FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
'WHAT'S THE OUTCOME'
PERSPECTIVES FROM THE FIELD

JONATHAN EDWARD BROWN

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Department of Adult and Community Education
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Supervisor: Camilla Fitzsimons

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I and white Pangur
Practice each of us his special art:
His mind is set on hunting,
My mind on my special craft.

In memory of my father Christopher

The completion of this thesis would have not been possible without the help and the warm welcome I received from the interviewees who willingly shared their working lives with me. It is through their generosity and their ability to connect with me at a human level that this thesis grew organically.

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ABSTRACT

Like it or not, we do live, learn and work in a capitalist society. A fundamental part of this reality is that the education system is linked to production as a means to serve the economy. Likewise, adult and community education, which is now sometimes positioned under the umbrella of Further Education and Training (FET) can also be seen as a vital part of the capitalist's machine. In spite of this, many will argue that because community education has its origins rooted in a libratory model for progressive social change, while at the same time cultivating transformative learning and personal growth, that it should remain separate from the needs of the economy. Consequently, adult and community education means different things to different people. However, no matter the viewpoint of its purpose and in many cases adult education as distinct from community education, from which it has borrowed its unique methodologies, has been sculpted and moulded to suit the needs of the learner within the community. This approach recognises the uniqueness of adult learning through critical pedagogy. This study examines the way in which, Irish policy makers informed by the futurologists of the European Union have shifted the agenda of the sector towards supporting the needs of the economy. As a result, it positions the learner in second place to the needs of the economy, thus creating a situation whereby different perspectives and elements of approaches to adult education are now being measured and valued and other aspects are being rendered invisible. However, this has created a paradox and this research explores the realities of this shift in meaning and the affect that this is having on practitioners as they try to maintain their philosophical approach to adult education. This study outlines adult educational policy through a discourse analysis and contains a literature review, which explores perspectives on both adult and community education, with particular attention to the debate on whether the primary focus should be the economic or the social agenda. The findings suggest that because the focus has shifted to performance and outcomes the practitioners working in one particular VTOS centre, on which this case study is based, believe their holistic approach to adult education is no longer valued. As a result, it is being diluted and squeezed out as part of a restructuring process that is being implemented at their centre.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AONTAS	The National Adult Learning Organisation
BTI	Back to Education Initiative
CEF	Community Education Facilitator
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DES	Department Education and Science
ETB	Education and Training Board
FÁS	Irish National Training and Employment Authority
PLC	Post Leaving Cert
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SOLAS	Further Education and Training Authority
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. 1 Introduction

My relationship with education has changed considerably over the years. In primary and Secondary school I was labelled as an under achiever and for me school was a site of devastation full of embarrassment, shame, fear and failure, which became an event in my life that I wanted to forget about. Unfortunately, as an 'event' its consequences followed me into my adult life. The anthropologists Vena Das wrote in her book '*Life and Words: Exploring Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary'* that these events can permeate through our lives '…attaching itself with its tentacles into everyday life and folds itself into the recesses of the ordinary' (Das 2006, p1). Consequently, this idea of the ordinary becoming a place of low self-esteem was very much part of my reality. As a result, I struggled with confidence issues surrounding my abilities in literacy. In retrospect, I now believe that the feelings I had of being labelled an under achiever and therefore incomplete, was because of the 'event' I speak about. This resulted in my early departure from the educational system in pursuit of an apprenticeship, where I remained for most of my adult life. Even though I enjoyed the benefits of the booming economy, which gave me the means to travel the world and fulfil lifelong dreams, the internalised feelings of being incomplete remained accompanied by a deep yearning to return some day to the site of devastation and rewrite the 'event'.

My own personal story is, I believe, a reflection of the Irish education system. Nevertheless, I believe that my own story and social transformation speaks for itself, from underachiever to tradesman, unemployed tradesman to mature student and now professional adult educator. I can now say with out any hesitation that I have achieved what some people would consider as the impossible. However, upon reflection I do not regard my own trajectory in life as overcoming the impossible but rather a journey that weaved through the cracks of the power dynamics and systems of inequality that a lot of people experience through education in Ireland. However, my own experience of education changed when I found myself unemployed, and broken on the economic scrap heap. My decision to return to education gave me a chance to rewrite the 'event' in a Vocational Educational Training Scheme (VTOS) in the Irish midlands. It was there that

the trajectory of my life changed and it put me on the path of my amazing journey. The staff at the centre worked closely with me through a holistic approach to education, by building my confidence through art so I could have the ability and the attention span to try out other subjects. As a result, they gave me a special gift of being recognised as a person and being conscious of my own uniqueness which gave me back meaning, purpose and a sense of identity in my life (Honneth 1995, p. 97, West et al., 2013, p. 125).

Opening the door into the art room is like stepping across the threshold into a space that enshrines what adult and community education is all about. Among the cluttered walls are images of past and present students, their achievements documenting through a visual history that in essence is of the very life and soul of the centre. Spread out over the expanse of nestled tables are the unfinished works and fragments of ideas waiting to be realised before they are nurtured into position. Just like theses unfinished works I use to once occupy this space, fragmented from unemployment and in a liminal space with my own ideas waiting to be realised. Through the expertise and the unconditional positive regard I received at the centre (Rogers 1969), I was nurtured into position to realise my own potential as a mature student, an identity that has organically grown and has taken me on an amazing journey of discovery. In essence, the art room was a transitional space '…where self and story are in negotiation and where struggles around separation and individuation – letting go of past ideas and relationships – can take place' (West et al., 2013, p. 124).

The reason why I have started this Chapter with an auto-ethnography is because I want to create a 'thick description' (Geertz 1973, p. 10) so anybody that reads this thesis can understand and absorb the richness that the staff of this centre offer to their students. Consequently, as part of the restructuring process that is currently being implemented by the Education and Training Boards, many of theses approaches in adult and community education have now come under the spotlight. Evidently, Irish policy makers informed by the futurologists of the European Union through the neoliberal agenda have shifted the agenda of the sector towards supporting the needs of the economy rather than the needs of the learner (Grummell 2014, p. 127). This research will endeavour to investigate the realities of this shift in meaning and the affect that this is having on practitioners as they

try to maintain their philosophical approach to adult education. The rational behind this study was inspired by the work of Giroux (2004) and Harvey (2005) who argue that the rise of neoliberalism can be framed as 'both an economic theory and a powerful public pedagogy and cultural politics' that has a destructive force on civil liberties and the social contract (Giroux 2004, p. 107). Likewise, Finnegan (2008, p. 58) argues 'neoliberalism needs to be understood as a powerful and complex form of cultural hegemony …it is not just what happens in the world of high finance or political mandates, it is a set of strategies, ideas that are shaping…' our public spheres. Consequently, one such public sphere is adult and community education and part of their work is enabling students to address issues that the formal education system has created in the first place. However, these issues are only the tip of the iceberg, so to speak and through critical pedagogy the staff at the centre that this case study focused on, work endlessly with students, so they can realise their full potential and either enter the jobs market or progress to higher education, or even just feel better in themselves. Nevertheless, due to the restructuring that is occurring in the ETBs their philosophical approach to adult education is potentially dismantled as they are under increasing pressure to move from a person centred approach over a two year period, to a diluted outcomes orientated production line that will now only run for a year.

For this reason this case study will also be informed by a discourse analysis on key policy documents as I focus on, what effects, have these shifts in meaning had on practitioners as they try to maintain their philosophical approach to adult education. I believe, Foucault's theoretical framework of discourse is a valuable tool in tracing the changes that have been occurring in the sector over the years. Theses policy documents structure the possibility of what gets included and excluded and of what gets done or remains undone' (Hunt and Wickham 1994, p. 8). Likewise, these discourses surrounding the meaning and purpose of FET can be traced through Foucault's concepts of archaeology and genealogy to illuminate the present conceptual understanding of community education by the analysis of what Foucault termed as 'statements in the archive…' because '…it reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification' (1972, p. 130).

1. 2 Outline of Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters followed by a bibliography and appendix 1, which contains a consent form and ach chapter is subdivided into relevant themes.

Chapter 1:

In this introductory chapter I began with an autoethnography to create a thick description as a springboard to the research question while at the same time offering a rational for such an academic endeavour.

Chapter 2:

In this chapter I lay out my research design and discuss my reasons as to why I have chosen a constructivist grounded theory approach and combined it with Freire's concept of dialogue on generative themes as my methodology.

Chapter 3:

In this chapter I set out the rational behind my theoretical framework of critical theory and deliberate on both my epistemological and ontological position as a critical theorist. Following on from that I review my four key theorists; Freire, Honneth, Gramsci and Foucault. Finally I deliberate on Foucault's concepts of power, knowledge and surveillance and their relevance to this study.

Chapter 4:

In this chapter I have utilised a literature review to focus in on the meaning and purpose of adult education from its early fledgling years to its present conceptions, which also includes the different ideologies that are shaping the sector.

Chapter 5:

This chapter consist of a literature review of policy documents that has also shaped the sector and this will be conducted through a Foucaultian discourse analysis of texts.

Chapter 6:

In this final chapter I present my findings from my case study through a mix of the voices of my participants and my own voice as I construct the themes that emerged. The latter part of this chapter is my analysis, which consists of the key concepts that run throughout this thesis, which are drawn together into generative themes that emerged from the data.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2. 1 Introduction

In the academic world of research the researcher seems to be confronted with a copious amount of options dealing with strategies, methods and approaches while selecting a suitable mythology. Consequently, I found this selection process a difficult task. Even though I thought my research question was straightforward regarding the establishment of the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and how this has impacted on practitioners in the field. Nevertheless, after surveying the literary landscape of research methods I have come to the conclusion that in order to select an appropriate methodology it has to be in congruence with not only my epistemology, my way of knowing, it also has to be in congruence with my ontology, my way of being in the world. In the introduction to this thesis I used an auto-ethnographic account of my own experience of adult education to give a thick description as to why I care about adult and community education. In chapter three, I laid out my theoretical framework and my belief in the power of critical theory. In these instances I believe I illuminated both my epistemology and ontological stance, that the world is very unequal and through the neoliberal project only a few in society benefit from it, whereas the majority experience an inequality that is viewed as normal. In spite of this, I believe that adult and community education to be the battleground where critical theory is utilised to raise consciousness and challenge the status quo. Moreover, through my own experience I believe that community education is about connecting with people at a human level and valuing their lived experiences. Therefore, in this methodology I have set out to critically evaluate why I have chosen a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2006), and combined it with Freire's (1972) concept of dialogue on generative themes, which I believe is congruent with my world view. Nevertheless there was a tension between my ontological position and the dynamics of grounded theory, which will be discussed in this chapter. However, before doing so and in keeping with the grounded theory approach, I will describe my methodology approach from the ground up starting with my selection process of participants and the methods I used. I will then proceed to evaluate grounded theory and how I used it to gather and analyse qualitative

data. Finally, I will deliberate on my ethical considerations that were applied throughout this research process.

2. 2 Methods

As a qualitative researcher I decided to tap into the valuable knowledge base that was around me in Maynooth University. As a result I interviewed two women, one worked in adult literacy and the other worked for a women's charity. These interviews lasted on average around forty-five minutes. I first asked the question 'what has changed in your practice since the formation of the Education and Training Boards' (ETBs) I used this question as a spring board to start the conversation and as the interview continued it generated more questions through the themes that were being mentioned. On an interviewing continuum this interview technique falls in-between unstructured and semi-structured, which can also be classed as informal interviewing (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002, p. 121). I initially used these two interviews as a learning tool to help guide my future interviews. However, these two pilot interviews will not appear in this study as I have chosen to focus on a case study.

As adult and community education is diverse I needed to broaden my scope of enquiry. Therefore, in early January 2015 I decided to return to a Vocational, Training and Opportunity Scheme (VTOS) where I was once a student and due to that very fact I was welcomed and the staff at the centre were more than willing to partake in my research. It was there at the centre that I interviewed five practitioners, two male and three female over a period of eight weeks. Four of the interviews lasted on average around forty-five minutes and were recorded on Olympus audio digital recorder**.** One of the participants was uncomfortable with the idea of being recorded, so with respect, I just used pen and paper to write down key themes that were emerging from the interview. Nevertheless, this interview lasted for just over an hour. However, all the participants were asked the same question, 'what has changed in your practice since the formation of the ETBs'? Which I believe kept the interview informal, I also wanted the participants to be able to name their world in a Freirean sense. This was achieved by forwarding the transcripts to the five interviewees, so they could re-examine their thoughts through

critical reflection. As a result, it gave them the time and space to critically reflect and give me feedback, before I started initial coding. However, the feedback required returning to the centre and sitting down with each interviewee to discuss their feelings on their previous interview. As theses return trips to the centre were not digitally recorded I documented key points on paper.

It was as a result of these interviews that I decided to use VTOS as a case study and this was due to the restructuring that was accruing at the centre. However, I did take on board Yin's (2009, p. 21) words of caution 'case study research is remarkably hard even though case studies have traditionally been considered to be "soft" research, possibly because investigators have not followed systematic procedures'. Nevertheless, by following systematic procedures, which in this case is constructivist grounded theory '…case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristic of real-life events' (Yin 2009, p. 4).

2. 3 Grounded Theory

In order to research the phenomena in question through a holistic lens whereby the purpose, methods and questions are all interconnected and interrelated so as to insure that this study appears as a cohesive whole, rather than a fragmented incoherent part, I was mindful of trying to achieve this endeavour through the concept of 'methodological congruence' as proposed by Morse and Richards (2002, 2007, cited in Creswell 2007, p. 42) Therefore, the research methodology utilised in this investigation was a constructivist grounded theory, which was redeveloped by Charmaz (2006) from the grounded theory approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967). I initially chose this qualitative post-positivist approach because it mirrored the thematic of community education as being an organic grass-roots endeavour starting from the bottom and enriched through dialogue from peoples lived experiences. Therefore, I also combined a Freirean dialogue on generative themes in the methodology as proposed by Mc Glynn (2012, p. 118).

Charmaz (2006, p. 2) points out that 'grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories "grounded" in the data themselves'. In other words, my concepts were generated from the

data collected from the lived experiences and views of the participants I interviewed. This post positivist approach also focused on concepts of discourse, the power/knowledge relationship and the value of narrative of peoples lived experiences, while at the same time being aware of the need to be reflective (Ryan 2006, p. 22). As opposed to the positivist approach, modelled on the natural sciences whereby researchers treat people as 'subjects from where information is abstracted' (Ryan 2006, p. 17), which I believe becomes framed through a heavy and static theorised lens. As a result, creating a distance between the researcher and the participants. For me, community education is about connecting with people; therefore this research was focused on connecting with participants at a human level (Corbin and Strauss 2008, p. 13). I believe that this approach of interpretive and qualitative research was an interwoven process. That recognised the complexity of people's subjective worlds and the self-reflective nature of research. Whereby, my own interpretations where subjectively shaped through…'personal, cultural and historical experiences' (Creswell 2007, p. 21). As a result, we as humans make meaning from our complicated cultural worlds, and therefore:

> In believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance, he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.
>
> (Geertz 1973, p. 5)

In my pursuit of interpreting how practitioners make meaning against the institutional power dynamics of the newly formed ETBs, I took on board Charmaz words of warning, that as part of the research process researchers should be mindful of not imposing their own 'concepts, concerns and discourses upon the research participant's reality' (2006, p. 32). Therefore, as stated earlier, as I conducted informal interviews I engaged in dialogue with my participants by asking one simple question, 'what has changed in your practice since the formation of the ETBs?

In addition, as I have been profoundly influenced by the philosophical work of Paulo Freire, I created a dialogue between equals and started the process as an on-going negotiation of dialogue (Freire 1972, p. 53). Kincheloe and McLaren (2005, p. 305) note that 'everyone involved in Freire's critical research, not just the researcher, joined in the process of investigation, examination, criticism, and reinvestigation'. In addition, I also

believe this process was further enhanced by the participants being able to name their World (Freire 1972, p. 76). This led me to my first step in coding the data, which Charmaz (2006, p. 42) refers to as initial coding.

This process required me as a researcher to stop and evaluate the data collected from the initial coding by studying 'fragments of data, words, lines, segments and incidents – closely for the analytic import'. This also included expressions or as Charmaz (2006, p. 55) calls them "in-vivo codes" such as 'coming down the line', 'poor cousin' the latter referring to their status within the ETB. This was a long and scrupulous process of sorting and categorizing the research codes from the transcripts before the second step of focused coding could begin. This was a process of making sense out of the recurring and sometimes fragmented webs of meaning and pulling them together to create a more conceptual framework (Charmaz 2006, p. 57). In addition, Charmaz (2006, p. 58) points out that this is 'not entirely a linear process' some participants or 'events will make explicit what was previously implicit' in earlier interviews or 'you may go back and explore topics that where glossed over' in a previous conversation. As I mentioned earlier, this was achieved through returning for feedback and letting participants to name their world. Following on from this, 'theoretical coding' was conducted, which is 'a sophisticated level of coding' which makes connections and highlights possible relationships between categories developed from the previous stage of focused coding (Charmaz 2006, p. 63). It was at this point that I started to see a story emerging out of the fragments. Charmaz also highlights a valuable point that 'coding routes your work in an analytic direction' as a result…

> …you may clarify the general context and specific conditions in which a particular phenomenon is evident. You may be able to specify the conditions under which it changes and to outline its consequences. You might learn its temporal and structural orderings and discover participant's strategies for dealing with them.
>
> (Charmaz 2006, p. 63)

I also utilised this approach as a process of moving back and forth as a comparative, collective effort of 'sign posting' between the researcher, the participant and the data collected. Charmaz refers to this as 'theoretical sampling, 'which' involves starting with data, constructing tentative ideas about the data, and then examining the ideas through

further empirical enquiry' (2006, p. 102). However, Charmaz also refers to this as a 'theoretical integration' that will assemble the bones of the enquiry into a 'working skeleton' from initial coding which generates the bones of the analysis (2006, p. 45). In other words, attention to detail was required to evaluate what is actually being said and to 'reduce the likelihood that researchers merely superimpose their preconceived notions on the data' (2006, p. 51). I also found this part of the process difficult because of my own preconceived ideas. In spite of this, I believe that because I was aware of this tension I was able to step back and view the emerging data with an open mind.

Throughout this research paradigm I also utilised reflective practices by keeping a journal, or as Charmaz refers to it as 'memo writing', which served an analytic purpose (Charmaz 2006, p. 80). It is through this journal that I was able to note emotions and key points during interviews, topics that were avoided or emphasised, fill gaps and identify the next step to take. In short, through critical reflection the journal was used to 'form the core of my grounded theory' and it enabled me to take my '…ideas to a more abstract analytic level' (Charmaz 2006, p. 94), before I begin the process of theorising. For me, theorising is about constructing abstract understandings from fragmented incoherent parts into an interconnected and interrelated cohesive whole. However, it is also about discovering new questions rather that just answering old ones, or as Charmaz puts it,

> When you theorise, you reach down to the fundamentals, up to abstractions, and probe into experience. The content of theorising cuts to the core of studied life and poses new questions about it.
>
> (Charmaz 2006, p. 135)

2. 4 Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research for this thesis, I endeavoured to maintain alertness to the fact that this research concerned human beings and dilemmas of an ethical nature may arise. Therefore, in maintaining confidences in the field all my collected data was treated as sensitive (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002, p. 226). The research was also conducted in accordance with the guidelines of Maynooth University's social research ethics sub

committee[1]. All interviews, when possible were recorded using an Olympus audio digital recorder. The data obtained was then fully transcribed and along with the recordings was secured and stored in password protected files. There after, the participants received the full transcript of their interview.

As part of my ethical obligations the participants gave me their written consent and they were made fully aware of their right to withdraw from the process at any time or have sections of the transcript omitted. However, in order to protect every body involved in this research including the institution, I kept in mind that I had to consider and protect my self as a researcher, my participants and Maynooth University's reputation. Likewise, I was also aware that with any relationship there is a dynamic of power and in this instance the power relationship had a three-fold dynamic. As a result the power dynamic that is enmeshed into the idea of informed consent is a double-edged sword, on the one hand it can protect and on the other it can do a lot of damage. In other words a signature on a consent form does not give me the right to do as I please with the data collected. Brooks (et al., 2014, p. 81) argues '…informed consent offers some protection to the powerless simply by extending a right to be left alone which the powerful have always clamed for themselves'. 'In other words to be powerful is to guard one's own interests' (Brooks et, al. 2014, p. 81). Nevertheless, I believe that through respect and by being aware of a person's right to dignity and privacy, all interested parties were protected through creating and maintaining a dialogue between equals. I also envisaged this as an ongoing negotiation of consent through an ethic of care (Brooks et al., 2014, p. 89). Likewise, in order to protect all parties the location of their employment was omitted and the participants were given pseudonyms. As they consider themselves as community educators the abbreviation 'CE' was used along with a number in the findings and analyses chapter of this thesis. In addition, other points of reference such as linguistic indexical of identity that could lead to their identification were omitted.

[1] The Social Research Ethics Sub-Committee of Maynooth University. http://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/ethics/social-research-ethics-sub-committee-srese

2. 5 Conclusion

In my methodological approach to research I have argued that, in order to select an appropriate methodology it has to be in congruence with not only my epistemology, my way of knowing, it also has to be in congruence with my ontology, my way of being in the world. Therefore, I hope I have coherently demonstrated why I have utilised a constructivist grounded theory approach and combined it with Freire's concept of dialogue on generative themes in this methodology. I believe that this approach I have adopted is in keeping with, not only the fundamentals of critical pedagogy, which is enmeshed into my own life, but it is also in congruence with my belief that understandings are only created from the bottom up through a dialogue between equals. Likewise, my commitment to creating a dialogue between equals was also formed by the underpinning of my ethical considerations to protect all parties involved in this research.

CHAPTER 3: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3 .1 Introduction

The process of informed committed action through reflection, which Freire (1972, p. 33) referred to, as 'praxis' is, in my belief, the underpinning of radical adult and community education. This implies working with people affected by different circumstances to create a meaningful learning experience and environment within the community. Likewise, this radical approach also implies challenging 'common sense' ideas imbedded in the social worlds we live in, in order to create the knowledge for structural change at a social, economic and political level. As part of my praxis (informed committed action) this chapter will utilise critical theory, because it contains many of the same components of critical pedagogy and acts as a lens that pulls into focus the webs of significance of a particular topic or event. In that respect, I see critical theory as 'really useful knowledge' because it develops critical thinking, which enables me to relate theory to practice and '…challenge what is generally taken for granted as inevitable' (Thompson 1996, p. 21). Therefore, I can act upon my social world with the aim of transforming it (Freire 1972, p. 28). In addition, critical theory also informs my epistemological view of the world, because as Brookfield puts it '…critical theory is grounded in three core assumptions regarding the way the world is organised'.

1. That apparently open, Western democracies are actually highly unequal societies in which economic inequity, racism, and class discrimination are empirical realities.
2. That the way this state of affairs is reproduced and made to seem normal, natural, and inevitable (thereby heading off potential challenges to the system) is through the dissemination of dominant ideology.
3. That critical theory attempts to understand this state of affairs as a necessary prelude to changing it

(Brookfield 2005, p. viii)

In consideration of these three core assumptions, the theorists that emerged for me as a framework for understanding the processes that are shaping FET are Freire, Foucault, Gramsci and Honneth. It is through their collective critical gaze that I will endeavour to create a holistic lens to conduct a 'thematic investigation' and make meaning from and

against the institutional power dynamics of the newly formed Education and Training Boards.

3. 2 Freire and Critical Pedagogy

Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educationalist whose most famous work was *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) combined educational practice with concepts of liberation. As I am highly influenced by Freire's philosophy of education, I regard education as an act of freedom and liberation, from the dominance of social power structures, as apposed to the banking concept of education that reproduces inequality. Freire's opposition to the banking concept is problem posing, which he sees as an act of true dialogue that cannot exist unless critical thinking is involved and without dialogue there is no communication, without communication there can be no education' (Freire 1972, p. 65). However, I believe that a good starting point and as a structural framework is Freire's concept of 'thematics' he presents his concept of themes by calling them the totality of peoples lives 'thematic universe', which he regards as being '…the complex of their generative themes' (Freire 1972, p. 69). Freire's argument is that a thematic investigation is a vital starting point in decoding or abstracting significant dimensions of an individual's contextual reality. In order to reveal situations of oppression that creates limits in their human-world relationships. In this instance, the relationship is practitioners and the changes that are occurring in the ETBs. Therefore, in order for me to understand the phenomenon as a whole, I have to be able to deconstruct it into parts to gain a critical understanding of how all the different parts interact and create meaning as a whole. On the other hand, these themes in people's lives are also the symbolic means in which they organise, interpret and connect life experiences as building blocks of identity (Kaufman, 1986, p. 76). Nevertheless, people maintain a sense of self by symbolically preserving and integrating different components of their past as thematic frameworks for understanding and living in the present. Freire (1972, p. 78) argues 'the more active an attitude men take in regard to the exploration of their thematic, the more they deepen their critical awareness of reality, and in spelling out those thematic, take possession of

that reality' through conscientisation (Freire 1972, p. 54). In addition this leads to process of 'praxis' (Freire 1972, p. 33), which is achieved through co-investigation and solidarity. Freire (1972, p. 31) also highlights the concept of solidarity as part of the collective battling against systems of oppression by stipulating that 'solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is in solidarity, it is a radical posture'. Thus, suggesting that true solidarity is fighting the side of the oppressed with the oppressed. Likewise, Honneth also covers the concept of solidarity as the product of people being denied recognition, which I believe is very applicable to this research, considering, that adult and community education has been struggling for recognition over the years.

3. 3 Honneth and Recognition

Axel Honneth is a contemporary German philosopher whose work focuses on relations of power, recognition and respect, which I believe is a very important concept in this study. Therefore, in chapter four I will argue that it is due to lack of recognition that many are poorly served by primary and secondary education. On the other hand, it is due to students being recognised as individuals that they grow through recognition of their abilities and achievements. I also cover how recognition can be tied into identity. In addition, adult and community education have also been struggling for recognition over the years. Therefore, I believe that Honneth's concept of recognition is a valuable tool for this research as it can highlight how practitioners view their position and make meaning from that position against the power dynamics of the ETBs.

Honneth's (1995, p. 121) concepts focus on how individuals experience three different forms of recognition of, 'love, rights and esteem'. In this instance I am focusing on esteem and rights. Social esteem is acquired through individuals having their abilities and achievements recognised and this is attained inter-subjectively within a particular group (Honneth 1995, p. 122). Likewise, West (2013, p. 125) asserts 'only by being recognised can we achieve an identity and become conscious of our own uniqueness'. In addition, self-esteem is reinforced through recognition of rights and is important for self-confidence and self-respect. (Honneth 1995, p. 121). This is achieved and maintained in

the public sphere such as the community and having rights that are recognised, which leads to self esteem (Honneth 1995, p. 122). West (2013, p. 125) points out that people who experience being honoured in the community for their contributions will reciprocate a mutual acknowledgement of each other's contributions. From this grows solidarity from social esteem (Honneth 1995, p. 128). However, as a binary opposition there are three forms of disrespect; neglect, abuse and humiliation, which leads to a loss of self confidence in children and in adults self esteem may be damaged through the denial of rights (Honneth 1995, p. 249-250). However, theses rights can be denied through structures of inequality through dynamics of power and knowledge and for this reason I now turn to Foucault.

3. 4 Foucault Power and Knowledge

As a theoretical lens I find the French philosopher Michel Foucault work particularly valuable in this research. However, I also found him very infuriating and at times hard to read. In spite of this, as a historian of ideas his philosophical investigations of the complex manifestations of power and how power is exercised through society by clams to truth and knowledge through discourse, I find valuable. Foucault sees power as something that is not in possession but rather relational that manifests itself and is employed through action in different positions, resulting in its circulation between the individual and the institutions of society (Foucault 1980, p. 98). In short, we are enmeshed in the webs of power and people circulate through theses structures, while at the same time exercising power, or as Foucault (Foucault 1980, p. 98) puts it '..individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application'. Consequently, practitioners are the vehicles of power because they are implementing the modules that are deemed as imperative knowledge for meeting the demands of the economy. However, where there is power there is resistance and like power resistance is multiple and produces other modes of knowledge (Foucault 1980, p. 142), which is a prime example of the genesis of community education. For example, people resisting the effects of marginalisation through power relations.

Foucault also highlights that power is exercised through claims to knowledge that are formed out of power through 'discourse' and discursive formations that shape and normalise our destiny to a certain mode of living (Foucault 1980, p. 94). I find this concept a powerful tool so much so that chapter five will be devoted to a discourse analysis on policy documents that have been shaping the FET sector from its humble beginnings to its present day conceptions. However, Foucault's theories on systems of control and surveillance, I feel are also applicable to the FET sector if applied to the neoliberal agenda and new-managerialism it gives a valuable insight as to how these mechanism are controlling FET and the knowledge's that are being promoted to service the economy. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to the topic of Foucault's power/knowledge paradigm, as well as his theories on control and surveillance. Nevertheless, before doing so I now turn to Gramsci, because Foucault is potentially week in the specific naming of sites or institutions that exercise power. Hence, Gramsci is able to take up the slack, so to speak, especially with his concepts of Hegemony and counter- hegemony.

3. 5 Education Gramsci, Hegemony and Education

The Italian socialists and political activist Antonio Gramsci's early twentieth century writings on social engineering are paramount in researching the different influences that are impacting on the meaning of FET. His concepts of hegemony and counter-hegemony are a useful tool to understand how different knowledge's become subjugated and devalued under an oppositional and more powerful ideology. For example, hegemony is a mechanism by which a consensus surrounding a particular ideology is normalised and maintained in society, even by those who benefit least from it (Gramsci 1971, p. 145). In other words an entire value and beliefs system saturates society and supports the status quo. Gramsci 1971, p. 433) calls it 'common sense' because even though the general public are oppressed from the dominant group in society, inequality is perceived as normal. Likewise, this can be applied to the debate over the social or the economic agenda of the FET sector.

Gramsci differs from Foucault in that he names the sites of power and control such as schools, colleges, media and culture itself. It is with his deep understanding of culture that he develops his theory of counter hegemony through critical approaches to education. Nevertheless, Gramsci (1971, p. 666) acknowledges that, 'every relationship of hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship'. In other words, if we can learn through ideology to support the status quo, then we can learn to challenge it through education and different institutions of civil society. However, Mayo (1999, p. 38) reminds us that Gramsci highlighted that this should not be done through '…confrontation as a war of manoeuvre' but '…as a war of position.' through social origination that influences the cultural sphere. Likewise, as this study explores the impact that the hegemonic neoliberal agenda in having on the FET sector Gramsci gives a valuable insight as how to challenge it, but also the importance of maintaining critical pedagogy to tackle issues of equality and social justice. In addition, I view the role of community educators as the people who give students a different and critical view of the world we live in. In this respect I like to equate community educators with Gramsci's organic intellectuals (Gramsci 1971, p. 142). In chapter four, I describe how community education grew organically from the rooms of women's houses through a need to tackle issues of social exclusion among other things. Similarly, for Gramsci (1971, p. 142) the organic intellectual was not the traditional intellectual from the upper classes but from the subaltern classes. Likewise, Mc Glynn (2012, p.72) points out the similarities to Freire's 'radicals' working in communities with the subaltern classes. However, I like to think of community educators as also 'border crosser' operating between the power dynamics of the institution, while they maintain their critical approach to education (Giroux 1992, p. 34-35).

3. 6 Power, Knowledge and Surveillance

Foucault's philosophy on power and knowledge this is a very important starting point in investigating the nature of power relations that are shaping FET, which in turn has a direct effect on practitioners and students in their remit. Foucault moves away from the

understanding of power as a means of one person imposing his will over another or forcing them to act in contradiction to their own beliefs. In addition Foucault also rejects that power is solely held by institutions as a means to control or impose sensations on individuals or groups. In this sense, power is understood as not something that is in possession of the most powerful in society. Likewise, it is not something that can be possessed, but is in fact relational, that manifests itself and is employed through action in different positions, resulting in its circulation between the individual and the institutions of society. Foucault (1980, p. 98) highlights that…'power must be analysed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of a chain…power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation'. Likewise, Foucault also sees the individual as circulating between the threads of power while at the same time exercising power, or as he points out '…individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application' (Foucault 1980, p. 98). Consequently, practitioners can be regarded as the vehicles of power because they are implementing the modules that are deemed as imperative knowledge for securing employment. Likewise, students are also the 'vehicles of power' in their acceptance of the value of the knowledge being presented. However, in order to conceptualise the power-knowledge relationship and how it has become accepted as the norm, power can be further conceptualised through a holistic lens. As such, power is not a stand-alone entity but a system of web like networks that are enmeshed into the mechanisms of society. Similarly, individuals and power relations are better understood as a process of cause and effect that are dispersed throughout society, thus giving it a dynamic of its own. Foucault notes that power relations should not be simply perceived as a binary structure of the relation between the oppressed and the oppressor, but in fact should be regarded as…'a multiform production of relations of domination' (Foucault 1980, p. 142). However, Foucault also suggests that even though power relations are susceptible of being integrated into strategies to serve a particular agenda, such power relations cannot exist without resistance '…like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated into global strategies' (Foucault 1980, p. 142). Consequently, suggesting that because power relations cannot be reduced to a binary opposition of a repressive nature, and are in fact productive due to resistance. Therefore, power produces modes of knowing and as a result ways of being throughout the whole social body. For example,

the very genesis of community education was the product of people resisting the marginalizing effects of power relations. As a result, forms of knowledge were established through discourses of social justice, equality and power Furthermore, Foucault highlights this important component of power as he asserts that,

> What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network, which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression.
>
> (Foucault 1980, p. 119)

In this statement Foucault highlights the exercise of power through claims to knowledge that are formed out of power through 'discourse' and discursive formations. In his work he conceptualises discourse as a group of statements that emerge from the same 'discursive formations…for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined' (Foucault 1972, p. 117). Hunt and Wickham (1994, p. 9) elaborate further by stating 'Discourses impose themselves upon social life, indeed they produce what is possible to think, speak and do'. In other words discourses shape people's worldview '…they are not just the way social issues get talked and thought about. They structure the possibility of what gets included and excluded and of what gets done or remains undone' (Hunt and Wickham 1994, p. 8). Even though, this is a prime example of how community education was first conceived and developed through discourses of struggle, social justice and equality of opportunity. However, it can also be applied to the present and the shift in meaning surrounding community education.

Foucault introduces the concepts of archaeology and genealogy to illuminate a historical knowledge of struggle (Foucault 1980, p. 83). In order to frame our present conceptual understanding of community education an analysis of what Foucault termed as 'statements in the archive'… is warranted because …'it reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification (1972, p. 130). Therefore, these archival statements also reveal the discourse of power, knowledge relations, or as Foucault asserts the 'how of power' through his triangle of power, right and truth as a means to '…relate its mechanisms …to the rules of right that provide a

formal delimitation of power…' including the '…effects of truth that this power produces and transmits, and which in their turn reproduces this power' (Foucault 1980, p. 92-93). In short, through his triangular paradigm of power, right and truth Foucault explains the way in which the powers 'that be' possess power and therefore have the power to dictate what is considered as true or true knowledge, as a result it maintains the ideologies of those in power. Foucault goes on to say:

> We are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need, in order to function: we must speak the truth; we are constrained or condemned to confess or discover the truth. Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition and its registration of truth: institutionalises, professionalises and rewards its pursuit.
>
> (Foucault 1980, p. 93)

In consideration of Foucault (1980, p. 94) argument that we are all 'subjected to truth' resulting in our destiny to a cretin mode of living being shaped and normalized through the function of discourse, the process itself and its influence on the meaning of adult and community education can be further conceptualised through Gramsci's concept of hegemony. For Gramsci, hegemony is 'the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group' (1971, p. 145). In short, hegemony refers to the mechanisms by which a consensus surrounding a particular ideology are normalised, maintained and reproduced in society, even by those who become marginalised from it. In addition, Mayo (1999, p. 35) notes 'These aspects of social life are generated among and made acceptable to people through the exercise of influence and the winning of consent'. Likewise, this also involves a process of 'learning'. Gramsci points out '…every relationship of hegemony is essentially an educational relationship' (Gramsci 1971, p. 666). In addition, institutions such as mass media, religion, law and education are not neutral; they become the networks that serve to cement the existing hegemony of the dominant social structures of discourse (Mayo 199, p. 36). For example, the media constantly covers the importance of the Irish economy and its ability to participate in a wider European context. They also connect a healthy economy to a prosperous population, through Ireland's competitiveness of being a highly educated and skilled workforce. Likewise, these hegemonic truth claims are also achieved through texts and

by drawing on Foucault's (1972, p. 7) concept of history, which is different from the traditional concept of history as periods in time or the memory of periods, 'History in its traditional form, undertook to 'memorise' the monuments of the past, transform them into documents' however '…in our time, history is that which transforms documents into monuments' (Foucault 1972, p.7). Consequently, one such document is the 'White Paper', upon its publication it was heralded as a monumental moment for the recognition of community and adult education. However, because of the contradictions between the social and economic purposes of adult and community education within the paper, this will be discussed in chapter five along with other policy documents, because I believe that a Foucaultian discourse analysis is warranted. However, as a result of being finally recognised community education was brought into focus and rendered visible by state bodies.

Foucault argues that this is another dimension to power by stating 'power is exercised by virtue of things being known and people being seen' (Foucault 1980, p. 154). In other words, before power can be exercised on something as a means to control or manage, it must be known. During community educations fledgling years it was unrecognised by the state bodies and outside of the state education system. Nevertheless, it was valued by communities and through years of lobbying by different bodies it was finally brought into focus through the importance it served with in the community as a second chance for people whom the formal education system failed. As a result, its very illumination yielded knowledge of its usefulness to contribute to the employability of the labour force, which created a paradigm clash between the social and economic purpose of adult and community education. With this in mind, it seems that from Foucault's perspective, power is better analysed not from its centre but from its extremities or the most revealing method to highlight the nature of power is to 'conduct an ascending analysis of power, starting…from its infinitesimal mechanism… and then see how these mechanisms of power have been… invested, colonised, utilised, involved, transformed, displaced, extended etc., by ever more general mechanism and by forms of global domination' (Foucault 1980, p.99).

Foucault's understanding of power highlights an important point in trying to conceptualise the very meaning underpinning adult and community education. For

example, the newly formed ETBs could be interpreted as only part of a web of power relation systems that are influencing community education, or as Murtagh (2014, p. 46) describes the institutional architecture of the state…'sweeping away the shambolic structures that held back the development'… of the sector, which included scandals surrounding FÁS. Likewise, part of theses sweeping changes that where instigated by the Irish state bodies, also included; accreditation, standardisation professionalisation and accountability of the sector. In essence this can be described as governmentality because it is the '…encounter between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self'. (Foucault 1994, p. 225). In short, it is a technique of governing people in the sector through the surveillance of a paper trail of evaluations, qualifications and tight budgets, which all seem to be underpinned by achieving outcomes or in the language of new managerialism 'outputs' (Lynch et al., 2012, p. 4).

Foucault's (1977) concept of surveillance is central to his concept of disciplinary structures of power and central to this is the architectural structure of the panopticon. Surveillance and control are combined to maintain order and regulate social systems such as penal intuitions, mental intuitions. However, in this instance the FET sector which is exposing the individual to a state of constant visibility through the mechanisms of new managerialism. Similarly, the infamous structure of a watchtower whose occupants were invisible to the inmates they were watching, as a result creating an effect of not knowing if they were being watched can be equated to this. Thus removing the need for internal supervision because practitioners regulated their own behaviour through the internalised fear of being under surveillance. Foucault (1977, p. 187) notes 'it is the fact of being constantly seen, of being always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection'. In this sense, self-surveillance should become so effective that the presents of constant surveillance is no longer needed because…'the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary' (Foucault 1977, p. 201). However, in this sense the panopticon has a psychological effect that exemplifies disciplinary power in modern societies. Therefore, it is not its architectural design that is of importance but its underlying principles, or as Foucault (1977, p. 205) argues 'it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form'. Therefore, as a metaphor, of surveillance and self-regulation the concept of the panopticon is applicable to FET.

Students self regulate through a timetable, class contract and peer pressure to abide by the rules, while at the same time being conscious of the importance of achieving the goal of a good grade for a better advantage in the jobs market.

The administration of student's into categories is one of the requirements of practitioners. Consequently, as a discipline it is a process of managing people into identifiable ranks of ability and therefore into a scale of hierarchical ordering. Foucault (1977, p. 148) notes that disciplines create '…tableaux vivants…' as a means to order '…confused, useless or dangerous multitudes into ordered multiplicities', thus resulting in students becoming visible, measurable and therefore accountable for their own performance, through the idea of success or failure. It can also be argued that judging individuals by their ability is also a technique of disciplinary power. Foucault argues 'the distribution according to ranks or grades has a double role; it marks the gaps, hierarchies, qualities, skills and aptitudes but it also punishes and rewards' (Foucault 1977, p. 181). This creative component of power-knowledge creates another aspect that is integral to Foucault work on surveillance, which is the 'individual', from this perspective the individual is constructed by being rendered 'knowable' through relations of power and knowledge. Foucault notes 'certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires come to be constituted as individuals' (Foucault 1980, p. 98). In short, the individual becomes the focus and at the same time a social product of power, knowledge strategies. Grummell (et al. 2014, p. 135) argues that this focus on the individual has a profound consequence for the learners because it '…endangers the social justice, caring and transformative possibilities of further education which are core to its ethos'. Similarly, the emphasis on the individual is having a corrosive consequence on the importance of being part of a community of learners. This also highlights, Fitzsimons (2012, p. 26) argument that in recent years community education has become de-radicalised and depoliticised.

3. 7 Conclusion

As a tool for understanding the shifting meaning of community education Foucault's theories surrounding power and knowledge add a valuable dimension to conceptualising

the power struggles that are influencing my practice. However, central to his theories is resistance and the idea that power is unstable, which means it can be contested. Nevertheless, I believe that in order to challenge power relations and maintain my own philosophical stance, the threads of power relations between the individual, society and the intuition have to be deconstructed, to render them visible. For me, visibility is a vital component of praxis and the underpinning of community education for social justice.

CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE REVIEW: THROUGH A HOLISTIC LENSE

4. 1 Introduction

In order to view these issues through a holistic lens I feel that I cannot look at VTOS as a stand-alone entity because many of their approaches to education were informed from community education. Therefore, this chapter will start with a critique of the reproduction of structural inequality that exits in Irish education. This will be followed by a literature review of surrounding the geneses of adult and community education from its early fledgling years to its present reframing as 'Further Education and Training' (FET). However, as many have argued that the reframing of the sector is due to a neoliberal agenda that is reshaping the sector to suit the needs of the economy over that of the learner. This chapter will also focus on the phenomenon of neoliberalism and new managerialism that go hand in hand with the logic of capitalism. Likewise, this logic is underpinned by ideas of performance, competition, costumer choice and measurability. In short, this chapter will tease out the meanings that have shaped adult and community over the years and highlight the paradox that exists between the economic and the social purposes in FET.

4. 2 The Reproduction of Inequality in Formal Education

For many people in society the first power dynamic they encounter outside of the family setting in which enculturation takes place, is the Irish education system. Consequently, as Connolly asserts 'very significant inequalities persist in the educational system in spite of the apparent equal opportunities provision' (Connolly 1996, p. 35). In my minds eye I see the formal educational system as a Victorian reproduction line of batches, bells and whistles, where by children are graded and streamed chronologically in a one size fits all approach, that neglects any differences in learning styles[2]. On the other hand, Bernstein (1971, p.199) argues that the school system is saturated with the symbolic code of the

[2] RSA Animate-changing paradigms by Ken Robinson.
https://www.thersa.org/discover/videosrsa-animate/2010/10/rsa-animate---changing-paradigms/

middle classes and when a working class child enters this environment they are bombarded with a symbolic system that causes a disjuncture between the child's world and that of the school. Consequently, creating a social wedge between children, their family, their community and the school '..either way the child is expected, and the parents as well, to drop their social identity, their way of life and its symbolic representation, at the school gate' (Bernstein 1971, p. 192). Lynch (1991, p. 4) suggests that those who do benefit from the educational system are the middle classes and in particular men. Likewise, Clancy (2007, p. 104) contends that education only serves the interests of the capitalist class, through the illusion of meritocracy. In other words, if a person studies and works hard they will be rewarded and if not the individual is at fault. Lynch and Baker (2005, p. 135) add another perspective to the reproduction of inequality by arguing that education is enmeshed into the economics of society in two distinct ways. Firstly, the economic resources of the family predetermine successful participation and access to education. Secondly, schools and colleges are social mechanisms of stratification that maintain the selection process for the labour market. In addition, Connolly (1996, p. 36) highlights the casualties by pointing out 'the two major marginal groups, women and working class people, are not served adequately by the formal educational system'. In short, this is a prime example of an unjust system that creates social issues and transforms them into private troubles. On the other hand, the reverse of this is turning private troubles into social issues by connecting the personal to the political, or as Freire (1972, p. 23) framed it as the process of conscientisation. Likewise, it is also '…a pivotal process in both the feminist movement, and in adult and community education' (Connolly 2014, p. 57) and for me praxis is not only the outcome, but also the underpinning of adult and community education, on which it is founded.

4. 3 Adult and Community Education

Over its long history and from its humble beginnings what is now termed as 'Further Education and Training' (FET) has had many different conceptualisations, which is evident in the different names that have been used to frame the sector through state policy. (Ryan 2014 p. 3-4). These included; Community Education, Adult Education, Continuing Education and life long learning. Ryan points out that even though they all

describe educational provision outside of the formal and higher educational sectors, these terms have been used interchangeably and at a different epoch, thus reflecting a process of a shifting emphasis surrounding the function and meaning of the sector (2014, p. 4). Likewise, the amalgamation of the VECs into sixteen Education and Training Boards (ETBs), along with the change in terminology in policy documents, and the contradictory nature of the language contained in statements of policymakers has created a conflict in clashing philosophies as to the very meaning of adult and community education, which underpins policy, theory and practice (Murray 2014, p. 102). However, as language is not a medium of neutrality, simply for communication, but rather a set of socially charged embedded practices (Ahearn 2012, p. 3). The very meaning of the sector seems to have erupted into a 'war of words' between the social and the economic agendas. Bakhtin (1981) reminds us of the socially charged nature of language both written and oral as he asserts,

> All words have the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life.
>
> (Bakhtin 1981, p. 293)

This suggests that the socially charged nature of the language that is now framing the sector as 'Further Education and Training' is seeking to become an embedded practice, of two originally polarised disciplines of 'Education' on one hand and 'Training' on the other. Moreover, it seems to have taken on the argument that John Dewey (1969) highlighted all those years ago regarding the polarised opposition between the 'traditional' and 'progressive' that exists in educational theory, which he equated with the human condition of thinking in extreme opposites of "either or" 'between which it recognises no intermediate possibilities' (p.17). However, it could also be argued that this binary opposition can create tight boundaries within the sector. Ryan (et al., 2014, p. 174) argues that in order to maintain a healthy system a balance has to be struck creating flexible boundaries in order to enable an exchange of ideas and perspectives, while at the same time each discipline within the sector maintains its own coherence and identity to meet the needs of society. Consequently, this suggests the restrictive nature of defining

terms as a process of 'ring-fencing'. Likewise, Fitzsimons (2012, p. 28) notes 'there is certain logic to caution when defining practice. A possible consequence of agreeing ring-fenced definitions is the potential to limit what is considered appropriate practice thereby excluding innovation'. However, in order to fully understand why creating tight boundaries can exclude innovation, I now turn to the geneses of community education, because 'at its broadest, community education can be understood as localised, structured learning that happens outside of traditional institutions…' which can also include state provision such as '…specialist adult education centres…' and the community sector which includes charities, family resource centres and community development projects (Fitzsimons 2012, p. 30). In spite of these differences between state and community the binding factor between the two is the fact that the community sector is also state funded (Fitzsimons 2012, p. 32).

The growth of community education can be traced back to the 1980s as a response to high unemployment and the impoverishment of certain sections of society (Murtagh 2014, p. 27). Consequently, one such section were women who found themselves being excluded from education and from the mainstream providers because of many different social and economic barriers, which also included childcare. Connolly (2014, p. 54-55) points out that these issues were addressed by different women's groups who met informally in peoples homes until they established the 'first self-funded, independent woman's education group with a crèche in Ireland'. In essence, community education was a response of women taking control of different aspects of their lives, which included isolation and poverty, perpetuated by a lack of state intervention. Connolly notes 'community groups decided what is to be learned, the methodology and the tutor, community groups challenged the existing provision' (Connolly 2003, p. 11). Connolly (2008, p. 10) asserts that by the mid 1980s adult and community education was being organised by other key groups and agencies '…from the labour movement unemployed people, people with disabilities and minorities, especially from the Travelling Community. As a result, these groups '…deeply influenced thinking about social justice dimensions of adult and community education' (Connolly 2008, p. 10). Likewise, Kiely (1999, p. 136) refers to it as 'community education movement' because the women filled the role of '…learners, tutors, organisers and resource people'. Kiely points out, 'in 1989

the Combat Poverty Agency estimated that there were at least one hundred women's educational groups operating in low income communities in Dublin and other provincial centres' (et. al, 1999, p. 136). In addition, this growth in popularity in women's groups can be equated to Honneth's concept of recognition that underpins our personal and social development. Honneth notes:

> …the reproduction of social life is governed by the imperative of mutual recognition, because one can develop a practical relation-to-self only when one has learned to view oneself, from the normative perspective of one's partners in interaction, as their social addressee.
>
> (Honneth 1995, p. 92)

The genesis of community education is rooted in women movements of mutual recognition and their shared experiences of being marginalized and undervalued by society. West (2013, p. 125) points out that mutual recognition of oppression creates self-esteem, which builds the bonds of social solidarity. In addition, this also created the philosophy underpinning the movement formed through women realising through a collective action that they wanted a different life, or as Connolly asserts:

> Community education has been created in the most dynamic of processes, that of generating knowledge by action and reflection. It was formed by people who wanted different ways of taking their place in the world.
>
> (Connolly 2003, p. 10)

However, community education is also associated with community development, whereby the focus is on the needs of the community rather than individual needs. In addition, its roots can be traced to popular education based on the work of Paulo Freire in the poorest locations in Latin America. In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Paulo Freire underpins his theory of liberation with the belief that human agency is the route to personal and political transformation. He argued that societal structures could become so embedded in the human psyche that they can become institutions of oppression. Nevertheless, Freire argued that they should not be perceived as the limits of a closed world where there is no escape, but as a social battleground where personal boundaries can be pushed by the transformation of their own realisation (Freire, 1972, p. 25), or put simply through education people could name their oppression. Connolly notes:

> Community education, like popular education is rooted in the real interests and struggles of ordinary people. It is committed to progressive social and political change, based on the clear analysis of the nature of inequality, exploitation and oppression.
>
> (Connolly 2001, p. 5)

Elsewhere, Mc Glynn (2012, p. 64) notes '…the role of community education is to engage the most marginalized and voiceless in the community, to respond creatively to their needs, empowering them to act individually and collectively for social change, bring about a more just and equal society'. However, through innovation and the ability to create new learning environments outside of formal structures, community education was able to reach out to people on the fringes of society. As a response to this innovation the Green Paper (DES 1998, p. 88) suggests that community education should influence the mainstream practice. Even though, this could be seen as recognition of the important role of community education some were cautious of the implications.

Connolly (2001, p. 7) uses the metaphor of a 'glass fence' to depict the reality that mainstream education might be looking through to view the usefulness of community educations '…new methodologies, while remaining disengaged from the philosophy underpinnings these developments" (Connolly 2001, p. 8). Mc Glynn asserts:

> …the glass fence protects the separation between a community education ethos and a mainstream education ethos. The community education ethos of radical critical theory challenges the entire structures of society perpetuating injustice and inequality, including the mainstream education system itself.
>
> (Mc Glynn 2012, p. 67)

However, the employment and training agencies did utilise the methods of community education and Connolly explored the contradictions and hammered out the differences by arguing that 'community education is not about training or up-skilling the labour force. While the outcomes may include the entry of people into the workplace, it is a critical citizens, rather than workers or consumers/customers' (Connolly 2003, p. 17). In addition, there seems to be two definitions of community education. The first is from a feminist perspective, which is based on empowerment and equality. The seconded is found in the *White paper on Adult Education* (DES 2000, p. 110), which will be covered in more detail in chapter five. However, this document is based on the principles of life

long learning and seems to be filling the gap between second level and third level. The definition developed by AONTAS, which follows the first definition by stating:

> Community education is a process of empowerment, social justice, change, challenge, respect and collective consciousness. It is within the community and of the community, reflecting the developing needs of individuals and their locale. It builds the capacity of local communities to engage in developing responses to educational and structural disadvantage and to take part in decision-making and policy formation within the community. It is distinct from general adult education provision, due both to its ethos and to the methodologies it employs
>
> (AONTAS 2004, p. 18)

Paulo Freire once argued about the paradox that existed in education by pointing out the competing philosophical perspectives that inform education, Freire noted:

> Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes 'the practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world
>
> (Freire 1972, p. 56)

In light of Freire's statement the contradictory nature of education can create two conflicting positions as to the meaning and purpose of education. For example the 'integration into the logic of the present system' as Ryan (2014, p. 2) points out '…is exemplified by those who argue that FET provision should primarily prioritise the labour needs of the economy'. On the other hand, those who align their philosophical view with Freire's that education should be a 'practice of freedom' believe that education should focus on '…the multifaceted needs of the learners and those sectors of the population who are otherwise poorly served by mainstream education' (Ryan 2014, p. 2). Likewise, Lynch (1991, p. 4) highlights the failings of the formal education system by arguing, that the main common denominator among people who return to adult education is most likely those that the formal education system failed to serve.

Consequently, this draws attention to the contradictory nature of the many terms that have been used to frame the sector, which also included 'second chance education' which

suggests the person failing in the system rather than the system failing the person. Ryan also notes 'Adult Education was used as a one heading fits all..' which included '…community education, further education, Youthreach, VTOS…' and other initiatives within the sector (2014, p. 4). In spite of the attempt to ring fence the different provision and different approaches towards adult learning, Further Education and Training is a new stamp on an existing practice '…which means theoretical and practical expertise exists in this sector and the different opinions and philosophical positioning regarding the purpose of FET continue to be relevant' (Ryan 2014, p. 4). Nevertheless, I feel that I have to point out that in trying to define community education and other provisions provided by the ETBs it would be an arduous task even the word 'community' is hard to define (see Martin 1987, p. 12-13). In spite of this, the ambiguity itself raises a very important point and that is practitioners working in the different segments of the sector, might be working under the official stamp of VTOS or Youth-Reach. However, they were not only looking through the glass-fence, but they also adopted the philosophy of critical pedagogy. Grummell highlights the reasons for this by pointing out that there are also conflicting definitions, structural confusion and overlaps within the sector because of two different governmental departments (2014, p. 124). The Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), which Grummell sees as the reason between the two agendas of education and training (2014, p. 24). As a result, the sections of further education drew from logic of community structures and a community education ethos and this was down to the commitment on the part of a particular Vocational Education Committee (VEC) committee member (Grummell 2014, p. 125).

This highlights the logic behind why many people who work in the FET sector, seem to share many similarities in their philosophical approach to adult education. This seems to be a commitment to the well being of others emulating from the ethos and methodologies of community education, whereas, it also explains the reasons behind why so many are working from a training perspective. Nevertheless, this explains how the overlaps occurred between the economic and social agendas, when the Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme (VTOS) was established in 1989 and the Back to Education Initiative was launched in 2002. However, in essence what made adult and

community education unique was that boundaries were blurred between educational establishments and their surrounding communities, as well as between teachers and students, and work and leisure. In this sense, community education stands for a particular quality of relationship among the communities of collective interest and need, not only within the education system but also between educational agencies and their public in the outside world (Martin1987, p. 14). However, the fluid nature or even culture of adult and community education can be seen to be a very ambiguous public space. Consequently, under the neoliberal project these public spaces are being 'hollowed-out' and refigured because '…private interests trump social needs, and economic growth become more important than social justice' (Giroux 2004, p. 106). In consideration of this statement I now turn to the concept of neoliberalism and its mechanism managerialism to shed light on how this phenomenon can impact on education.

4. 4 Neoliberalism and Managerialism in Education

After extensive reading on neoliberalism I now view it as a powerful form of hegemony that seems to be in conflict with critical pedagogy. The rational behind this is due to Giroux, who refers to neoliberalism as a public pedagogy because:

> …it creates a mode of permanent education…that wants to squeeze out ambiguity from public space, to dismantle the social provision and guarantees provided by the welfare state, and to eliminate democratic politics by making the notion of the social impossible to imagine beyond the isolated consumer and the logic of the market
>
> (Giroux 2004, p. 107)

On the other hand, critical pedagogy is the extreme opposite to public pedagogy. Accordingly, when surveying the literature I came to the conclusion that nothing positive has been written about neoliberalism. For many, it seems to be a dirty word even in the political arena nobody seems to have put their hand up and claimed 'yes I am a neo-liberal'. Nevertheless, the extensive literature on the topic suggests that neoliberalism rocks and can even dismantle the very democratic foundations of our society through the idea that every thing has a price and if not it should be given one through commodification. Finnegan (2008, p. 54) notes that over thirty-five years ago the idea that the market should dictate and determine the needs of society was only entertained by

a few on the fringes of academia. However, after many years of experimentation which started in Chile in the early 1970s, an American backed military coup resulted in the instalment of the dictator General Pinochet and along with the new regime came an economic restructuring programme that we now understand as an experiment in social and economic engineering, spearheaded by economists known as 'the Chicago boys', who negotiated bank loans with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Harvey 2005, p. 8).

Neoliberalism has been framed as both an economic theory and a powerful public pedagogy and cultural politics" (Giroux 2004, p. xxv). Harvey (2005, p. 2) refers it to as the 'new economic configuration-often subsumed under the term 'globalisation'. Likewise, Finnegan (2008, p. 58) points out that neo liberalism needs to be understood as a powerful and complex form of cultural hegemony, it is not just what happens in the world of high finance or political mandates, it is a set of strategies, ideas and models that have been used to secure consent for the uneven structures of power and wealth around the world. In short, neoliberalism is capitalism at its best that supports the idea that the well-being of people and a healthy society is achieved by '…liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade' (Harvey 2005, p. 2). In an Irish context Allen and O'Boyle (2013, p. 4) argue that during the 'Celtic Tiger era' Ireland was offering tax-cuts to big business while at the same time turning a blind eye to ruthlessly bad business practices, so corporations could gain an aura of respectability as they operated as they pleased. Meanwhile, the media championed the Irish business elite by elevating them to superstar status through air time on radio and game shows such as '*The Apprentice'* where '…designed as fantasy programmes to romanticise business leaders and suck people into an aspiration to emulate them' (Allen and O'Boyle 2013, p. 5). On the other hand, even though Ireland was experiencing a 'first world' economy the reality was reflected in our 'third world' public service (Allen and O'Boyle 2013, p. 133)

Ireland's progression into a market driven neoliberal project accrued on the tail of an international trend that emerged in the 1990s. Lynch (et al., 2012, p. 5) notes that this is due to the fact that 'Ireland operates within the Anglo-American zone for reasons of history, culture, language, colonisation and trade'. Consequently, as part of Ireland's

modernisation process for trade and to foster competitive economic relationships within the zone the government embraced new public service (NPS) management as a 'distinctly political project underpinned by the spirit of capitalism' (Lynch et al., 2012, p. 3). However, managerialism is not just about management in a neutral sense it is about developing new systems of governance imbued with the language of values and practices that are synonymous with the neoliberal restructuring of social, political and economic organisational changes that where now being focused more on 'outputs' than 'inputs' for indicators of performance and accountability (Lynch et al., 2014, p. 4). Consequently, as part of this language of values and practices the concept of empowerment has been adopted. According to McCabe (1996, p. 36) in more recent years it has been appropriated by organisational management and industrial training. Nevertheless, the central argument of Inglis (1997, p. 4) is that empowerment involves people developing capacities to act successfully within the existing system and structures of power. At one stage empowerment was associated with a wide variety of radical social movement. However, this suggests that a process, which supposedly leads to, increased or devolved power leads in effect to a more subtle form of incorporation. The emphasis on people becoming self-regulating, disciplined, and controlled. Which also ties into Foucault's theory that power is now used in more softer, subtle and pervasive forms of control. Empowerment thus becomes a strategic discourse employed by management to legitimise changes to increase production and profit, which are often 'above and beyond the interests of employees' (McCabe 1996, .p36).

Framed in the logic of performance, competition and costumer choice large originations where fragmented thus created a decentralisation of budgetary and employment arrangements that filtered down from the private to the public sector, it became a mode of governance saturated in the values of the market. The example of the VECs being amalgamated into sixteen ETBs is exemplary of this, however at first glance it would seem to be a centralisation of power rather than a decentralisation, but as Grummell (2014, p. 133) notes, further education is being restructured through statutory agencies of the ETBs, SOLAS and the web of interagency responsibilities with Intro and other groups. Consequently, this has also filtered down into formal education, further education and higher education institutions. However, the primary and secondary sectors

have resisted such attempts at the governance of managerialism due to their strong representation from unions and the fact that people working outside of the primary and secondary sector are working on a contractual basis (Lynch et al., 2012, p. 15-21).

Another aspect of the impact of managerialism is accountability, value to the taxpayer, through the idea of 'how to capture the performance of further education?' (Grummell 2014, p. 127). Consequently, this is also having an influence on what counts as knowledge, what knowledge is being valued 'and equally what was rendered invisible and not valued' (Grummell 2014, p. 130). Consequently, it also forms the measurement of performance as an outcome-based system (Grummell 2014, p. 127). Grummell, points out that the whole idea surrounding 'what learning occurs for individual learners and for society.' is being '..filtered through an employment discourse of the government as further education is asked to contribute to the employability of the labour force' (2014, p. 127). As a result, it positions the learner in second place to the needs of the economy, thus creating a situation whereby 'different perspectives and elements of education are now being measured and valued' and other aspects are being 'rendered invisible and not valued' (Grummell 2014, p. 130). Grummell (2014, p. 130) argues 'this has significant implications for the kind of teaching and learning that occurs' because 'the focus is primarily on performance and outcomes'. This can also be equated to what Kincheloe and Mclaren (2005, p. 308) refer to as 'instrumental or technical rationality' 'the most oppressive features of contemporary society because it is more interested in method and efficiency than in purpose'.

4. 5 Conclusion

Adult and community education has come a long way since its fledging years. The methodologies and critical approach to adult education is with out question as a result of community educations success in reaching out to people on the margins of society. Nevertheless, the utilisation of theses methodologies into other sections of adult education was down to which agenda was adopted either the social or the economic. Consequently, due to the impact of the neoliberalism the economic agenda seems to be taking over due to the fact that everything has to be measured and given a place of value

through managerialism. Nevertheless, this process did not happen over night since the establishment of the ETBs, but was in fact a slow progression that has now taken up momentum, which I believe is evident in policy documents and to which I now turn to in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: FOUCAULTIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

5. 1 Introduction

Foucault's theoretical framework of discourse, I believe, is a valuable tool in tracing the changes that have been occurring in the sector over the years. Theses policy documents structure the meaning and purpose of the FET sector, but more importantly they also convey the political and economic agendas that underpin these documents. For this reason this chapter will conduct a discourse analysis on the Green and white papers, lifelong learning and the *SOLAS 2014-2019 Further Education and Training Strategy.*

:

5. 2 The Green and White Papers.

Informed by the Green Paper (DES,1998) which served as a discussion document, the publication of '*Learning for Life: The White paper on Adult education* (DES 2000, p. 26-27) was seen as a landmark policy document marking the official recognition of community education by the Irish government. According to Fleming the development of both papers was 'welcome and timely' because it evolved a 'lengthy consultation process' that can be traced back to the 1992 Green Paper (2001, p. 27). Part of this lengthy process for recognition was as a result of successful lobbying by AONTAS, NALA and women's groups (Murtagh 2014, p. 38). According to Hurley (2014, p. 72) the Green Paper was a response to the low levels of literacy among Irelands adult population and the concept of promoting equality along with, competitiveness and employment is reflected within the paper. Consequently, this seems to follow a contradictory path of combining both the social and economic discourses. In the opening pages of the paper 'job-creation, rapid growth' and up-skilling are deemed imperative, thus suggesting the needs of the economy over the learner. Whereas the social purpose is highlighted through the acknowledgement that adult education plays in promoting personal, social enrichment and improving democratic processes and addressing issues of equality and inclusion (DES 1998, p. 3-4) However, the White paper was the end result of a long awaited process, viewed as a land mark, not only in recognition of the sector but also the start of funding arrangements for human resources and new structures within the

field. Nevertheless, Hurley (2014, p. 74) notes that at the heart of the document is the idea of competitiveness, thus, suggesting that even after the lengthy consultation process the white paper maintained the paradigmic clash that was evident in its predecessor.

The representation of both ideological discourses seems to be accommodated in the policy documents. Nevertheless, by placing the economic and social purposes as nearly one in the same, these documents neglect to analyse or even recognise any compatibility between the economic purpose of competitiveness with the social purpose of consciousness raising, community building and citizenship (DES, 2000, p. 12). This apparent gap can be equated with what Foucault asserts as the said and the unsaid (1972, p. 110). Consequently, this silence functions as the means to fuse together both the economic and the social purposes of community education, which also seems to indicate a shift or even and emergence of a new political agenda of counter democratic processes. Fleming, views it as a 'conflict between the system world of state, economy and civil society' and as a result 'civil society becomes colonised by the system (2001, p.34). However, Grummell (2007, p. 187) points out that even though the policy document identified six priority areas of; consciousness-rising, citizenship, cohesion, competitiveness, cultural development and community development (DES 2000, p. 28), the White Paper's understanding of community development was limited to marginalized groups within society who are willing to solve their own problems. Thus, suggesting that the Irish state is '…negating any sense of state or societal responsibility for social exclusion and disadvantage' (Grummell 2007, p. 187).

Larner (2000, p. 7) argues that the rolling back of welfare state activities is one of the consequences of the neoliberal agenda that is focused on enhancing economic efficiency and international competitiveness. Consequently, this suggests that a void would be created in the welfare state provision and community education through the concept of life long learning is being shaped to fill that void. Likewise, (Finnegan 2008; Fitzsimons 2012; Grummell 2014) all argue that the meaning of community education is now saturated with the economic paradigm of neoliberalism, through the discourse of life long learning. This discourse will now be deconstructed below.

5. 3 Discourse of Lifelong Learning

The concept of lifelong learning is also supported by EU policy as noted in both the green and white papers. According to Alheit (2009, p. 116) '…during the most recent decade the concept of life long learning has been sharpened strategically and functionally'. Alheit (2009, p. 116-117) argues that the very idea of learning has shifted and has taken on a biographical dimension covering the lifespan and extending life-wide into people's everyday lives, he highlights two decisive reasons contained in the European Commission, *memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, to support his argument. Firstly, Europe is becoming a knowledge-based society and economy, where by skills and motivation is paramount in both the individual and the community as a whole if Europe wants to improve competitiveness through the adaptability and employability of the workforce (Commission of the European Communities, 2000, p. 5). Secondly, because of the complexity of Europe's positioning in the political and social world and the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity of Europe itself, people who want to plan the trajectory of their own lives must learn to live, while at the same time make active contribution to society. 'Education, in its broadest sense, is the key to learning and understanding how to meet these challenges (Commission of the European Communities, 2000, p. 5). Consequently, suggesting that because of the enlargement of Europe and the free movement of workers through nation states it is up to the individual if they want equality of opportunity to become educated and flexible to meet the demands of Europe's move 'towards a knowledge-based society and economy'. In Finnegan's study on neo-liberalism he highlights the emerging neo-liberal language as a 'paradigm for understanding change in contemporary Ireland, both in the narrow sense as economic policy and in the broad sense of political hegemony (Finnegan, 2008, p. 61). Likewise, Finnegan argues that the 'public pedagogy of neo-liberalism' is creating an ideological shift towards 'individualistic and acquisitive tendencies' (2012, p. 63). Finnegan also argues that 'politics of neo-liberalism needs to be understood as a powerful and complex form of cultural hegemony rather than simply as economic policy' (Finnegan 2008, p.58). This suggests that neo-liberalism is not just a political discourse focused on the nature of ruling the masses, but as Larner (2000, p. 6) argues it is '…a set of practices that facilitate the governing of individuals from a distance'. Evidently, suggesting that this process of

governing is executed through discourses of lifelong learning streaming from European policymakers.

Brine (2006, p. 654) notes 'within this period dominated by the Lisbon strategy (2000) the lifelong learning trilogy of documents continued not only to develop the concept but also to construct the learner in relation to the knowledge economy/society'. Brine asserts that this continued the distinction made in pre-Lisbon documents that created a dual definition of lifelong learning and as a consequence it positioned the learner in a structural hierarchy of high knowledge-skilled and low knowledge-skilled learners (Brine 2006, p. 649). Consequently, this positioned the high knowledge-skilled learner as privileged within the knowledge economy, whereas the low knowledge-skilled learner was positioned in a discourse of deficit model of needs, resulting in them being regarded as not only being 'at risk' of unemployment and marginalisation, but also as the 'risk' to the stability of the European Union (Brine 2006, p. 656). Grummell (2007, p. 197) argues 'that the current focus on individual autonomy, economic competitiveness, expertise and consumerism results in adult education's emancipatory potential being constrained'. Grummell concern is that the framing of equality of opportunity 'by a neoliberal discourse emphasises individual choice and market needs which in turn switches the focus of adult education to the needs of the market (Grummell, 2007, p. 179). However, it could also be argued that the blurring of the boundaries between the social and economic purposes of adult and community education, is in fact as a process to define the winners and the losers in the educational and labour market power relations. However, in the most recent document published by SOLAS (2014) '*The Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019*' the boundaries between the social and economic purposes of adult and community education seem to have been removed and community education seems to be ring fenced in its own section separate from other further education provisions that are listed.

5. 4 SOLAS: FET Strategy

This document produced by SOLAS (Further Education and Training Authority) maps out its strategy for delivering and funding education and training for the next five years. One of the most striking statements in this publication is placed under the heading of

‘Skills as an insulator from unemployment’, it states that ‘as job security gives way to labour market flexibility and the focus moves away from a ‘job for life’ to ‘work for life’, only through skills development and life long learning can participants in the labour market ensure employability’ (SOLAS 2014, p.5). This is another prime example of the said and the unsaid as Foucault (1980, p. 94) argued that we are all ‘subjected to truth’. However, in this case the truth is not being directly falsified ‘…but is playing on some truths of experience whilst masking or leaving out others and so theses partial or isolated truths become our explanation of what is natural, which also achieves hegemony’ (Allman 1987, p. 232). In addition, this switch from ‘job for life’ to ‘work for life’ only holds strong ‘…as long as our concept of production exists to create profit rather than to fulfil human needs’ (Allman 1987, p. 232). However, the misleading concept of FET being a ‘second chance’ is also present in the document (SOLAS 2014, p. 20). As I stated before this suggests that the person failed not the system. Nevertheless, the most striking feature I found was the idea of measurability, outputs and matching the needs of the employer, the document states:

> …stakeholders revealed challenges in combining the maintenance of the inclusive ethos of community education sector and at the same time matching the needs of employers. Respondence had mixed views with respect to the extent to which accreditation could or should be introduced into all programs. However, this was a consensus that all programmes should be measured against some form of suitable outcome metric closely related to the objectives. SOLAS will sustain funding as appropriate for community education until such time as the information exists that will allow for the establishment of a new funding model based on appropriate metrics. This budget will be reviewed on an annual basis.
>
> (SOLAS 2014, p. 26)

This suggests that because different aspects of community education cannot be measured appropriately to match economic needs over the learners needs, funding will remain. However, it will also be reviewed, which could also indicate why so many programmes are losing their funding. Finally, I find ‘establishment of a new funding model’ interesting, because it seems to suggests that they are still trying to figure out what to do with community education, it is kind of like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole.

5. 5 Conclusion

The discourses surrounding the FET sector have changed considerably since the launch of the *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult and Community Education* (DES, 2000). However, the ideas that are evident in the texts seem to be the same that is, preparing a flexible workforce that can meet the demands of the European Union both at home and abroad. However, the latest document from SOLAS takes a more full-on view and that is measurability because its focus is primarily on performance and outcomes. As a result the learner in positioned in second place to the needs of the economy and value to the taxpayer. Without doubt, I have to agree with Grummell (2014, p. 130) that this is going to have a '…significant implications for the kind of teaching and learning that occurs'.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

6. 1 Introduction

The primary focus of this research was to enquire into the restructuring of adult and community education under the recently formed Education and Training Boards (ETB). This research endeavoured to investigate the realities of this shift in meaning and the affect that this is having on practitioners as they try to maintain their philosophical approach to adult education. The rationale behind this enquiry was to establish whether or not this state led reframing of the sector under 'Further Education and Training' has impacted on practitioners working in the sector and if so what has changed in their practice. Consequently, I do have to admit that coming into this research I did have a lot of preconceived ideas about the establishment of the ETBs. One of these was that the ETBs were like a juggernaut, and with one clean dramatic sweep they were going to restructure the whole sector to suit the needs of the economy over that of the learner. I also have to point out that many of the concepts that we covered for the M.Ed. in Adult and Community Education, which included; neoliberalism, new managerialism, hegemony, power control, resistance and recognition. I did not fully understand how interconnected they are and how they are played out in the real world. Nevertheless theses might seem as personal findings but with out them this research would never have been completed because they all emerged as themes in some part or form in the research.

6. 2 Contextualising the study

Through this case study the voices of my participants turned fragmented parts into a cohesive whole by sharing with me their lived experiences, in which I am greatly thankful. As I stated earlier, they consisted of three women and two men whom have all been working in adult and community education for many years. As part of my commitment to confidentiality I will introduce my participants but I believe that by connecting them to the subjects that they teach, could lead to their identification. In spite of my concerns I did identify the art teacher (CE 2) because of the nature of their work and the role that art plays at the VTOS centre. Participants CE 1, CE 2 and CE 5 originally worked in the community development sector before moving to VTOS when it

opened in the early 1990s. Whereas participants CE 3 and CE 4 both came from the secondary school sector before starting work in VTOS in the late 1090s. However, as this is the chapter dedicated to my findings I will start with the first question that I asked all the participants and that was 'what has changed in your practice since the establishment of the ETBs?

6. 3 Findings

What has changed?

Two different distinct views emerge from this specific question. One was that things have being changing slowly at the centre, but over the years they have been trying to resist theses changes. The second was that everything is changing fast. Due to the fact that their whole centre is now being restructured as a result they are no longer classed, as VTOS but are now an education and training centre. However, the other major change for them is due to the fact that their previous coordinator recently retired and was replaced by a person who seems to have a different approach to adult education. In addition, their original VTOS programme ran over a two year period, but now from this September 2015 the courses that they will be running will be reduced to a one-year period. The other change that they highlighted was the fact they no longer work for the department of education and are now working for SOLAS. However, this switch from one government agency to another seemed to be a contentious issue for the participants.

SOLAS

> It was like waking up to a bad dream instead of from a bad dream. I have been employed by the department of education for the last twenty years, I go to bed one night and the next morning I'm working for SOLAS, talk about a kick in the teeth.
>
> (CE 4)

> The fact that we have been tied into SOLAS has changed the game plan for a start, it means that our courses are taken on a new role, ok we are now gone from being purely educational, to more, I suppose results based.
>
> (CE 3)

> We have gone completely over to a system, which is only dealing with a production line, with students in, and students out with qualifications, that is where we have moved to in recent months.
>
> (CE 1)

Reflecting back over these conversations, the mood seemed tense and fraught with emotional charged feelings of being devalued but being devalued in many different ways. However, it was through this conversation regarding SOLAS that the themes of ethos started to appear.

Ethos

One was the ethos of the centre underpinned by their philosophical commitment to the learner and the community. In addition part of this commitment to the learner was addressing issues that were created by the bad experiences that students had in their primary and secondary education. CE 3 noted that the person centred approach they adopted in VTOS was very successful over the years in addressing theses issues. CE 1 pointed out that over the years they have always promoted Freire's concept of consciousness raising in the classroom. However, it was also pointed out to me that:

> Students are under the same hegemonic affects as every body else they are exposed to the same media as we are, same realities as we are and its difficult to see alternatives, if you are constantly told, if you do A, B or C you will be successful and if you do not then you are some how personally lacking, so its no wonder you are not successful. So when I present material for course work to my students especially the social studies area I try to give alternative. I present also in alternative ways and if I express an opinion to the class it is because I like to have a classroom where everyone is free to express their opinion.
>
> (CE 1)

These conversations regarding their philosophy approach to education had a very significant influence on the findings of my research. Even though they have the official stamp of VTOS they identified with and work from a community education perspective. This was one of the findings that I had difficulty understanding. Nevertheless, this will be covered in detail in the analyse section of this chapter. However, as part of their ethos the sub-theme of 'process' was also highlighted. Consequently, they also see their ethos at

the centre being squeezed out and lost because of a shift to an outcome-orientated production line.

Process

Over the years the art room at the centre played an important role as part of their holistic approach to education. For many students it was a place of refuge, where they could go relax unwind and immerse themselves in a creative endeavour. The mood in the room was all ways tranquil, apart from the occasional eruption of laughter, 'that's adults for you'. This atmosphere of peace and safety was maintained by the facilitator quietly moving around the room attending to the different students, while at the same time speaking in a low tone. The art facilitator told me that for many people, returning to education is a difficult decision to make. Some are nervous and carry with them a lot of personal issues. For them art can be therapeutic, which helps to build concentration and confidence, which then filters down into the other classes. The theme of 'process' and its importance was touched on throughout the interview.

> When their attention span is reduced because everything has to be instant. So there is nothing planned or worked and thought out, you know. But the minute they start working in a creative environment, what they do is they give themselves permission to try and fail and dust themselves off, go at it again and assess it, evaluate it, make it better… so they are making all these decisions without any negative force within themselves. Its like the old thing if it fails again it fails better, failure is a positive thing because it's about the process, rather than the end result.
>
> (CE 2)

The importance of process in the art room and the ripple affect it can have on the students is a testament to the work that is carried out. Likewise, it is also a prime example of how the centre operated through a holistic approach, whereby all the staff works together as a whole instead of a fragmented departmental part. In addition the art facilitator also made another important point that…

> If I create a safe environment, safe warm, comfortable environment I can teach them anything…so if they feel safe with me feel comfortable with me, they feel important with me, feel like they are an individual. They are a person in their own right, they are valued, valued as a person. Then self-esteem has raised to a level where they feel confident to go for opportunities…I find that developing the person is far more important than the actual training.
>
> (CE 2)

However, they also see their ethos at the centre being squeezed out and lost because of a shift to an outcome-orientated production line. As one participant said:

> It's all about results for the sake of results…what we did in VTOS around the person will be lost… for the last two years we have been trying to hang onto personalised learning, as a major support and a huge influence on the learning, but because it is seen as non-contact hours, it's gone. We will now be training people for a course and not for life, so education for life has gone back to being education for a job. It's pretty much what PLCs are.
>
> (CE 3)

As well as personalised learning being dropped other modules are also being considered. The craft section of early childcare is being fazed our as well as personal effectiveness. Consequently, CE 2 claimed that the art program is now being considered, because it is not seen as valuable anymore, as a progression into employment.

I was interested in how the sector was reframed through shifts in meanings and how their role was being reframed through a shift in terminology. Moreover, I was interested to discover new discursive formations (Foucault 1972, p. 117).

Discursive Formations

A significant point was also made regarding the language that I had used around training I was told that are now an institute of further education and training rather than a vocational training opportunity scheme (VTOS). Even though the word 'training' appears in both titles it was pointed out to me that…

> Its how people perceive the language used when people will see education as training, where I see education as educating the person as well as the skills. There is a slight difference in thinking, if you take VTOS, that was to train people to get back into employment but within that process you were developing the person. But from what I can gather is the emphasis is now gone on the training rather than the education.
>
> (CE 2)

Another aspect of this shift of emphasis is they are no longer classed as community education. In addition they are also not classed as teachers or facilitators but are now classed as tutor/trainers. However, another discursive formation appeared which centred on the idea of empowerment. Nevertheless, it was not a shift in terminology but more of a reallocation from the student to the practitioner.

Empowerment

The theme of empowerment was also mentioned in conversations. However, surprisingly it was not regarding students it was in relation to the ETBs new mission statement. Unfortunately I could not get a copy of it. According to CE 1 in a recent meeting the ETB employees where presented with their vision statement, which began with nurturing learners but what followed, was a sentence that stated, "empowering the pursuit of excellence"

> Now I don't know what that means ' excellence' if you are talking about language excellence has become a dirty word in our society because we had many centres of excellence given to us within the health service and they have been just so many problems, this was, this was the argument around the health service, you will have centres of excellence. Now I work for a new organisation does empowering excellence, does that even as a sentence even make sense, I don't think so, but it is learners that we should be empowering. I know the statement nurturing the learner was in there as well, but I wonder which is the priority.
>
> (CE 1)

In addition there was another discursive formation and that was focused on the new co-ordinator. The terms manager and co-ordinator were interchangeably used by different participants. According to CE 4 the co-ordinator made a remark about 'managing the place'.

Co-ordinator or manager

During the interviews I could get not only a sense of resistance but also I got verbatim a very hypercritical view of the new co-ordinator.

> We used to have an open door policy, not any more he keeps the office locked. I was told the other day that it was not in my job description to care about students, it was my job to deliver the modules and it was up to the students if they wanted to pass them or not. If he had his way, he would get rid of us all and replace us with tutors on part-time contracts.
>
> (CE 5)

I found the theme of care very interesting or in this instance the lack of it, because it raises the question as to the views that the coordinator holds regarding education and care. However, during the interviews I asked them had the title changed from coordinator

to manager? The answer was no but one participant made it clear to me that they regarded him as a trouble-shooter to manage the restructuring of the centre. On the other hand, another participant said…

> Is it coordinator or manager, and I'm not sure what we have, the fact that the coordinator is seen in a different light and a manager is seen in a different light the terminology that's being used creates perception; perception has an effect on every body. The fact that a person becomes a manager means that they are no longer part of the staff, they are above the staff, separate to the staff, they are now an extension of the ETBs as apposed to an coordinator that works as staff. I'm not sure, I never thought about it.
>
> (CE 3)

Apparently at a staff meeting they were all told that over the years they had too much say in the running of the place, they were here to teach and he was here to manage the place and make sure their outcomes were met.

Outcomes

The topic of achieving outcomes seems to be having a significant consequence. One comment was:

> I hear outcomes a lot, though we are looking for efficiencies, we are looking for outcomes. We are looking for quality assurance, the language relating to learners and opportunities for them is some what lost a little bit in that".
>
> (CE1)

Likewise, the three other participants commented that over the last couple of months they have gone into a system, which is only dealing with a production line of students in, and students out. CH 2 remarked 'the emphasis is gone on the training rather than the education' Consequently, the idea of achieving outcomes was attached to funding and this was also another major change for the staff at the centre. Previously they were allocated funding by the Vocational Education Committee (VEC), but now under the ETB they have to apply for funding from SOLAS based on their outcomes. In other words their funding model is based on the results of students and how many they can successfully get through to either higher education or employment. One of the participants, who would not let me record the interview, gave permission for me to use the data. I was told that 'the new coordinator is talking about streaming students before

they start the course to make sure that the only students they get can make the grade'. CE 4 had very strong feelings regarding this prospect and remarked 'you can imagine the potential that will be lost, some students that had bad experiences in their early school days will just end up running out the door'. Another comment regarding outcomes was:

> If a student comes in here now, a student can't cut the grade, well so be it. Move on to some thing else, as apposed to trying to help the person to get to where they need to be…so now we are compounding failure on top of failure.
>
> (CE 3)

In another interview I asked the question 'if everything gets hinged around outcomes, how is that going to affect the learner? CE 2 asserted:

> Well the process isn't followed, from my point of view its about the bottom line, I'm being assessed, I'm being assessed whether people get through or not, so the process changes to satisfy my needs or the bottom line.
>
> (CE 2)

Many of the themes that emerged during the interviews were made very explicit. However, another theme that did emerge was recognition or lack of it. I believe that this was evident in expressions or 'in vivo code' such as 'poor relation', 'lumped in' and 'fiasco' (Charmaz 2006, p. 55).

Recognition

The idea of adult and community being the poor relation was mentioned. However, I did not ask the question regarding recognition. Nevertheless, the topic was covered through the interviews. The following quote is a prime example

> Adult education has always been the poor second cousin, it was always looked at with secondary education and secondary education gets all the funding. Secondary education gets all the support, but adult education, further education area was always the very, very poor second cousin. Who got the scrapings of what was left, the fact now that we are being bungled in with a training programme that was a fiasco in the first place and that's why it had to be closed down, moved on, change of name and every thing else, and now they have change name they have lumped in further education with it, and yet the same people are running the same programs. So I can't see how it is going to be any different. The same people are,

> are doing the same thing that they did before, how can things be different, it doesn't work that way. Further education is a small part of it it's even a smaller part of the training part because the budgets for training are bigger than the budgets for further education and always have been.
>
> (CE 3)

In addition the concept of recognition did surface through different topics. One such topic was their new involvement with SOLAS, another one was the ethos of the centre and the way they work with adults. In short, the concept of recognition seemed to be interconnected with other topics including what subjects were being valued and what subjects were being devalued. Nevertheless, as this is a chapter on findings and because of the nature of this finding on recognition, I believe I can do it better justice in my analysis.

6. 4 Summary of key findings

The staff at the centre are in the midst of a restructuring program their whole way of working with adult learners seems to be getting dismantled. I found that over the years the staff worked from a community education perspective, which they viewed as a valuable tool in their approach to education. Similarly, the concept of process also emerged as part of their ethos. Therefore, ethos was the first theme to emerge. However, as they have been trying to maintain or even hang on to own philosophical values of education, which now seems to be getting measured on a scale of value, regardless of the success they have had over the years. Hence, the theme of recognition emerged. This was also highlighted through their connection with SOLAS and the change in terminology from teacher/facilitator to tutor/trainer. In addition, to the idea of value the theme of outcomes emerged. However, I also see the discursive formations of the way empowerment is being used and the idea that they have a new co-ordinator who manages rather than co-ordinates. Through my reading for this thesis and my understanding of value, outcomes and discursive formations I will be putting them under the heading of 'new managerlalism and its outcomes'. However, all these themes are interconnected and this will be teased out in my analysis.

6. 5 Analysis

6. 6 Introduction

The analysis of my findings was conducted through a constant comparative approach between the conversations and the literature (Charmaz 2006, p. 163). The discourses and their analysis that was explored in the literature was utilised to give shape and meaning to the emerging discourses from my participants. This allowed me to view the data and attach it to context of past and present meanings surrounding this study (Mc Glynn 2012, p. 119). In addition, this was also enhanced by keeping a journal and writing memos on the mood, and expressions at key points during the interviews (Charmaz 2006, p. 80). The headings that are below represent the generative themes that emerged through theoretical integration (Charmaz 2006, p. 45). These themes are the result of initial codes and in-vivo codes that produced my focused codes. This allowed me to make connections through theoretical coding, which then developed into the theoretical categories of generative themes.

6. 7 Ethos

I found this topic fascinating because I could not understand as to why the staff at the VTOS centre regarded themselves as community educators. However, through extensive reading for my literature review, I discovered that people were looking through the glass-fence, or as one of my participants told me 'we had a very forward thinking AEO, a man who had wonderful ideas'. Therefore because of this man they adopted the philosophy of a person centred approach through critical pedagogy. Likewise, Grummell confirms this by pointing out that there were also conflicting definitions, structural confusion and overlaps within the sector because of two different governmental departments (2014, p. 124). The Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), which Grummell argued as to the reason between the two agendas of education and training (2014, p. 24). As a result the sections of further education drew from logic of community structures and a community education ethos and

this was down to the commitment on the part of a particular Vocational Education Committee (VEC) committee member (Grummell 2014, p. 125).

It was through the descriptive language of the participants that I got a feel about their approach to education. The idea of process and creating a warm and safe environment seems to be not only a commitment to the well being of others, but also an identity that they all shared. For example, in my findings I quoted CE 1 as saying that 'students are under the same hegemonic affects as everybody else' with this regard CE 1 tries to give students a different interpretation of their social worlds. I like to think of this statement as a prime example of Giroux (1993, p. 34-35) concept of the teacher being a 'border-crosser' and Gramsci (1971, p. 134) concept of the organic intellectuals that I covered in chapter three. Likewise, I believe that this emphases an important point that people will bring with them their best practices and if these practices are a recognised common theme within a working environment they become an identity (Honneth 1995, p. 163). However this idea of identity was also focused onto the students. The art room was the epitome of this, through the process that was described by CE 2. In short he was describing 'problem posing'. Freire's (1972, p. 68) depicts "problem posing" education as students become co-investigators. Likewise, the art room is a transitional, educational space, 'where identity may be renegotiated and risks taken in relation to potentially new identities' (West 2006, p. 42). It could be plausible argued that the new identity of being a student is an on-going negotiation that was 'kick started' through the attention they receive in the art room. In this sense, the ethos at the centre stands for a particular quality of relationship of identity, between the practitioners maintaining their identity as community educators, so students can build or rediscover their identity. Consequently, this identity is under treat as the different components of it are being reconfigured and positioned with and into different meanings. I believe that can be further explored through the concept of recognition or in this sense misrecognition and disrespect West 2013, p. 132)

6. 8 Recognition

Reflecting back over these conversations the mood seemed tense and fraught with emotional charged feelings of being devalued but being devalued in many different ways. The fact that their wage cheque is now being issued by SOLAS, whereas before it was by the Department of Education has caused a conflict of identity. For example, their views of SOLAS seemed to be loaded with contempt, references where made about the re-branding of FÁS after the scandals of exam results being altered so students could get a pass and of the fact that tax payers money was being wasted in many different ways by the board of management or as Murttagh (2014, p. 46) points out '…FÁS became involved in a public controversy over lavish expenditure on travel to the US', seems to have left a bad taste in the mouths of practitioners I interviewed. One such comment that exemplifies their distaste of being assonated with SOLAS was 'we are being bungled in with a training programme that was a fiasco in the first place…and now they have changed the name they have lumped in further education with it' (CE 3).

The concept of recognition is also evident in this statement from being the poor relation of formal education, receiving only the scraps of what was left from budgets, to now being even a smaller part of the training agenda. This also raises the question of the promises that were laid down in the White Paper (DES 2000) considering that was seen as a landmark policy document marking the official recognition of adult and community education by the Irish government. However, if this is applied to Honneth's (1995, p. 121) concepts of recognition and how individuals experience the three different forms of, 'love, rights and esteem'. In this instance, social esteem is acquired through individuals having their abilities and achievements recognised and this is attained inter-subjectively within a particular group (Honneth 1995, p. 122). Elsewhere, West (2013, p. 125) points out 'only by being recognised can we achieve an identity and become conscious of our own uniqueness'. In addition, self-esteem is reinforced through recognition of rights and is important for self-confidence and self-respect. (Honneth 1995, p. 121). Consequently, their rights seem to have been taken away from them and the esteem of working for the department of education has been removed and replaced with SOLAS, an organisation that they do not seem to share an identity with.

Their removal of rights is also compounded by, being told by the co-ordinator that in the past they had too much say in the running of the centre. After hearing this statement I remembered what Freire said 'the language of the people, cannot exist without thought; and neither language nor thought can exist without a structure to which they refer' (Freire 1972, p. 69). In other words, language contains the philosophy of being in the world, which contains themes of people's lives. In this sense, themes are the symbolic means in which people organise, interpret and connect life experiences as building blocks of identity (Kaufman 1986, p. 76). Moreover, it could be plausible argued that over the years their input in the centre was one of the components of their identity that they all shared and valued. Consequently, they are now being told that their input is no longer valued and irrelevant to the present structure. Likewise, their switch of departments can be depicted as a switch from a purely education agenda to a training agenda. Consequently, part of this switch can also be highlighted through the discursive formation of their title, '…for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined' (Foucault 1972, p. 117). Consequently, this shift in definition repositioned the practitioners from teacher/facilitator to tutor/trainer. As a result, redefining who they are and what they do. In chapter four I highlighted that language is not a medium of neutrality, because it lives a socially charged life (Ahearn 2012, Bakhtin 1981). As a result it is not only framing the sector, but it is also framing and fixing boundaries around the practitioners working in the sector. However, this also highlights the reality of the clash between the economic and the social purpose of the sector that now seems to be more focused on outputs than inputs as an outcome of managerialism.

6. 9 New Managerialism and its Outcomes

One of the outcomes that restructuring has brought is the timeframe that students can attend the centre from next September 2015, what was originally a two year course will be reduced to a year. This seems to be a prime example of managerialism that is synonymous with the neoliberal systems of governance imbued with the language of values and practices that are focused more on outputs than inputs for indicators of

performance and accountability (Lynch et al., 2014, p. 4). On the other hand, it can also be equated to Grummell's (2014, p. 127) argument that value to the taxpayer is being channelled through the idea of 'how to capture the performance of further education'. However, the whole idea of outcomes and how they are measured seems to be the crux (for the want of a better word) of how the centre is being restructured. In addition, it also seems to be a major component that connects all the themes that emerged from this research. For example, the whole idea surrounding 'what learning occurs for individual learners and for society…' is being '…filtered through an employment discourse…' (Grummell 2014, p. 127). Consequently, this is also having a direct influence on what counts as knowledge, what knowledge is being valued '…and equally what was rendered invisible and not valued' (Grummell 2014, p. 130). The dropping of personalised, learning along with, the suggestion that the art programme might be cancelled altogether because it is not viewed as a route to employment is a prime example of this. It could also be plausibly argued that this is also being applied to the knowledge base of the practitioners working in the sector, as their approach to teaching and facilitation is not being valued any more. This was exemplified by a practitioner being told, it is not in your job description to care for students, it is jour job just to deliver the modules and it is up to the students to pass them. According to Noddings (1984, cited in Lynch et al, 2012, p. 82) this assumes that education is a rational process preparing citizens as public persons, largely ignoring the ways in which caring is both endemic to education and to human life itself. Similarly this can be equated whit Foucault's 'subjugated knowledge's' (Foucault 1976, p. 81), which I see as being buried under what Kincheloe and Mclaren (2005, p. 308) refer to as 'instrumental or technical rationality' because it is more interested in method and efficiency than in purpose'. Likewise, this can also be equated to the neoliberal project and its mechanisms of governance through managerialism, because as Grummell (2014, p. 130) points out 'the focus is primarily on performance and outcomes'. However, this can also be conceptualised through Foucault (1980, p. 94) argument that we are all 'subjected to truth' resulting in different viewpoints and modes of living being normalised through discourse. Similarly, Gramsci's (1971, p. 145) concept of hegemony is also applicable. However, another aspect of how discourses are shaping the way practitioners work within the ETB came from one ETBs vision

statement for the future and that was ‘empowering the pursuit of excellence’ and ‘nurturing the learner’.

I found this statement fascinating for a number of reasons, firstly the word ‘excellence’ was highlighted during the interview rather than the word ‘empowering’ which the participant equated with the student, as one would expect. However, the central argument of Inglis (1997, p.4) is that empowerment involves people developing capacities to act successfully within the existing system and structures of power, while emancipation concerns critically analysing, resisting and challenging structures of power. At one stage empowerment was assonated with a wide variety of radical social movements including adult and community education. Consequently, McCabe (1996, .p 36) points out that in recent years it has been appropriated by organisational management and industrial training. Likewise, in this case it has been used by the ETB regarding its employees, which Inglis (1997, p. 4) regards as ‘a process, which supposedly leads to increased or devolved power leads, in effect to a more subtle form of incorporation’.

The emphasis on people becoming self-regulating, disciplined, and controlled, which also ties into Foucault’s theory that power is now used in more softer, subtle and pervasive forms of control, especially when applied to Foucault’s concept of surveillance and his depiction of the panopticon (Foucault 1977, p. 187). As a result, empowerment becomes a strategic discourse employed by management to legitimise changes to increase production and profit, which are often ‘above and beyond the interests of employees’ (McCabe 1996, .p36). In short, it is about encouraging workers to rationally choose to commit themselves to the values, goals, polices and objectives of the organisation as a rational means of improving their life chances. On the other hand, I also find the use of the phrase ‘nurturing the learner’, intriguing because in the ‘*English Oxford Dictionary’* nurture as a verb can mean to train or educate. Undoubtedly, the staff at the centre have always been focused on trying to nurture the learner. However, because of the restructuring that is occurring at the centre the staff are still processing the changes that are being implemented and their relationship to those processes and their main concerns are the students, because they believe that their centre is turning into an outcome orientated production line with ‘students in and students out’.

6. 10 Conclusion

Through my research as depicted in my findings and analysis, I found a group of practitioners working in a centre that provided adult education. However, their holistic approach to education was underpinned by the methodologies and critical pedagogy of community education. Consequently, their centre is being transformed into a place that is only going to run different courses over a year period. However, because of the emphasis on achieving outcomes and maintaining funding, different subjects are being placed on a value system of outputs. As a result, some subjects and supports to students have been dropped and some are under evaluation. Consequently, their approach to adult education has also been evaluated and it seems that because it no longer has a place in the new structure of students in students out, their holistic approach is being dismantled. Consequently, blended into all this upheaval is their association with SOLAS, which seems to be a major issue for them. In the face of all theses changes the staff at the centre are still committed to the well being of the students. In spite of this they are concerned as to the quality of education that they are now expected to provide.

My own journey through education has had an impact on me in many different and interesting ways. As depicted in the opening chapter of this thesis my early school days were fairly dismal and full of feelings of regret and unfinished business. However, it was my return to education that gave me a new perspective or even a new lease of life. Therefore, I have an appreciation for the work that is carried out in the further education and training sector. Nevertheless, I also had my own preconceptions as to the consequences that the establishment of the ETBs could or would create. In spite of this, I entered this research with an open mind to investigate the changes that practitioners are experiencing due to the amalgamation of the VECs into sixteen ETBs. Coming from a construction background I have first hand experience of training due to the fact that I was trained in an apprenticeship for four years as a bricklayer. On the other hand, I also have experience of education. I viewed both as two separate entities and with this in mind, I took on John Dewey's (1969, p. 17) argument that he highlighted all those years ago between the traditional and the progressive, which he equated with the human condition of thinking in extreme opposites of 'either or' 'between which it recognises no intermediate possibilities'.

I hoped that this frame of mind of being open to intermediate possibilities would give me an unbiased view of how practitioners were making meaning from theses changes to their practices. However, this was an amazing learning experience for me because what I found took me by surprise in a few different ways. First and fore most, I learned that I could read all the theory in the world but it was only by engaging in dialog with front line staff working for the ETB that I could really get a deeper understanding of the different concepts that we covered in college. On the other hand, it also highlighted the interplay between theory and practice as an important tool to challenge the structures of inequality that are persistent in our society. Consequently, one such structure is neoliberalism and I now understood why Giroux (2004) called his book '*The Terror of Neoliberalism'.*

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APPENDIX 1

Research Consent Form

Masters in Adult and Community Education.

Researcher:
Jonathan Brown
Department of Adult and Community Education
Maynooth University
Maynooth Co. Kildare
Email: JONATHAN.BROWN.2010@nuim.ie

Supervisor:
Camilla Fitzsimons
Department of Adult and Community Education
Maynooth University
Maynooth Co. Kildare
Email: camilla.fitzsimons@nuim.ie.

Purpose of Research:

As part of the requirements to successfully complete my masters in Adult and Community Education at Maynooth University, I am conducting research concerning the changes that have occurred in community education. Therefore, I am inviting you to participate in a semi-structured interview. In order to fully document your valued insight and only with your permission the interview will be recorded on a mobile device. As I value you're input confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process and anonymity will be ensured, by disguising your identity through the use of a pseudonym.

If at any time you wish to withdraw from the interview you are fully entitled to do so. A full transcription will be sent to you for your approval before the final thesis is written. In addition, if you are unhappy with any section of the transcript you are fully entitled to request its removal.

I…….agree to participate in Jonathan's research and I fully understand that I have the right to withdraw from the interview process at any time, which also includes my right to withdraw permission to use any data gained from the interview. I also understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the final thesis and any subsequent publications extracted from this thesis.

_____ _____

Signature Date

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.