'a fundamental change to our collective response

[to problematic drug and alcohol use]: a shift away from focusing on the traditional harms, to one that recognises the hidden wealth and untapped strength of individuals and communities...'

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