

# MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS IN FURTHER EDUCATION

DEIRDRE DIXON

Submitted as part fulfilment of the  
requirements for the  
MEd in Adult and Community Education

Department of Adult and Community  
Education

National University of Ireland Maynooth  
2012

Supervisor: Dr. Bríd Connolly

## **Declaration**

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I hereby declare that this project is entirely my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award, or part thereof, at this or any other educational establishment.

Signed: Deirdre Dixon

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> June 2012

Student ID: 60039187

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Bríd Connolly for her help and guidance during this study.

I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of college management, teachers and students who took part in this research and thank them for their support.

I would like to thank my family who encouraged and supported me throughout my studies over the last number of years.

## **The Abstract**

Motivational factors refer to reasons why we want to do something or learn something.

In the further education setting there are many elements that determine motivational factors. The learners own attitude and interest in learning will be a primary factor. Within the setting tutors and student support can also impact on the motivational factors of the learners.

Further education combines concepts, methods, processes, tools and pedagogic styles to achieve a holistic approach to teaching and learning. The amalgamation of a mixture of structured classroom-based formal lessons, informal learning through work placement and student support seeks to ensure that learner centred requirements is the main priority in the teaching/learning process.

The purpose of this research was to examine the motivational factors for studying in Further Education, to examine the ratio of male to female students studying in the areas of Child Care, Nursing and Social Care in Moate Business College. I also examined how the grant system affects students in Further Education and how the economic downturn has affected the numbers enrolling in courses within the Further Education sector.

The research was carried out at a further education college located in the Midlands, Ireland. The research group comprised of students attending a FETAC Social Care, Childcare and Nursing Studies Course along with teachers involved in these courses. I also investigated a similar Further Education College in Co. Meath and made comparisons.

Key findings were determined from a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data and include the opinion that a vast number of learners choose to study in Further Education as it provides students with an excellent platform for further study and to gain entry into third level education. Further Education also ensures students gain theoretical and practical experience to equip them with knowledge and skills for future employment.

## **List of Abbreviations**

<b>CAO</b>	Central Applications Office
<b>FE</b>	Further Education
<b>FETAC</b>	Further Education and Training Awards Council
<b>HELS</b>	Higher Education Links Scheme
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>PLC</b>	Post Leaving Certificate
<b>SCIE</b>	Social Care Institute for Excellence
<b>MBC</b>	Moate Business College
<b>AIT</b>	Athlone Institute of Technology

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

I am a FETAC Level five and six tutor in a Further Education Centre in the midlands. I teach on the Social Care, Child Care and Nursing Programmes. Currently more than 45,000 students are attending Further Education courses in schools and colleges throughout the country. There are 45 centres with more than 150 students offering Further Education (PLC) courses. Moate Business College first opened in 1991 with 40 students. At present there are 500 full-time students in MBC taking Further Education courses. This makes MBC the largest provider of Further Education in the midlands.

There are many factors that have contributed to this increase of students studying in the centre. The economic downturn has been the most significant factor. I wish to investigate the reasons learners have chosen to study a FETAC level course and in particular why they chose Moate Business College in which to complete their studies.

In September 2011 for the first time in the history of MBC male candidates have enrolled on such courses,

“The largest number of major awards was in health and welfare, reaching almost 6,500, most of which were made at level 5.” (Future Skills Needs, Monitoring Ireland’s Skills Supply 2009 p.58.)

As many of these students have no formal qualifications they have chosen Further Education as a way of gaining a qualification and entry into Third Level Education via the FETAC Links system. This system allows students to obtain up to a maximum of 400 points in FETAC which is the equivalent to that of a Leaving Certificate through the CAO. The Links system allows some students to gain entry onto the second year of a degree programme in a Third Level Institute or University in Ireland (subject to each individual Institute). For 2011/2012 there are 40 higher education institutions offering progression from FETAC courses. Of these 19 are participating in the Pilot Scheme.

Further education acts as a progression route to higher level education; this contributes to the fact that one in every five applicants to the CAO in 2010 was a mature student. 21,500 applicants had been approved for the Back to Education Allowance, with the final number of applicants expected to be even higher.

In addition 12,000 adults will avail of the new Labour Market Activation Measures targeting people who are unemployed, an initiative welcomed by AONTAS.

(Aontas (2011) The Voice of Adult Learning p.4)

Another programme MBC provides is the BTEC qualification based in the UK. In 2009, 300 Nursing Places were removed from the CAO leaving many students facing an impossible chance of completing a Nursing degree in Ireland.

By completing the BTEC programme in Nursing Studies, students have gained entry onto nursing programmes in the UK. In 2009 MBC made a link with Christ Church University in Canterbury. Twenty five students were enrolled on the FETAC Level Five Nursing Programme in MBC. All students were interviewed for a place on the Nursing Degree in Christ Church University. In Ireland a total of 30 students were selected for the Nursing programme, 15 students from this group studied in MBC. In 2010, 54 students enrolled on the same programme in MBC.

Traditionally the Irish education services were divided according to gender and religious orders dominated the sector with nuns catering for the females and the brothers catering for the males. In more recent times the sector has attracted more females than males as a result of female tutors to male tutors is disproportionate to the ratio of male to female students to ensure gender balance amongst tutors with the entire teaching sector, the further education sector has not escaped this gender disportion. This would be in line with our Scottish counterparts.

The teacher census carried out by the Scottish Executive Education Department 2003 showed that there had been a fall in the percentage of teacher who were male for 30 per cent to 26 per cent in 2003. This gender imbalance is evident in many European countries, Riddell, p.5

While effectiveness of a tutor is not dependent on their gender and on an individual level gender maybe if little significance. However on a broader level to acquire a balance the gender issue needs to be addressed.

Having a gender balanced staff is likely to enhance motivation for male students. It also beings a more balanced approach to how a college might view development and policy.

It is important that the further education sector also notes the European perspective in relation to gender balance. Currently in Moate Business College there are twenty-six tutors only one of which is male.

Further Education in Ireland evolved during the late 1980s and did so, on an ad hoc basis. The movement and demand for (what is now known as) Further Education came from “the ground up”. It grew mainly through the VEC structure and in most cases was an add-on to traditional vocational education which by the 1980s itself reflected what had been taking place in our “private secondary schools”.

As the demand for further education expanded some centres found that they were graduating towards having a complement of Post Leaving Certificate students and few if any secondary students. Hence the arrival of the Further Education College. Of all the current Further Education students (in the direct education sector) almost all are in the VEC sector. No structure for Further Education was ever put in place. Each centre adopted, as far as it could, its own “structure” or “lack of structure”. The model in use was and still is that of a Second Level Vocational School.

Almost all Post Leaving Certificate/Further Education students are more than 18 years of age is arguable that the strict secondary school model is not appropriate.

Efforts have been made to devise and introduce administrative and management structure for Further Education but without success.

In the case of MBC the matter is further compounded by the fact that we are not part of the VEC. MBC is in fact a subsidiary of a Community School. MBC is the largest provider of Further Education in the Midlands from within the Community School sector. This is sometimes confusing for the Department of Education and Skills, so it is no surprise to find that there is no formal administrative or management structure.

Each member of staff in MBC is a fully qualified teacher recognised by the Teaching Council of Ireland. Each member has a number of years experience working in the Further Education. Staff members are already involved in course administration, course promotion, course development, course planning, quality assurance, examination and assessment administration.

Further Education in Ireland is rather isolated. There is no organisation which represents teachers on a professional level either at further education or the further education colleges. Professional development is done largely by individual teachers.

Many Further Education Colleges in Ireland may view themselves as competing and as a result are not prepared to share resources, teaching or in-service.

Standardisation needs to be put in place across the board in order to comply with the National Framework for Qualifications. FETAC continuously speak about the need for Standardisation on a national level. Quality Standards were advised by the White Paper 2000 for all areas of Adult and Community Education, this has yet to be made a national procedure,

to advise on quality standards and to engage in evaluation and research in the field of adult education. (The White Paper 2000 p.16)

A comprehensive system of prior learning should be devised in order to allow equal access to Further Education for adult learners. A greater awareness of the learner's needs rather than the needs of the individual centres should underpin the ethos of each centre. Prior learning and life long experience should be recognised in lieu of state examinations to gain entry onto courses in Ireland. According to the White Paper 2000,

a review of the PLC sector was needed, "a review of PLC management, organisational, administrative and technical support arrangements to assess the appropriateness of existing structures to changing needs" (The White Paper 2000 p.16)

## **1.2 Statement of Topic**

The study was instigated as a response to the increase in the numbers enrolling on courses within the Further Education sector. It is the purpose of this research to examine, the ratio of male to female students in Further Education and the motivational factors for studying in the areas of Child Care, Nursing and Social Care in Moate Business College

### **1.2.1 Research Rationale**

Some of the aspects I wish to examine within my research are, the differences in male and female enrolment in Further Education, course selection in Further Education, how the grant system affects students in Further Education and how the economic downturn has affected the numbers enrolling on courses within the Further Education sector.

## **1.2.2 Context of Research**

This research was carried out in a Further Education Centre in the midlands with an enrolment of 500 full-time students. The college provides courses in areas such as business, computing, childcare, social care, nursing, art and design and performing arts. The student group selected to take part in the research was selected from the School of Caring, who, because of their general structure and student profile, it was believed by the researcher, has changed in terms of the differences in male and female enrolment for Further Education courses.

## **1.3 Objectives**

The specific objectives being focused upon in this research are as follows:

1. The investigation of what motivates students to attend a Further Education centre.
2. The investigation of how Moate Business College can improve its existing courses for new entrants.
3. The investigation of the centre meeting student's expectations.
4. The investigation of providing options for students for the future.
5. Investigation of trends in another Further Education Centre

## **1.3 Research Methodology**

The research focuses on an examination of contemporary events and attempts to deal with in-depth information based on the "how" and the "why" it was felt that an approach which facilitated an explanatory case study as defined by Yin (2003) would allow for the collection and evaluation of in-depth information.

Yin (2003, p.13) defines a case study as;

...an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

Yin notes that a case study is a triangulated research strategy that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques (Yin 2003, p.6).

The need for triangulation is very necessary within this research because of the ethical need to confirm the validity of the processes involved. This according to Yin can only be achieved by using multiple sources of data and a case study facilitates this.

In order to attain the necessary information to compile a valid case study the design of the study had to be carefully examined. A number of issues had to be considered before developing the design. The scope of the study; the structure of the research; the research questions and the data collection methods and sources.

Mason J (1996) denotes the importance of the intellectual puzzle of the research question being connected to the broad research area, to knowledge and evidence and to the epistemological position of the researcher. It is crucial that the methodology strategies are distinguished from the methods thought the methods will from part of the methodologies. The methodology strategy is the logic which underpins the method by which the research question is answered. In relation to the current research the case study seemed to be the best way to answer the research question. In terms of the methods used and to be addressed within the methodology section this forms the day to day decisions about all aspects of the research and must be capable of enabling the researcher to collect and analyse sufficient data to adequately address the research question, while not dictating the outcomes. (Mason J. 1996) Because the research is of a developmental nature the methodology strategy and research design had to be build around assembling data, evidence or arguments which can be used to form a developmental explanation. When seeking the design of the research a key factor to consider is the scope and limitation of the study.

One-to-one interviews were carried out with the Principal and tutors in the School of Caring. The interviews took place during March 2012. Student interviews were also carried out with focus groups.

A focus group is a carefully planned and moderated informal discussion where one person's ideas bounce off another's creating a chain reaction of informative dialogue..... The product of a focus group is a unique form of qualitative information which brings understanding about how people react to an experience or product

Anderson (1996, p. 200)

Ten students from the Social Care, Child Care and Nursing courses were selected as the basis of a student focus group. The focus group was used to solicit perceptions, views and a range of opinions from learners on their motivational factors in Further Education. A set of questions elicited from questionnaire results was designed in such a way so as to flow as a natural conversation might, with the most general questions being asked first and the more specific being introduced later in the interview. The focus group interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed by the researcher.

## **1.5 Scope and Limitations of Study**

It is important to critically evaluate the processes and results of the study as a whole. One aspect to consider is that the research methodology used, i.e. the case study, has certain limitations that need to be taken into account when analysing findings. Firstly, it can be problematic to present findings from case studies in numerical format since most of the data is of a qualitative nature.

Also, because of unique features involving the specific setting, social structure and individuals concerned, case study research is not generalisable in the conventional sense. Subjectivity can also be a limiting factor in case study research. However, in this instance the researcher has tried to minimise such subjectivity through the use of triangulation of findings.

Another limitation of this particular research is the fact that I am so involved with these particular students. I hope to remain objective and not biased whilst carrying out the research.

## **1.6 Structure of Thesis**

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the research project and examines the background to and reason why the research subject was selected. It introduces the reader to the structure of the further education system in Ireland and also to the concept of motivational factors for learning. Specific research objectives are documented within this chapter as is a summary of the methodology used. Finally, limitations of the research are acknowledged and detailed.

Chapter 2 details the research methodology employed.

It examines why the case study methodology was chosen for this project and also gives details of the data analysis strategies and tools that were used to collect and analyse data from all stakeholders involved.

Chapter 3 is divided into six sections and analyses past and current literature in the subject area.

Chapter 4 presents the research findings that were extracted from questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings from chapter four and compares these findings with previous research undertaken by accredited researchers in this field.

Chapter 6 summarises issues raised in chapter 5 and draws conclusions from the entire case study.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Methodology**

#### **2.1 Introduction and Overview of Research**

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the reasons learners have chosen to study a FETAC level course and in particular why they chose Moate Business College (MBC) as their learning centre.

This chapter outlines the process and methods used in establishing the reasons why teachers and students have chosen to study at MBC reasons and what the motivational factors are studying and teaching at MBC.

To attain the appropriate information it was of vital importance that due consideration be given to the devising of research questions designed to assist in the investigation.

#### **2.2.1 Research Questions Investigated**

Dr. Nick Pratt (2006) point out the fact that questionnaires are not among the most prominent methods in qualitative research, however they have their uses. At times questioners are at times the most efficient means of collecting information and can be reached by personal interview. While the information may be limiting direct questions can still be very useful and are particularly useful when dealing with slightly larger numbers. Dr. Nick Pratt (2006)

Though a large number of sources where not approached while conducting the research it was important to ensure that particular pieces of information were obtained from each source. For this reason the following research questions were investigated from all participants during the course of the study.

1. Why did you choose to study/work in Moate Business College?
2. Why did you choose to study/work in Social Care/Child Care?
3. Were the objectives of the course clear to you?
4. Did the course meet your expectations? Are we meeting the student's expectations?
5. Did the course expose you to new knowledge and practices?
6. How would you describe the level of the course?

7. Were the tutors encouraging and helpful?
8. What are the strengths of the course?
9. What are the weaknesses of the course?
10. How can we improve on what is being offered?
11. Does MBC need to offer new courses for students?
12. As a mature student what do you think are your options for the future?
13. Do you think MBC offers realistic options for students?
14. Is Further Education/Post Leaving Certificate courses publicized enough or do we need to do more to inform people?
15. Will you recommend MBC to your own friends/family?
16. How would you describe the future of MBC/Further Education?

## **2.2 Research Methodology**

### **2.2.1 Selection of Methodology**

In order to select the most appropriate research methodology to be used in this study, the following conditions were examined:

The type of research question being asked. In this instance the research question being asked are primarily “*how*” questions – how will an existing further education course be improved for future learners.

...how and why questions are more explanatory and likely to lead to the use of case studies, histories and experiments as the preferred research strategies. This is because such questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence.

(Yin 2003, p. 6)

The requirement of control of behavioural procedures. Control of all variables cannot be guaranteed within this project and because of this, experiments have to be excluded as a research method.

Limitation of research in further education. Historically, very little research has been carried out within the further education sector. This is in part due to the fact that it falls between second and third-level structures.

FE in Ireland would benefit from a clear remit and direction; this has been confused by the second-level legacy, including administration and different types of learners. The teaching workforce needs support and a structure that matches requirements, rather than one designed for second-level schooling.

(Leney et al. 2007, p.83)

The examination of contemporary events. Histories deal with the *dead* past and consequently would not be appropriate for this research project. Silverman D (2004) informs us that the use of case studies are appropriate to studying current events, but when the applicable behaviours cannot be influenced. Case studies also allow for a wider range of data collection instruments to be utilised instruments to be utilised and for the facilitation of an intergraded methodology. Case studies allow for interviews with participants plus the use of observations and questionnaires.

### **2.2.2 Types of Case Study**

Yin (2003) sub-divided case studies into three different types – Explanatory, Exploratory and Descriptive. In this instance an explanatory case study methodology was chosen over an exploratory or descriptive one as this type of case study seeks to link an event with its effects and is suitable for investigating causality.

Robson C (1993) suggests that a case study to be effective must focus on an individual person, an institution or a specific situation. The case study design studies the case in its context generally using multiple methods of data collection. As the current research focused on a specific Further Education College the case study needed a design capable of ensuring the collection of qualitative data, from multiple sources and through the use of suitable data collection methods. This intergraded approach heightened the validity of the research and allowed for cross referencing.

### **2.2.3 Designing the Case Study**

Yin describes the research design as “the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and ultimately to its conclusions” (Yin 2003 p. 20).

The case study design for this research was broken down into four specific sections:

a) An analysis of the study’s central questions, i.e. why students and staff chose to study/work in Moate Business College?

Propositions to be analysed within the scope of the study – these can be generated through a deconstruction of the study’s central questions. Propositions determined include, (i) MBC offers realistic options for students, (ii) MBC offers an excellent platform for further study and to gain entry into third level education or future employment, (iii) Staff and students are exposed to new knowledge and practices

b) The primary unit of analysis of the case study – be it a person, place, event etc., i.e. the selected resources of the study. (Dallal 2008) describes the unit of analysis as “the smallest units that are independent of each other or the smallest units for which all possible sets are equally likely to be in the sample.” Classes are independent of each other and for this reason the class group has been designated as the unit of analysis for this study

c) Linking data to propositions through a mix of qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques.

d) Criteria for interpreting findings. Marshall and Rossman (1995) suggest that credibility, transferability, replicability and conformability are the four criteria that should be used when evaluating a case study.

## **2.3 Background to Study**

### **2.3.1 Identification of the Problem**

The study was instigated as a response to the ongoing problems which are indicative of further education institutions in Ireland. Due to a continuing cycle of underfunding and lack of awareness of the importance of Further Education, the FE sector is faced with a number of difficulties in the day to day running of courses. These difficulties include:

- The absence of a comprehensive system for the recognition of prior learning. Such a system might enhance equal access to Further Education for adult learners.
- The continuous conflict between the needs of the learner and the needs of the centre. A robust system that ensured the focus of the centre was on the needs of the learner would support the ethos. The current financial and administrative demands on an under resourced centre can prohibit the development of same.

- The failure of state examination authorities to credit Prior Learning and Life Long Experience within the Further Education Sector, for exam credits raises serious questions in terms of equality, as this mapping of such credits can be attained within the Higher Education Sector. According to the White Paper 2000, a review of the PLC sector was needed, “a review of PLC management, organisational, administrative and technical support arrangements to assess the appropriateness of existing structures to changing needs” (The White Paper 2000 p.16)
- Restricted work placement resources create difficulties for the college administration and for the students’ vocational learning opportunities. A review of the use of current resources and the value of work placement in terms of social care students could help address this matter.
- A lack of knowledge surrounding the opportunities for students from the further sector to access higher education without a leaving certificate seem to prevail amongst the both the student population and the public.

The system that allows students to obtain a maximum of 400 points within the FETAC system, equivalent to that of 400 points within the Leaving Certificate system for the CAO is greatly underutilised and which is the.

### **2.3.2 The Setting of the Research**

Research was carried out in a Further Education Centre in the midlands with an enrolment of 500 full-time students. Of the 500 students, 192 are enrolled in the School of Caring. There are six specific Social Care/Child Care Courses ongoing at the college. These are:

- a) FETAC Level 5 Certificate in Community Care
- b) FETAC Level 5 Certificate in Community and Health Services
- c) FETAC Level 5 Certificate in Nursing Studies
- d) FETAC Level 6 Certificate in Community Development
- e) FETAC Level 5 Certificate in Childcare
- f) FETAC Level 6 Certificate in Supervision in Childcare

On the commencing of the study, tutors and learners were surveyed in relation to the strengths and weaknesses of Further Education. At the conclusion of the study, interviews and evaluation forms were completed by tutors and learners to assess the motivational factors in Further Education.

### 2.3.3 The Participants Involved

Management, practitioners and learners were involved in the study to determine the motivational factors in Further Education. The practitioners consisted of the eight tutors who are currently teaching on the social care and childcare courses. The learner profile initially consisted of 192 students who are subdivided by course and gender as shown in table 2.1.

Course	Year 1		Year 2		Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Community Care	27	9	N/A	N/A	36
Community Health Services	26	8	N/A	N/A	34
Nursing Studies	37	8	N/A	N/A	45
Community Development	N/A	N/A	13	4	17
Childcare Year 1	30	2	N/A	N/A	32
Childcare Year 2	N/A	N/A	28	0	28

**Table 2.1: Breakdown of Students attending Social Care, Nursing and Childcare Courses at FE College Focused on in Research Study – 2011/2012**

### 2.3.4 Timescale of Study

The study was completed over a six month period from November 2011 to April 2012.

### 2.3.5 Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

Yin (2003) suggested the use of six sources of evidence when using the case study research method. These are:

- Documentation
- Archival records

- Interview of participants
- Direct observation
- Participant observation
- Physical artefacts.

Of these six sources, this study uses three – documentation, interviews and direct observation. Along with these traditional case study collection techniques, surveys and evaluations were also completed. The observational and survey data provides a degree of quantitative information, while interviews and documentation allow for collection of qualitative data.

Triangulation of the various data collected was then applied to fully evaluate and develop converging lines of enquiry from the outcomes of the study.

## **2.4. Research Tools**

### **2.4.1. Questionnaires**

Questionnaires created incorporating a mixture of dichotomous questions and Likert scaling were used to generate quantitative data during the study. The majority of the questions were closed although some of the dichotomous choices contained comment boxes for further remarks to be recorded if necessary.

### **2.4.2 Participant Observations**

Participant observations were carried out on an ongoing basis. This was particularly evident in the months of November 2011, December 2011 and January 2012 when the learners were applying to UCAS in the UK and also filling in their CAO forms to apply for Higher Education in Ireland. I was involved in assisting many of the learners to fill in both their personal statements and interview preparation for the mature students. The main purpose of these observations was to be active in my research and also to assist to gain a better insight into the motivational factors of education for the participants.

### **2.4.3 Interviews**

One-to-one interviews were carried out with the Principal and tutors in the School of Caring. The interviews took place during March 2012. Interviewing is an important method of gathering evidence for the action researcher. Interviews portray “what the situation looks like from other points of view” (Elliot, 1991)

Student interviews were also carried out with focus groups.

A focus group is a carefully planned and moderated informal discussion where one person's ideas bounce off another's creating a chain reaction of informative dialogue..... The product of a focus group is a unique form of qualitative information which brings understanding about how people react to an experience or product

Anderson (1996, p. 200)

Appendix I: Shows a list of questions utilised in the focus group interview with tutors.

Ten students from the Social Care, Child Care and Nursing courses were selected as the basis of a student focus group. The focus group was used to solicit perceptions, views and a range of opinions from learners on their motivational factors in Further Education. A set of questions elicited from questionnaire results was designed in such a way so as to flow as a natural conversation might, with the most general questions being asked first and the more specific being introduced later in the interview. The focus group interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed by the researcher.

Appendix 2: Questions used in student interviews.

## **2.5 Analysis Techniques**

### **2.5.1 Analysis Strategy**

Before commencing an analysis of the data collected, there must first be an analytic strategy that will lead to reliable conclusions. Yin (2003) lists three analysis strategies which are most suitable to case studies. These are a) relying on theoretical propositions, b) thinking about rival explanations and c) developing a case description.

The general analysis strategy used during the study was to rely on the original theoretical propositions on which the research questions were based.

This analysis strategy was selected in order to limit the temptation to analyse data that was outside the scope of the research questions. Also, this iterative process provides increased confidence in any findings returned.

To apply a structure to the analysis process, the researcher used the Miles and Huberman Components of Data Analysis: Data Flow model in which data analysis is defined as “three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification” (1994, p.10).

## **2.5.2 Analysis Tools**

### **2.5.3 Triangulation**

The need for triangulation arises from the ethical need to confirm the validity of the processes involved in the research (Stake 1995). Methodological triangulation involves the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study (Cohen *et al.* 2004).

Triangulation is the research practice of comparing and combining different sources of evidence in order to reach a better understanding of the research topic.  
(Cohen *et al.* 2004)

In this instance, triangulation was achieved through the examination of multiple sources of qualitative data – interviews, focus groups and observation, along with quantitative data from the questionnaires complete.

A focus group is “a planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (Kruerger,1994).

### **2.5.4 Case Study Database**

Data collected from interviews, questionnaires and observations was compiled and stored in a specifically constructed case study database. Software used to generate the contents of the database and the database itself included Survey monkey, Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access.

## 2.6 Validity and Limitations of Research

Due to the naturalistic nature of this research, all efforts were taken to maximise validity by minimising the amount of bias as much as possible. For interviews and focus groups, a predetermined list of questions was constructed in such a way that their meaning was clear and there was no element of leading or interviewer bias. Questionnaires were piloted to refine their contents, wording and length while observations were carried out in an unobtrusive manner so as to limit possible differentiations in subject behaviour.

My research approach will be action research as I am currently teaching this particular group of students on daily basis. Observations will also be vital element in collating and validating my research along with the interview and case studies. I like this approach as I teach the students and I am aware of their strengths in various subjects and what these students hope to achieve from the courses. This also gives me a better insight as to whether we as tutors are providing a quality service to the students and really equipping them for further education and employment.

Student feedback is very important and can help the tutors own professional performance by, keeping up to date with information and training ourselves and also informing ourselves with what potential employers expect our students to have in terms of knowledge and hands on experience.

A limitation to this approach is the fact that I am so involved with these particular students. I hope I remain objective and not biased whilst carrying out the research.

The main methods of collecting my data will be individual and focus group interviews of the participants and surveys. I will use a method of triangulation to collect my data.

My role as a researcher also involves many different aspects. I will be an active participant, observer, and facilitator and provide support and encouragement for the students.

The triangulation method of using focus group interviews, individual interviews, observations and case studies will enhance my research and validate my findings in a much better way.

The area I am researching is in the field of social science and I am working with these particular students on a daily basis so I feel triangulation is the best method of research on this particular occasion.

I feel my findings will address my research question. More importantly I wish to gain information from other further education centres to compare my findings with that of their centres in the midlands region.

According to McNiff (2002) action research is used in many professional learning contexts, both formally and informally. Action enquiries begin with the question, 'how do I improve my work?' Action research is different from other kinds of research in many ways one such difference is according to McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (2003) as it is practitioner based. The researcher is inside the situation, and will inevitably influence what is happening. Action research involves according to McNiff (2002) identifying a problematic issue, imagining a possible solution, trying it out, evaluating it, did it work and changing practice in the light of the evaluation. Therefore this is the role of the researcher. I as a researcher saw an area to develop by investigating what motivates students to attend a Further Education centre and how Moate Business College can improve its existing courses for new entrants. Through this research project I hoped not only to evaluate practice but I will have evaluated how I conducted my research and myself. As a researcher I hope to evaluate my findings to enable change to occur and develop the future of MBC.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Literature Review**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this research is to examine the motivational factors of learners in a Further Education college. I also wish to investigate in particular why they chose Moat Business College in which to complete their studies. I wish to examine any barriers learners have experienced gaining access to a FETAC level 5 course. The processes involved and outcomes attributed to their experience as learner on a programme in the further education sector.

The literary review focuses on the following areas of enquiry:

1. The investigation of what motivates students to attend a Further Education centre.
2. The investigation of how Moate Business College can improve its existing courses for new entrants.
3. The investigation of the centre meeting student's expectations.
4. The investigation of providing options for students for the future.
5. Investigation of trends in another Further Education Centre

### **3.2 Structure of the Further Education System in Ireland**

The term "Further Education" embraces education and training which occurs after second-level schooling but which is not part of the third-level system. On its initial foundation, Further Education was seen as the "poor relation" of education. It incorporated numerous different awarding bodies without any official encompassing framework to determine classification of awards, assessment techniques, and course delivery methods. The sector was formalised in 2001 with the introduction of a statutory awarding body, The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999. FETAC has responsibility for making awards previously made by BIM, Fáilte Ireland (CERT), FÁS, NCVA and Teagasc. It's Learner Charter states that "FETAC formally recognises learning by making relevant quality assured awards at Level 1 – 6 at the National Framework of Qualifications" (FETAC 2009). As well as the harmonisation of the further education system under FETAC, a Higher Education Links Scheme (HELs) has been introduced with a number of places reserved by higher education institutions for FETAC applicants for entry to a range of third-level courses.

Under this system HELs will map FETAC level 5 grades to the CAO points system with the maximum points available being 400 points.

As of January 2009, there were approximately 70,000 full certificates being issue to learners attending further education courses in the Republic of Ireland annually with more than 1,000 courses available in 230 schools and colleges.

The Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) programme is a further education programme that was initially introduced into the Irish education system in 1985, its remit at that time being to provide a combination of vocational training and work experience to young people who had left education on completion of secondary school. Since then, the scope of the PLC sector has expanded considerably so that now, along with their original objectives, PLC courses

... provide an important progression route to higher education, through the Institutes of Technology. They have also become an important re-entry route for older adults wishing to return to learning.

(McIver Report 2003, p.vii)

The content of a PLC course differs significantly from that of second-level programmes, in that it focuses specifically on vocational elements. Frequently, there are no textbooks available for subjects being taught with the task of constructing courseware falling to the teacher. The student body is also diverse, incorporating all ages and varied backgrounds, with learner objectives covering vocational, academic and recreational areas.

### **3.3 Motivational factors of learners in a Further Education College.**

Learners require certain criteria to be present to achieve an effective learning environment. These criteria include the feeling of belonging to a group (social presence), quality of resources and teaching available (teaching presence) and the construction of meaning through sustained communications (cognitive presence) (Garrison and Vaughan 2008). However, what also must be taken into account is the focus on learner centred practices.

Maslow's Hierarchy of needs

Taylor W. F (1856-1917) put forward the idea that workers are motivated mainly by pay this theory of scientific management argued the following, workers do not naturally enjoy work so need close supervision and control therefore managers should break down production into a series of small tasks.

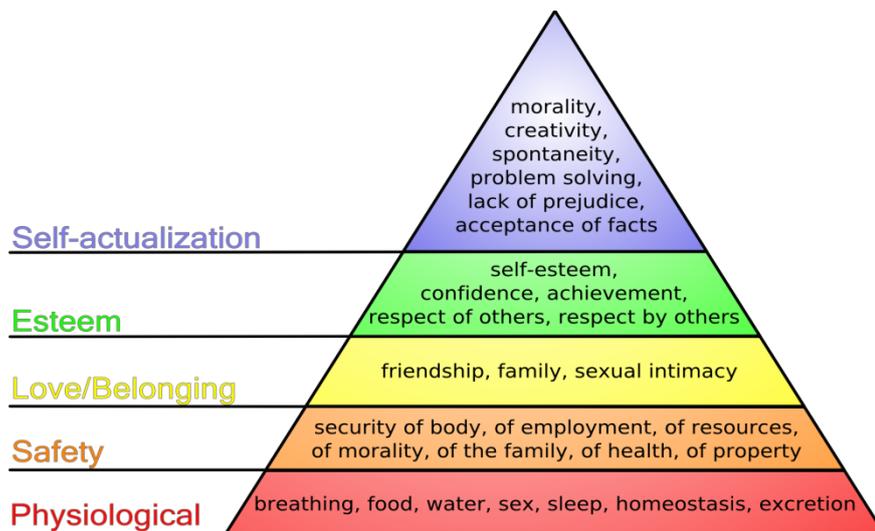
Robinson and Taylor draw attention to the way on which behaviour objective imply a rational planning model of learning. p.3 Tennant. M 2006

Elton Mayo 1818 -1947 not just motivated by money but could be better motivated by having their skill needs met whilst at work. Human relation school of thought focused on managers taking more of an interest in the workers treating them as people who have worthwhile opinion and realising the workers enjoy interacting together.

### **3.4 Course selection in Further Education**

In order to comply with our National Quality Framework a professional body for Further Education teachers and centres needs to be created in order to compete with International standards for education and training. The scope of the PLC sector has expanded considerably so that now, along with their original objectives,

“PLC courses provide an important progression route to higher education, through the Institutes of Technology. They have also become an important re-entry route for older adults wishing to return to learning. (McIver Report 2003, p.vii)



Maslow 1908-1970 Fredrick Herzberg introduced the human relation school in the 1950s focused on the physiologic needs of the employees. This relates to the Further Education sector. If student’s physiological needs are not being met this will impact on meeting their self-actualization needs and thus impacting on their motivation.

### **3.5 The ratio of male to female students in Further Education.**

The context which I have chosen as an example is my workplace MBC, a Further Education setting in the Midlands. The centre has grown dramatically in the last twenty years. It first opened in 1991 with forty students. Currently the number of students registered is four hundred and fifty. There are many factors that have contributed to this increase of students studying in the centre. The economic downturn has been the most significant factor in this increase. As a result MBC has seen an increase in male students on the Social Care courses. In September 2011, two male students enrolled on the FETAC Level 5 Childcare course.

This has been the first time in the history of MBC that male candidates have enrolled on such courses. The largest number of major awards was in health and welfare, reaching almost 6,500, most of which were made at level 5.(Future Skills Needs, Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply 2009 p.58.)

As many of these students have no formal qualifications they have chosen Further Education as a way of gaining a qualification and entry into Third Level Education via the FETAC Links system. This system allows students to obtain up to a maximum of 400 points in FETAC which is the equivalent to that of a Leaving Certificate through the CAO. The Links system allows some students to gain entry onto the second year of a degree programme in a Third Level Institute or University in Ireland (subject to each individual Institute).

Another programme MBC provide is the BTEC qualification based in the UK. In 2009, 300 Nursing Places were removed from the CAO leaving many students facing almost virtual impossible chance of completing a Nursing degree in Ireland.

By completing the BTEC programme in Nursing Studies, students have gained entry onto nursing programmes in the UK. In 2009 MBC made a link with Christ Church University in Canterbury.

Twenty five students were enrolled on the FETAC Level 5 Nursing Programme in MBC. All students were interviewed for a place on the Nursing Degree in Christ Church University. In Ireland a total of 30 students were selected for the Nursing programme, 15 students from this group studied in MBC. In 2010, 54 students enrolled and in 2011, 65 students enrolled on the same programme.

The number of award holders increased by approximately 1% over the period 2009-2010, reaching almost 177,000 in 2010. There was also an increase in the total number of awards made, which reached 348,005 in 2010, up 11% on the preceding year. With the exception of special purpose awards, the number of awards and award holders increased for each award type between 2009 and 2010”

(Future Skills Needs, National Skills Bulletin, 2011 p.46)

The literature that I have examined reinforces existing positions and ideas that there are many motivational factors why men choose Social Science courses. One of the main reasons is due to the economic downturn in particular the construction sector.

A decline in the number of special purpose awards, mainly at level 5 in the fields of engineering, manufacturing and construction; agriculture and veterinary”, (Future Skills Needs, Monitoring Ireland’s Skills Supply 2009. P.54)

Another reason for the increase for men choosing Social Science courses is the possibility of employment. The Health Care and Social Care areas currently have more employment opportunities. Many men are changing careers and retraining in these areas. In 2008

The largest number of major awards was in health and welfare, reaching almost 6,500, most of which were made at level 5 compared to 471 students in Engineering, manufacturing & construction. (Future Skills Needs, Monitoring Ireland’s Skills Supply 2009. P.60)

Some of the arguments are convincing. However the statistics from F.A.S, Monitoring Ireland’s Skills Supply 2009 only gives general gender statistics and does not give specific details on what age groups completed specific FETAC level 5 Certificates. This lack of clarity is confusing and may prove a weakness in my research question.

More than half (56%) of all major awards were made to females. However, the gender distribution of major awards by level is slightly different: males dominated at level 6 with over 85% of major awards. Females, by contrast dominated at level 5 with three quarters of all major awards at this level. Awards made at levels 3 and 4 were mostly for female candidates (56-58% each) while two thirds of the major awards made at levels 1 and 2 were made to males.

(Future Skills Needs, Monitoring Ireland’s Skills Supply 2009, p.60)

Livesey (2002) categorized Feminism into four main categories. The first category as Liberal Feminism, the second category as Marxist Feminism, Radical Feminism as the third category and Socialist or “dual system” as the fourth category. Liberal Feminism became the problem of socialisation. In the 1950’s women were viewed as merinstrumental. During the women’s movement in the 1960’s Talcot Parson found himself confronted by women who felt powerless. Socialisation needed to be reformed in order to give these women a voice.

Gender divisions exist because we do not have equal opportunities. They exist due to individual prejudice and discrimination. This has introduced to need of removing inequalities and more positive action including legislation so that women can enjoy the same freedom as men. These ideas underlie much of the current equal opportunities legislation has put in place today.

The rise of modern women's movement has contributed greatly to how the world has changed over the past thirty years. Irish society has had huge debates with regard to gender, sexuality and family.

This has become very prominent in recent years. People can argue that things have changed for the better especially the rise of women in the workforce and the success of Irish sports women like Sonia O'Sullivan and Katie Taylor have highlighted these in recent times. While a lot has changed it is argued that a difference between equality of men and women remains in society. Women are still perceived as inferior in terms of wealth, status and income. Women are less wealthy and therefore have less access to property and power. The recent downturn in the economy proved this. Many of the property developers that lost all their assets were essentially all men. Widespread violence towards women and children remains in society at large. Much of this violence is domestic abuse however criminal violence such as rape and family-ucide has also increased. Feminism strives to eliminate violence against women and to give women control over their sexuality. Liberal feminism aims to seek equal opportunities for women within society through changes in legislation.

Education is thought to be a vital tool in overcoming discrimination against women based on ignorance from the other party involved. In recent years statistics have proven that a larger amount of women are now obtaining higher degrees than men. However the ratio of men receiving doctorates and professional degrees remains greater than women. According to Donohoe and Gaynor, (2009),

“the majority of women employed in Ireland are concentrated into three job types: clerical, service and technical and professional. Where women are well represented in a workforce they are not proportionately represented in top positions” p23

There has also been a large increase in women's participation in politics. Mary Robinson was the first female president in Ireland followed by another female colleague Mary McAleese. In recent times Mary Coughlin has indicated she too would like to be the leader of the country if she remains in government.

The role of liberal feminism is to obtain equality in terms of legal, political, economical and social equality for women. Liberal feminism has been most productive in areas such as work and education in terms of ensuring that women seek legal protection by putting in place legislation on anti-discrimination.

Society's view needs to change; women are no longer inferior to men. Women are entitled to the same rights as men with regard to political, legal, economic and social rights and responsibilities.

Marxist Feminism, This theory is also known as sociological theory. The development of industrial capitalism involved the separation of home and work, the creation of distinctions between the private world of the home and the public world of production. It includes the sexual division of labour.

Men carry socialisation into the home and with their relationship towards women due to the fact that they are being placed in exploitive positions in their workplace. The benefits of capitalism greatly. In most cases the female stays at home and becomes an unpaid domestic maid and is responsible for child rearing. This benefits men and capitalism greatly, as the women are not being paid to perform the reproduction of labour power. In return men are receiving a domestic maid free of charge. Marx referred to this "Free Service." This ideology has also been referred to as Socialist Feminism.

Another outcome of this exploitation is dependency on each other. If the man is out working then there may only be one income entering the house, therefore he is dependent on his employer. In turn the female is dependent on her partner for income and survival. This may be characterised as a relationship of domination and subordination due to both parties having a high dependency on each other and capitalism and society.

It is evident that women are the losers in this theory. They are highly dependent on their partners and on the state for survival. Marx doesn't however see that men are the problem with regard to the exploitation of women, "Neither Marxist nor socialist Feminists see men as the "enemy" of women. Macdonis, John. J., Plummer, K., (2002)

The only way of women overcoming this problem of exploitation is to overthrow the capitalist system and seek equality for women. On the other hand women could seek a more equal form of society.

"For Marxist Feminists, the concept of social class is considered to be more important than the concept of patriarchy since the latter is seen as a form of ideology that stems from class exploitation." (Macdonis, John. J., Plummer, K., (2002) p.63)

Patriarchy is central to the theory of Radical Feminism. Patriarchy pre-dates capitalist forms of gender inequality, Capitalism, like any economic system, is seen to be built upon exploitation of female biology by men and for Radical Feminists (unlike their Marxist counterparts), the revolutionary overthrow of Capitalism is not seen as a solution to women's exploitation (since it cannot change the fact that men will still be able to exploit female biology) Macionis, John. J., Plummer, K., (2002)

Sexual division of labour can be understood in terms of the way it serves the need and the interests of men. Sociologist Kate Millet does not agree with having a few women in decision-making posts as it makes very little difference. The women who accept these posts accept and reinforce patriarchy. Male control over women's lives is reflected in violence against women, child abuse and sexual harassment at work. The key concept in relation to gender divisions is patriarchy.

The systematic nature of men's power over women, the way it is embedded and reinforced by all the intuitions of society. Some of the main causes of patriarchy are women being exploited by men through their capacity of pregnancy or even women's inability to bear children, within marriage men may control women's behaviour. Men may control and prevent women working outside the home or the decision of women to continue their career after they have children.

“Patriarchy rests on the subordination of women through sexuality and reproduction”  
(Macionis, John. J., Plummer, K., (2002) p.63)

In an attempt to change these ideas and beliefs sociologists have found some solutions to end this radical feminism. One being homosexual relationship as opposed to the traditional heterosexual relationship. Improved technology in the field of reproduction has also helped for example contraception methods, sterilisation, IVF and sperm donors. These options have helped break the traditional cycle of radical feminism.

Psychoanalytic Feminism evolved as a result of Freud's Stages of Psychosexual Development. The Phallic Stage, Freud maintained that children had sexual feelings towards their parents, girls – dad, boys – mum. These attractions are known as Electra and Oedipus Complex. Attractions are named after characters in ancient Greek mythology that experienced these feelings.

As children develop they have to give up the opposite sex parent as a “love object” hence learning to identify with the other. This also has an effect on their later personality known as “letting go” process. The Genital Stage: With the onset of puberty adolescents become fully sexual and ‘life energy’ or libido is focused on.

Existentialist Feminism revisits the story of Adam and Eve. Men may make dramatic changes to their lives and futures whereas women’s main contribution is that of reproduction. Women strive for the same power and career success whilst trying to balance a family and attempting to become Supermoms in the process. However determined the woman may be in succeeding the ideal working-family life one will supersede the other at some point during the process. Post Modern Feminism realism is evident during this phase. Women can only do their best and likewise with men. The ideal working-family life takes a back seat and individuals choose to find a path that works for them personally and practically at home or at work.

Essential Masculinities Ireland has only embraced the rights of individuals regarding their sexuality. The Feminist and Gay movements during the 1970’s and 1980’s have brought about changes in society. In recent times Ireland now recognises civil partnership of same sex couples. Working relationships have not improved as both men and women are protected by legislation in the workplace against sexual harassment and discrimination. Anti-feminist Masculinities, These theories of masculinities of the belief that feminism has created a feminist hegemony in society. Men are becoming discriminated and undermined in society and in the workplace. If a couple separate the mother of the children is given automatic rights for her children to live with her unless she is deemed unsuitable. Men must seek legal representation to visit their children.

Violence and rape in the home or society atomically views women as the victim, when the statistics of violence towards men is on the rise. RTE’s soap Fair City has highlighted the latter in recently. Women contributed greatly to society and played a vital role in the home as carers and educators to young children and continue to do so in modern times. It is evident that many women continue to be exploited in terms of their role in the workplace or in the domestic setting. Some women continue to perform tasks as carers, educators, servants and strive to have a successful career. In general, men on the other hand have their career or occupation outside the home and play the role of a father towards their children. Some however do not help their partner in the roles assumed as the female role of carer.

According to McDonald (2009) gender issues and inequalities still remains a complex issue,

the changing structure of the family and occupational structure in Irish society all show to some extent the complexities of the gender issue” (McDonald p.55)

With the introduction of The Equality Act 1977 in Ireland, women are receiving recognition that they truly deserve as competitive career women, who can perform the role in the workforce as equally as men. With the introduction of legislation women are now protected against harassment or any form of abuse. Women are now achieving the goals their grandmothers and great-grandmother may only once have dreamt of. Another important reason for enabling women to achieve a career is the introduction of quality childcare in recent years. Society has become more favourable of women in the workforce.

In the last three to four years due to the economic downturn many men have no alternative but to take over the once assumed female role as carer, educator and servant in the home. This role reversal suits some families if their female partner is lucky enough to have a career or occupation. Women in recent times chose to have careers breaks in order to spend more quality time with their children. As the recession deepens this is no longer an option and more women are now the bread winners. In some cases men are now becoming inferior to their female counterparts as they no longer have the career, power or position they once had. The danger of men becoming the inferior sex is increasing rapidly due too much favouritism towards women, less economic and employment prospects.

### **3.6 The investigation of providing options for students for the future**

Arguments put forward from FAS appear to be self explanatory. However on further inspection the arguments regarding the amount of students in Further Education registering for the Agriculture sector is in decline. This is in contradiction to what is actually happening. Agricultural colleges around Ireland are full to capacity and there are large waiting lists to complete FETAC Level 5 Certificate and Advanced Certificate Level 6 in Agriculture. The Level 5 Certificate in Agriculture is offered at six Agricultural Colleges - Ballyhaise, Clonakilty, Gurteen, Kildalton, Mountbellew and Pallaskenry.

“a decline in the number of special purpose awards, mainly at level 5 in the fields of engineering, manufacturing and construction; agriculture and veterinary; and services”,  
(Future Skills Needs, Monitoring Ireland’s Skills Supply 2009 p.54)

The White Paper 2000 argues what needs to happen and has made recommendations in relation to adult and community education in Ireland. With particular interest in the Further Education Sector the White Paper announced that closer cohesion and support would be put in place to combat adult literacy difficulties and the back to education initiative and ensure that both programmes are monitored and reviewed.

The impact of these programmes will be monitored and assessed on an on-going basis so as to ensure that they meet their targets.

(The White Paper 2000, p.108)

This statement was unattainable as there are so many independent further education and adult education centres on a national scale. Many of these centres offer programmes leading to FETAC awards e.g. : Fáilte Ireland, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Teagasc, FÁS, Vocational Education Committees (VECs), private providers and the workplace (e.g. Skillnets).

The ‘Second Chance’ Myth: Equality of Opportunity in Irish Adult Education Policies’, (Grummell, 2007). Grummell explores the impact of the neoliberal perspective of adult education on adult education policies. Grummell examines the discourses of consumerism and market competitiveness in adult education policy. Grummell notes that these discourses have “important implications for adult education, especially equality of opportunity and social inclusion.” Ann Garvin-Higgins (2006) addresses the issue of social equality in adult education in her paper on Widening Participation: Challenges Facing A Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme. This article focuses on ‘identifying barriers faced by non-participants in education’. Garvin-Higgins notes that the ‘awareness of these adults of VTOS or other educational opportunities for adults was vague or non-existent’.

### **3.7 Investigation of another Further Education Centre.**

An insight into how other similar institutions in Europe organise their work could provide encouragement and hopeful inspiration. Even the Department of Education and Skills recognised the need for:

Intensive outreach work in partnership with relevant community interests; Localised provision within the community; A participative process and a key attention to dialogue, devoting time and resources to identifying needs, and demonstrating a willingness to adapt programmes to ensure relevance on an ongoing basis; Flexible delivery and assessment arrangements.”

(The White Paper 2000, p.94)

Burman and Evans (2008) argue that leadership can have a far reaching effect on culture, while Kotter (1992) notes that top management must display its commitment in order for change to take place.

## Chapter 4

### Research Findings

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the research study. The data is obtained from four sources, these being practitioner interviews, focus group interviews, practitioner questionnaire and observations. The findings have been subdivided so as to focus on each of the original research questions.

#### 4.2 Findings by Research Question

##### 4.2.1 Motivation Factors in Further Education

Many of the participants choose to study in MBC as family members had previously studied here and the college had a good reputation. One participant felt it gave him an excellent platform for further study and to gain entry into third level education.

Some of the participants did not get the opportunity to study in this area when they finished secondary school and found themselves working in the social care area and wished to gain a recognised qualification to enable them to pursue further or higher education or retain their current employment.

From conducting my focus interviews with students many participants' motivation for studying in a Further Education Centre was to achieve a better quality of life for themselves and their family; it was seen as their last chance saloon. Some participants stated that it would give them more options for the future.

It gave me an excellent platform for further study and to gain entry into third level education. Education is the way forward

Student C- Interview

The tutors were fair, equal, supportive and approachable and this really helped in completing the course in MBC. It was a second chance at something they wanted to do but had been previously informed it wasn't a possibility, as some had completed the Leaving Certificate Applied and not the regular leaving certificate and in some cases some participants had not completed their leaving certificate.

“Many tutors went out of their way to help us with assignments and applying to college.”

Student B- Interview

The general consensus from the group was learners should be made aware of the progression route into higher education by completing a post leaving certificate course.

Further education acts as a progression route to higher level education; this contributes to the fact that one in every five applicants to the CAO in 2010 was a mature student. 21,500 applicants had been approved for the Back to Education Allowance, with the final number of applicants expected to be even higher.

(Aontas (2011) The Voice of Adult Learning p.4)

#### **4.2.2 The investigation of how Moate Business College can improve its existing courses for new entrants.**

Many of the participants found it difficult to state weaknesses within the centre and the tutors delivering the courses.

“What am I going to do with my time now that the course is finished”

Student F- Interview

The learners discussed ideas on how the courses may be improved. Many of the learners stated that that more work placement should be made available and for longer periods of time. Both management and tutors delivering the courses agree that work placement within the Child Care, Nursing and Social Care fields is an important element of how students link theory to practice and gain valuable experience and knowledge. This will be amended for the new academic term.

“I learned more in the work placement than studying the theory in class.MBC should make links with certain work placements to allow us to experience different areas within the social care field. By the time I went looking for my placement most of the nursing homes were full with students on work placement from AIT”.

Student B- Interview

Some other suggestion made during the interview by the learners was to reduce the amount of modules being studied. Some students were completing twelve modules. Many of these modules were elective and were being provided due to demand.

With the increase in HIQA standards and regulations it is required that potential employees have completed FETAC Level five modules such as Palliative Care and Infection Control.

These were elective modules and some students felt they may have been at a disadvantage if they did not complete them, therefore increasing the total number of modules to twelve on the Social Care and Nursing courses.

### **4.2.3 The investigation of MBC meeting student's expectations.**

The course content and objectives were clear to the participants however the volume of written assignments and projects came as a great shock particularly to the mature students who had been out of education for many years.

The course met many expectations of the participants. Some of the participants found that more class contact would have been more beneficial in the more difficult subjects in particular Human Growth and Development. Some of the participants also felt that there was too many modules on the course and it was difficult to allow equal study time for all the modules.

Many of the participants found that they were exposed to new knowledge and practices. In particular, Human Growth and Development, Understanding Special Needs and the various work placement options available. The participants felt that the tutors were very helpful, supportive and approachable.

“Many tutors went out of their way to help us particularly with assignments and applying to higher education”.

Student B- Interview

All of the participants stated they would definitely recommend the course to others. Many felt that a PLC should be mandatory before students apply to college when they don't really know what they want to do.

“Students finishing the leaving cert should be encouraged do a PLC as it gives you a broad outline of the course and a better insight to whether you would be suited to this course in third level education”

Student A- Interview

Many of the students commented on the expertise of the tutors. All tutors in the caring department in MBC have worked in the Child Care, Social Care and Nursing professions.

“ The support of the tutors, the interest and passion of the tutors made it more interesting to study. It was a very positive experience and I have a better understanding and appreciation of education. Before I would have thought anyone could get their degree but now I realise how much work is involved in achieving a qualification. My opinion has changed dramatically”.

Student E- Interview

#### **4.2.4 The investigation of providing options for students in the future.**

The participants found the level of the course was achievable; however the amount of assignments and written projects was difficult to cope with. Many of the participants were very impressed with the course and appeared to really enjoy studying in MBC.

Many of the participants stated that the main strengths for them were the tutors. Also the fact that the tutors worked in the caring field made a huge difference.

“The tutors understood how to deliver the modules better due to their experience. Knowing me on a one to one basis helped. I was able approach any tutor unlike school”

Student G- Interview

“MBC is like a little family. Everyone knows each other. The building isn't too big that's why I came here unlike AIT it's huge”.

Student A - Interview

The majority of the participants stated that studying in MBC has really helped them achieve their goals and has provided them with a stepping stone to progress into higher education or pursue future employment.

“I’ve applied to AIT and if I don’t get a place I’ll come back to MBC to do a FETAC level 6 course. I’ll still be able to work as a carer on a part-time basis”.

Student E- Interview

“I feel we are one step ahead of new entrants applying to AIT because of studying in MBC. When I went for my interview for Sligo IT they couldn’t get over the amount of work we’ve done and all the different modules we studied”.

Student C- Interview

Many participants stated that MBC does offer realistic options for students as it gives them the opportunity to seek employment or continue on in education.

“Education is the way forward regardless of how much training a person has. I’m a qualified carpenter and I did my training for four years but I still need to up-skill and continue with education.”

Student B- Interview

“It’s a natural progression to go onto further study”

Student G- Interview

Many participants stated that continuing to stay in education is an individual choice if they are ready for employment they also have that option.

“Studying in MBC has given me a better insight as to what third level education will be like; it has been a big eye opener. The tutors in MBC offer a huge amount of support and help for mature students. It covers a wide range of opportunities in terms of future employment and higher education routes for students”

Student C- Interview

## **4.2.5 Investigation of trends in another Further Education Centre**

### **Dunboyne FE**

Further Education in St. Peter’s College Dunboyne has grown dramatically over the past seven years. It began in 2005 with four pre-fab buildings with approximately 70 students. At present there are forty tutors teaching on a variety of courses at FETAC level five and six.

Due to the primary location of the centre this also resulted in an increase of learners applying to the centre. The centre is located closely to Blanchardstown Institute of Technology, NUI Maynooth and is approximately forty minutes by bus into Dublin city centre.

Currently Dunboyne Further Education College has their own building in an industrial estate which caters for 450 students. It is expected to have a designated building in the next three years. This building will allow the FE centre to cater for a maximum of 600 students. The demand for Further Education has increased and Dunboyne FE is turning away a lot of potential entrants on an annual basis as the student allocation from the Department of Education and Skills is a maximum of 450.

From conducting my research both the staff and students in Dunboyne FE College feel that the current building is insufficient. Morale appears to be low amongst the staff and is impacting on students and their performance.

This may have serious knock on effects for new entrants in terms of the college's reputation, if the new proposed building is not secured in the near future.

“The building itself and the amenities can have a big impact on staff and student morale. If amenities are poor than the morale is also poor”.

Teacher A - Interview

#### **4.2.6 Reasons why students choose to study in Dunboyne FE?**

There are many factors that have contributed to this increase of students studying in the centre. Due to the rise in third level fees and poor economic circumstances, many students can only afford to go to a FE college. Many students also choose further education as the third level grant is processed late in the academic year and students cannot afford to commence a course which incurs registration fees of in excess €2,500 for some institutes of education. Despite the efforts of the state and society in looking into education system to address issues of inequality, inequality still remains at the forefront in all educational settings. Social status and money remain two of the strongest driving forces of many participants in education. McDonald (2009) strongly believes that this too is at the forefront of education.

Educational attainment is strongly linked to social class and what seems apparent from statistics gathered is that children from poorer backgrounds do less well academically.

It costs €500 to attend a course in Dunboyne FE. Many of the students in attendance receive government aid for these courses. It also means that parents can still receive the children's allowance to some degree. For many students location is hugely important. They can live at home while going to college. Drudy and Lynch (1995) also outline the strong connections between the social economic backgrounds of individual families and their commitment to education.

“There is a strong link between lack of qualifications and unemployment mainly due to attitudes and culture in poorer and working class areas and families. Also the lack of interest on the behalf of parents of working class children in their child's teachers, school and schooling than their middle-class counterparts”

Teacher A- Interview

For some they simply want to be in education but are not one hundred per cent sure of what they want to do. The modules available on some of the courses in Dunboyne offer a “taster” of what they could potentially study in the future at third level.

Another important factor in choosing to study at Dunboyne FE is the potential of gaining a qualification and entry into Third Level Education via the FETAC Links system.

This system allows students to obtain up to a maximum of 400 points in FETAC which is the equivalent to that of a Leaving Certificate through the CAO.

#### **4.2.7 Teachers in Dunboyne FE**

There are thirty teachers teaching in Dunboyne FE who also teach in St. Peter's College at second level. The remaining ten teachers are employed independently to teach very specific courses that they have qualifications and expertise in such fields. On the Agricultural Course at FETAC level 5 a qualified veterinary surgeon is employed to teach specific modules such as, animal anatomy and physiology. Similarly on the Nursing Studies course, a qualified Nurse also teaches similar modules such as, introduction to nursing and human anatomy and physiology.

Through my research many of the tutors found the Further Education sector just as difficult to teach as second level education.

Many of the tutors in Dunboyne FE similarly to MBC are responsible for course administration, course promotion, course development, course planning, quality assurance, examination and assessment administration. One of the weakness' tutors experience in Dunboyne FE is student accountability.

The tutors are under pressure for the students to excel in order to achieve a maximum of 400 points in FETAC which is the equivalent to that of a Leaving Certificate through the CAO. However, due to low morale and an unsuitable building student attendance is poor and students fail to submit course work on the due dates issued.

“PLC is just as hard to teach as secondary, even though you are lecturing rather than teaching you still have to collate and correct assignments, project work and exams. It's tough despite the classroom rules, student's attendance is often poor and assignments are not always submitted on time which can be a real issue. Often there is the similarity drawn to the Leaving Certificate as the grade you award can impact or dictate the college course a student applies for. There is a lot of pressure in this regard”

Teacher A- Interview

### **4.3 Processes used for my findings**

### **4.4 Data Collection and Analysis Techniques**

Yin (2003) suggested the use of six sources of evidence when using the case study research method. These are:

- Documentation
- Archival records
- Interview of participants
- Direct observation
- Participant observation
- Physical artefacts.

Of these six sources, this study uses three – documentation, interviews and direct observation. Along with these traditional case study collection techniques, surveys and evaluations were also completed. The observational and survey data provides a degree of quantitative information, while interviews and documentation allow for collection of qualitative data.

Triangulation of the various data collected was then applied to fully evaluate and develop converging lines of enquiry from the outcomes of the study.

## **4.5 Research Tools**

### **4.6 Questionnaires**

Questionnaires created incorporating a mixture of dichotomous questions and Likert scaling were used to generate quantitative data during the study. The majority of the questions were closed although some of the dichotomous choices contained comment boxes for further remarks to be recorded if necessary.

### **4.7 Participant Observations**

Participant observations were carried out on an ongoing basis. This was particularly evident in the months of November 2011, December 2011 and January 2012 when the learners were applying to UCAS in the UK and also filling in their CAO forms to apply for Higher Education in Ireland. I was involved in assisting many of the learners to fill in both their personal statements and interview preparation for the mature students. The main purpose of these observations was to be active in my research and also to assist to gain a better insight into the motivational factors of education for the participants.

### **4.8 Interviews**

One-to-one interviews were carried out with the Principal and tutors in the School of Caring. The interviews took place during March 2012. Interviewing is an important method of gathering evidence for the action researcher. Interviews portray “what the situation looks like from other points of view” (Elliot, 1991)

Student interviews were also carried out with focus groups.

A focus group is a carefully planned and moderated informal discussion where one person's ideas bounce off another's creating a chain reaction of informative dialogue..... The product of a focus group is a unique form of qualitative information which brings understanding about how people react to an experience or product

Anderson (1996, p. 200)

Appendix I: Shows a list of questions utilised in the focus group interview with tutors.

Ten students from the Social Care, Child Care and Nursing courses were selected as the basis of a student focus group. The focus group was used to solicit perceptions, views and a range of opinions from learners on their motivational factors in Further Education. A set of questions elicited from questionnaire results was designed in such a way so as to flow as a natural conversation might, with the most general questions being asked first and the more specific being introduced later in the interview. The focus group interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed by the researcher.

Appendix 2: Questions used in student interviews.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion of Findings**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines the findings presented in Chapter 4. Again, discussion of findings has been subdivided into an exploration of the original research questions.

#### **5.2 Discussion of Findings by Research Question**

##### **5.2.1. The investigation of what motivates students to attend a Further Education centre.**

Many of the participants choose to study in MBC as family members had previously studied here and the college held a good reputation. Some of the participants did not get the opportunity to study in this area when they finished secondary school and found themselves working in the social care area and wished to gain a recognised qualification to enable them to pursue further or higher education or retain their current employment.

Some of the participants did not get the opportunity to study in this area when they finished secondary school and found themselves working in the social care area and wished to gain a recognised qualification to enable them to pursue further or higher education or retain their current employment.

One participant's motivation in studying in a PLC was to achieve a better quality of life for himself and his family; "it was my last chance saloon". Another participant stated that it would give him more options for the future. Education is the way forward. The tutors were fair, equal, supportive and approachable and this really helped in completing the course in MBC it was a second chance at something I wanted to do that I was told I couldn't do before as I had completed the Leaving Certificate Applied and not the regular Leaving Certificate. More people should be made aware by completing a PLC you can get into third level education regardless of whether you did the Leaving Cert or the Leaving Cert Applied.

The course content and objectives were clear to the participants however the volume of written assignments and projects came as a great shock particularly to the mature students who had been out of education for many years.

The course met many expectations of the participants. Some of the participants found that more class contact would have been more beneficial for the more difficult subjects in particular Human Growth and Development. Some of the participants also felt that there were too many modules on the course and it was difficult to allow equal study time for all the modules.

Many of the participants found that they were exposed to new knowledge and practices. In particular, Human Growth and Development, Understanding Special Needs and the various work placement options available.

The participants found the level of the course was achievable; however the amount of assignments and written projects was difficult to cope with. Many of the participants were very impressed with the course and appeared to really enjoy it. They felt that they were now ready to progress into employment or higher education.

The participants felt that the tutors were very helpful, supportive and approachable. One participant stated that many tutors went out of their way to help the students particularly with assignments and applying to higher education.

### **5.2.2 The investigation of how Moate Business College can improve its existing courses for new entrants.**

Many of the participants found it difficult to state weaknesses. One participant stated that the weakness he found was “what he was going to do with his time now that the course had come to an end”. The only weaknesses the participants found was the lack of internet access, too many modules and not enough time spent on the more difficult modules.

One participant stated that more work placement should be made available and for longer periods of time. He stated that he found he learned more in the work placement than studying the theory.

One participant felt that the assignments and projects should be given out earlier in the academic year. One participant suggested that MBC make links with certain work placements to enable the students to experience different areas within the social care field.

Many of the participants felt that what MBC has on offer covers a wide range of opportunities in terms of future employment and higher education routes for students.

### **5.2.3 The investigation of MBC meeting student's expectations.**

The course met many expectations of the participants. Some of the participants found that more class contact would have been more beneficial for the more difficult subjects in particular Human Growth and Development. Some of the participants also felt that there was too many modules on the course and it was difficult to allow equal study time for all the modules.

Many of the participants found that they were exposed to new knowledge and practices. In particular, Human Growth and Development, Understanding Special Needs and the various work placement options available.

One participant stated that she has applied to AIT and if she is not successful she would like to return to MBC to complete a FETAC level 6 course. She will continue to work as a carer on a part-time basis. One participant feels he has good options because of MBC and in particular the modules he has studied on the course. Another participant stated he felt he is one step ahead of new entrants applying to AIT because of studying in MBC. Another participant stated he is now better quipped for employment because of the course he studied and the experience he gained on work placement.

### **5.2.4 The investigation of providing options for students for the future.**

One participant stated that she has applied to AIT and if she is not successful she would like to return to MBC to complete a FETAC level 6 course. She will continue to work as a carer on a part-time basis. One participant feels he has good options because of MBC and in particular the modules he has studied on the course.

Another participant stated he felt he is one step ahead of new entrants applying to AIT because of studying in MBC. Another participant stated he is now better quipped for employment because of the course he studied and the experience he gained on work placement.

One participant stated that MBC does offer realistic options for students as it gave them the opportunity to seek employment or continue on in education. One participant feels education is the way forward regardless of how much training a person has achieved already.

This participant is a qualified carpenter and feels although he studied for four years in the past he must continue to up-skill and continue with education. One participant stated that by studying in MBC he has covered different aspects of the social care course and feels he has better options for the future. Another participant stated that he feels it's a natural progression to go onto further study. Another participant stated that continuing to stay in education is an individual choice if they are ready for employment they also have that option. Studying in MBC has given me a better insight as to what third level education will be like; it has been a big eye opener. The tutors in MBC offer a huge amount of support and help for mature students.

## **5.2.5 Investigation of trends in another Further Education Centre Dunboyne FE.**

### **5.2.5.1 Dunboyne FE**

PLC in St. Peter's Dunboyne has grown dramatically over the past 7 years. It began in 4 pre-fabs teaching approximately 70 students, now we have our own building in the industrial estate which caters for 450 plus students. We expect to have our own designated building in Dunboyne in the next 3 years. It should cater for about 600 students.

The demand for PLC has increased and we have to turn away a lot of people every year as we can't cater for the numbers at the moment.

### **5.2.5.2 Reasons why students choose to study in Dunboyne Further Education College?**

To increase their chances of gaining a maximum of 400 points through the FETAC links system. Due to the rise in college fees and poor economic circumstances, many students can only afford to go to a FE college as the grant occurs so late in the academic year.

It costs around €500 to do a PLC course but most students get government aid for this. It also means that parents can still receive the children's allowance to some degree. For many students location is hugely important. They can live at home while going to college.

For some they simply want to be in education but are not one hundred per cent sure of what they want to do. The modules available offer them a ``taster`` of what they could potentially do.

### **5.2.5.3 Teachers in Dunboyne Further Education College**

Most teachers teach in PLC as they are usually connected to a secondary school. Other professionals they are hired independently to teach very specific courses. Through my research many of the tutors found the Further Education sector just as difficult to teach as second level education. Many of the tutors in Dunboyne FE similarly to MBC are responsible for course administration, course promotion, course development, course planning, quality assurance, examination and assessment administration. One of the weakness' tutors experience in Dunboyne FE is student accountability.

The tutors are under pressure for the students to excel in order to achieve a maximum of 400 points in FETAC which is the equivalent to that of a Leaving Certificate through the CAO. However, due to low morale and an unsuitable building student attendance is poor and students fail to submit course work on the due dates issued.

“PLC is just as hard to teach as secondary, even though you are lecturing rather than teaching you still have to collate and correct assignments, project work and exams. It's tough despite the classroom rules, student's attendance is often poor and assignments are not always submitted on time which can be a real issue. Often there is the similarity drawn to the Leaving Certificate as the grade you award can impact or dictate the college course a student applies for. There is a lot of pressure in this regard”

Teacher A- Interview

From conducting my research both the staff and students in Dunboyne FE College feel that the current building is insufficient. Morale appears to be low amongst the staff and is impacting on students and their performance.

#### **5.2.5.6 Staff Interview Findings from Dunboyne Further Education College**

In order to gain a better insight into another FE College I interviewed a teacher in Dunboyne Further Education College and distributed questionnaires amongst the teaching staff. Six questionnaires were completed. From analysing the returned questionnaires and speaking to a teacher in the college the results were similar to those of the staff I interviewed in MBC to some degree.

#### **5.2.5.7 Differences between MBC and Dunboyne FE College**

Unlike MBC many of the tutors chose to work in the Further Education Centre. All of the tutors within the caring department in MBC all worked within the field of Child Care, Social Care and Nursing before being employed in MBC.

However in Dunboyne FE College none of the tutors except the ten specialized tutors (for example the Nurse and the Veterinary Surgeon) worked in the areas they are teaching. All thirty tutors are time tabled to teach between the FE College and the secondary school.

Some of the tutors in Dunboyne have stated that the students genuinely do not want to be in the FE centre and are completing courses for the sake of something to do. This is not the case for the most part in MBC all students are interviewed and rated on the performance of their interview before being accepted onto a course in MBC.

From conducting my interviews with students in MBC the majority stated they wished to study in the centre due to its good reputation. From analysing the questionnaire from Dunboyne FE College three tutors stated the reason for studying in Dunboyne was “*Students see it as easy access- they don't genuinely want to be here*”

However the most startling result was the lack of motivation and excitement from the staff in Dunboyne FE College. As many of the tutors did not choose to be employed and the lack of facilities in the FE college, staff morale is low and is having a negative impact on the students.

“Attendance is not mandatory; students in reality do not face consequences for not handing course work up on time. It needs a building and better organization. The building itself and the amenities are poor and this can have a big impact on staff and student morale. If amenities are poor than the morale is also poor.”

Teacher A Dunboyne FE College - Interview

All the tutors who completed the questionnaire would not encourage their own friends or family to attend Dunboyne FE College where as all staff in MBC would encourage their friends and family to attend a course.

### **5.2.5.8 Similarities between MBC and Dunboyne FE College**

Both colleges have almost 500 students registered for full-time FETAC level five and six courses in business, social care, child care nursing and computer studies.

The tutors in both MBC and Dunboyne FE centres agreed that tutors genuinely want to help students and go out of their way to help them achieve their goals.

Feedback is given throughout the year – constantly trying to improve/help students and their grades

Teacher D MBC - Interview

Tutors have a very caring attitude towards students- trying to get them to pass

Teacher F MBC – Interview

The majority of the time tutors are trying to do the best they can for the students

Teacher A Dunboyne FE College - Interview

## **5.3 Summary of Answers to Research Questions**

Motivation factors for studying a PLC course it the desire to achieve a better quality education and provide more options in terms of continuing on in education or seeking future employment.

Studying on a PLC course was a second chance at something some learners wanted to do previous to recent employment. The fact that students were treated as adults and encouraged throughout the year impacted on the learner’s confidence and belief in themselves that they could achieve a qualification at the end of the academic year. The tutors were fair, equal, supportive an approachable and this really helped in completing the course in MBC.

Work placement should be made available and for longer periods of time to enable students to apply theory to practice. The reduction of modules in order to allow more time spent on more difficult modules.

Student's expectations are being met and many of the participants found that they were exposed to new knowledge and practices. Many participants feel they have better options and choices because of MBC and in particular the modules studied on the course. A FETAC level 5 course allows learners to gain access to higher education through the FETAC links system or seek employment

Tutors in Dunboyne FE College similarly to MBC are responsible for course administration, course promotion, course development, course planning, quality assurance, examination and assessment administration. The tutors are under pressure for the students to excel in order to achieve a maximum of 400 points in FETAC which is the equivalent to that of a Leaving Certificate through the CAO. MBC retains a good reputation and is providing students with a quality service.

## Chapter 6

### Implications, Applications, Recommendations, Conclusion

Motivational factors refer to reasons why we want to do something or learn something.

In the further education setting there are many elements that determine motivational factors

The learners own attitude and interest in learning will be a primary factor. Within the setting tutors and student support can also impact on the motivational factors of the learners.

Further education combines concepts, methods, processes, tools and pedagogic styles to achieve a holistic approach to teaching and learning. The amalgamation of a mixture of structured classroom-based formal lessons, informal learning through work placement and student support seeks to ensure that learner centred requirements is the main priority in the teaching/learning process.

The purpose of this research was to examine the motivational factors for studying in Further Education, to examine the ratio of male to female students studying in the areas of Child Care, Nursing and Social Care in Moate Business College. I also examined how the grant system affects students in Further Education and how the economic downturn has affected the numbers enrolling on courses within the Further Education sector.

The following is a summary of the conclusions and outcomes reached having examined and compared two centres within the Further Education sector.

#### 6.1 Implications

Many learners who choose to study in a Further Education College will do so due to a good reputation. Many learners also choose to study in Further Education as it provided students with an excellent platform for further study and to gain entry into third level education. It also ensures students gain theoretical and practical experience to equip them with knowledge and skill for future employment.

Further education acts as a progression route to higher level education; this contributes to the fact that one in every five applicants to the CAO in 2010 was a mature student. 21,500 applicants had been approved for the Back to Education Allowance, with the final number of applicants expected to be even higher.

(Aontas, 2011 The Voice of Adult Learning p.4)

## **6.2 Applications**

The Further Education Curriculum devised by FETAC uses a learner centred approach. There is equal assessment of theory examinations, written project work and practical examinations as a result uses constructivist and situative learning theories. The teacher can create a mix of learning opportunities that take into account the numerous learning styles and learner needs that make up the student base of the further education sector. In Garrison and Vaughan's Community of Inquiry model. Cognitive theories state that articulating the same ideas in different ways and from different perspectives lead to the development of schema or mental models that are more flexible and that facilitate more effective memory retention.

However, teachers can act not only as providers of knowledge but as facilitators who empower students to take part in critical thinking and enquiry.

## **6.3 Recommendations**

Further Education is evolving and changing to suit demand. Programmes that are being offered by various institutes should meet the needs of the learner and not by suiting the learner to the programme as many learners have experienced within the field of education. Practitioners should enable learners to grow and reach their individual full potential both academically and holistically.

Historically, very little research has been carried out within the further education sector. This is in part due to the fact that it falls between second and third-level structures. More research needs to be carried out on the Further Education Sector.

FE in Ireland would benefit from a clear remit and direction; this has been confused by the second-level legacy, including administration and different types of learners. The teaching workforce needs support and a structure that matches requirements, rather than one designed for second-level schooling.  
(Leney et al. 2007, p.83)

A clear division or re-vamp of the education system needs to be investigated. Recognition of further education as "proper education" needs to be sought. Recognition of further education as a holistic education.

Prior learning and life long experience should be recognised in lieu of state examinations to gain entry onto courses in Ireland. According to the White Paper 2000,

a review of the PLC sector was needed, “a review of PLC management, organisational, administrative and technical support arrangements to assess the appropriateness of existing structures to changing needs” (The White Paper 2000 p.16)

More work placement should be made available and for longer periods of time. MBC could make links with certain work placements to enable the students to experience different areas within the social care field. More advertising needs to be done to attract mature students.

More awareness of the links system could be made available to potential learners. By completing a Further Education course candidates can get into third level education regardless of whether you did the Leaving Certificate or the Leaving Certificate Applied subject to each individual institute of education.

The Links system allows some students to gain entry onto the second year of a degree programme in a Third Level Institute or University in Ireland (subject to each individual Institute). This system allows students to obtain up to a maximum of 400 points in FETAC which is the equivalent to that of a Leaving Certificate through the CAO.

Tutors in the Further Education sector should engage with in-service activities to cement teacher knowledge and capture innovative ideas inspired by other Further Education centres and on-going feedback from learners. A training programme should also be instigated for tutors involved which could be built into existing induction schedules.

## 6.4 Conclusions

More male students are enrolling in courses within the social care and health care field within in the last six years. The choice of employment prospects has contributed to this increase. More male students may have been working in the construction sector are now unemployed and seek a new career.

As many of these students have no formal qualifications they have chosen Further Education as a way of gaining a qualification and entry into Third Level Education via the FETAC Links system. This system allows students to obtain up to a maximum of 400 points in FETAC which is the equivalent to that of a Leaving Certificate through the CAO. The Links system allows some students to gain entry onto the second year of a degree programme in a Third Level Institute or University in Ireland (subject to each individual Institute).

As a researcher I have learned the importance of research completed within the Further Education sector. It has given me a better insight into why policies and documents are published. Future research is essential to meet the needs of future learners and to promote Further Education as the way forward.

Long term visions, plans, policies and structures must be taken into account in every element of the Further Education sector to aid decision-making process. The support and participation of management is paramount for these policies and procedures to succeed. It will be through management that funding can be made available; teachers can be released in order to attend in-service training and the long term continuance of promotion of the Further Education sector.

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## Appendices

## **Appendix 1**

### **Interview Questions: Staff**

1. Why did you choose to work in Moate Business College?
2. Why do you think students choose to study in MBC?
3. Are we providing courses to fit into the DEIS allowances or do students really want to study in MBC?
4. Is MBC meeting the student's expectations?
5. How would you describe the level of the courses on offer in MBC?
6. Are the tutors encouraging and helpful?
7. What are the strengths of the courses on offer?
8. What are the weaknesses of the courses on offer?
9. How can we improve on what is being offered?
10. Does MBC need to offer new courses for students?
11. Do you think MBC provides enough options for all students for the future?
12. Is Further Education/Post Leaving Certificate courses publicized enough or do we need to do more to inform people?
13. Would you recommend your own friends/family members so study in MBC?
14. How would you describe the future of MBC/Further Education?

## **Appendix 2**

### **Interview Questions: Students**

1. Why did you choose to study in Moate Business College?
2. Why did you choose to study Social Care/Child Care?
3. Were the objectives of the course clear to you?
4. Did the course meet your expectations?
5. Did the course expose you to new knowledge and practices?
6. How would you describe the level of the course?
7. Were the tutors encouraging and helpful?
8. What are the strengths of the course?
9. What are the weaknesses of the course?
10. How can we improve on what is being offered?
11. Does MBC need to offer new courses for students?
12. As a mature student what do you think are your options for the future?
13. Do you think MBC offers realistic options for students?
14. Is Further Education/Post Leaving Certificate courses publicized enough or do we need to do more to inform people?
15. Will you recommend this course to others?

## **Appendix 3**

**Online student evaluation from Moate Business College**

## **Appendix 4**

### **Moate Business College Mission Statement**

Moate Business College is a teaching and learning community committed to quality and excellence in education and training.

We are dedicated to:

- Creating an environment where each individual can develop self-esteem and a sense of their place in, and responsibility to, society.
- Promoting personal achievement and academic success in a professional and supportive environment.
- Respecting the individuality of every student, and encouraging each, to reach his or her, full potential.
- Providing the best quality education and training to all our students.
- Excellence in further education through the provision of programmes leading to nationally and internationally recognised awards.
- Advancing the educational, cultural, social and economic development of the wider community.

