

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION; CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS FOR PEOPLE
WITH
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES ACCESSING FURTHER EDUCATION.**

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Abstract

While there have been advances towards inclusive education at primary; post primary level and in higher education such as Maynooth University there has been little or no progress made for people with intellectual disabilities accessing further education (FE). Despite policy and legislation calling for inclusive education for people with intellectual disabilities; this marginalised group are disproportionately represented in further education colleges in Ireland.

This study examines the challenges and barriers to inclusive further education for people with intellectual disabilities. Literature on disability issues and models of inclusive education for people with intellectual disabilities is also reviewed. The research question focuses on the challenges and barriers to inclusive education for people with intellectual disabilities from the perspective of adult educators working in two further education colleges, under the auspice of two separate Education and Training Boards (ETB). This is done through qualitative research in the form of unstructured/semi-structured interviews. The responses to the questions provide the foundation of the data analysis. The themes have been extracted based on the experiences and opinions of the interviewees.

The research presents key findings that need to be addressed in order for further education to be made accessible to people with intellectual disabilities. Issues such as funding, resources, teacher training, alternative assessment models based on the individual student's abilities; as well as flexibility for students to take modules over several years as opposed to completing eight modules in one year were raised. Deconstructing the socially constructed views on people with disabilities and their ability to participate in further education is highlighted as an issue for this marginalised group and their advocates.

However; the most challenging issue in the pursuit for inclusive education is the reality that the Irish education system is inextricably linked to production as a means to serve the

economy. The amalgamation of the Vocational Education Committees (VEC) and SOLAS (formerly FAS) raises fundamental concerns for inclusive further education. Measuring the value of further education based solely on economic outputs limits opportunities and access for students with intellectual disabilities. The transformative personal, social and psychological benefits of education are being disregarded. The neoliberal agenda has altered the course of the sector towards supporting the needs of the economy rather than the needs of the learner (Grummell 2014, p. 127)

Giroux (2004) and Harvey (2005) 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 the civil liberties and the social contract; (Giroux 2004, p. 107). The restructuring of the VEC and SOLAS to form the Education and Training Board (ETB) has depersonalised the person centred approach and the autonomy afforded to each college of further education in favour of an outputs based production line measuring and valuing students who graduate in a timely manner, gain employment or progress to higher education only.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DES Department of Education and Science

ETB Education and Training Board

FAS Irish National Training and Employment Authority

PLC Post Leaving Certificate

QQI Quality and Qualifications Ireland

SOLAS Further Education and Training Authority

VEC Vocational Education Committee

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This piece of research was prompted while facilitating a discussion on inclusion with a group of Social Care Practice students. I was advocating for a fully inclusive society by providing access to all aspects of community living and education for people with intellectual disabilities. It was during this lecture that it dawned on me that the college I was working in was not inclusive.

While there were students registered in the college with learning difficulties and physical disabilities there were no students with intellectual disabilities. I was embarrassed and felt like a fraud. Having studied in Maynooth University where the Inclusive Learning Initiative (ILI) had been piloted, students with intellectual disabilities are supported to integrate and experience university life to the fullest possible extent. The students attend lectures and tutorials, complete assignments, and take part in social activities just like their peers. The ILI is open to accessing outcomes at a level which the student can achieve. This allows students to work at their own pace. It is strengths based model and aims to challenge students to reach beyond the expectations of others, to identify and achieve their own potential.

I enquired as to why such an initiative was not offered in the college I was teaching in and in other colleges of further education. A discussion with the head of department informed me that such an initiative had been explored but had not gone ahead due to several factors, including, funding issues, lack of interest, and fear and attitudes of academic staff. It was this series of events that prompted this piece of research.

Aim of research

The research looks at inclusive education; it explores the challenges and barriers for people with intellectual disabilities in accessing further education (FE). More specifically, it attempts to identify what the challenges and barriers are for people with intellectual disabilities accessing further education. The intention of doing this is to provide a framework by which the reader could understand inclusive education from philosophical and practical perspectives. The research endeavours to address this question by reviewing relevant

literature and researching current legislation. Qualitative research design will be utilised in the form of unstructured/semi structured interviews. The data will be analysed to generate themes. The key focus of the study is to ascertain the challenges and barriers to inclusive education for people with intellectual disabilities from the perspective of adult educators working in two further education colleges, under the auspice of two separate ETBs. The overall aim of the research is to identify issues that need to be addressed prior to such an initiative being introduced in the FE sector. It can be defined as a pilot study or feasibility study. It is hoped that it will be part of a first step in a broader process in making further education inclusive for people with intellectual disabilities. According to Van Teijlingen and Hundley pilot studies are a crucial element of a good study design, they further warn that conducting a pilot study does not guarantee success, but does increase the likelihood.

The purpose of this research is to uncover the challenges and obstacles to people with intellectual disabilities accessing further education. I could have chosen to conduct this research from many different perspectives. For example, I could have chosen to interview students with intellectual disabilities and their families; this may have provided me with an insight into what it's like to be a minority in the classroom and how that might affect their social, emotional and educational well-being. Parents may have provided me with an idea of what it means for them for their son or daughter to attend further education and how that has impacted on their family.

I could have chosen to interview mainstream students and ascertain their perspectives on inclusive education. I could have chosen to include the policy makers and the people holding the purse strings. However, I chose to interview professional practitioners working on the front line in further education, in order to get a sense of the practical issues that need to be addressed in order for inclusive education to be introduced in further education. Ultimately, it will be these staff that someday, will be at the forefront of developing and promoting philosophies and policies of inclusive further education into practice. It will be front line staff that will be educating students, their families and society on the benefits of such an initiative. For the purpose of this study, utilising staff as participants, from all levels of further education, made the most sense, as it is their knowledge and experience I value.

Learning for Life

The White Paper on Adult Education (2000) proposed to

‘Set out a blueprint for the future development and expansion of adult education, for a strengthened focus on access, quality, flexibility and responsiveness, and for the establishment of national and local structures which will help provide a coordinated and integrated approach. Adult Education is the last area of mass education which remains to be developed in Ireland. It further promises to ‘provide for further development within the context of an over-arching policy and a comprehensive systemic approach to meet the challenge of bringing the concept of lifelong learning concept to reality’

The Paper recommended that adult education should be underpinned by three core principles, promoting: (a) a systemic approach; (b) equality of access, participation and outcome for participants in adult education, with pro-active strategies to counteract barriers arising from differences of socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity and disability. A key priority in promoting an inclusive society is to target investment towards those most at risk; (c) interculturalism.

The White Paper advocates a national programme of Adult Education within an overall framework of lifelong learning on the basis of its contribution to six priority areas; Consciousness Raising refers to the capacity of Adult Education to enable people to realise their full human potential in a way that draws on the links between their individual personal experiences and wider structural factors as an empowering process of self-discovery towards personal and collective development. Citizenship refers to the role of Adult Education in enabling individual members of society to grow in self-confidence, social awareness and social responsibility. Cohesion focuses on enhancing social capital in general, but particularly on the empowerment of those experiencing significant disadvantage, in order that they may play a full and active part in all areas of the social and economic life of the country. It also recognizes that this is both an educational and an organisational challenge.

While the white paper highlights the need for a national programme on the basis of lifelong learning and advocates for equal access and participation for all; including adults with disabilities; there has been little or no change for this marginalised group. When we compare this to the advances that have been made in community living options for people with intellectual disabilities, the shift from the medical to the social model is significant as our institutions are closing down and people with disabilities are being supported to live and

participate in community life. The further education sector has resisted change consequently denying access to certain groups in society. One must consider the work of Giroux 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)

Overview of thesis

The thesis is divided into five chapters.

Chapter one introduces the research question, why this topic is pertinent and why I have chosen it as my research topic.

Chapter two will explore the current literature, reviewing intellectual disability, including disability as a social construct, models of care, social inclusion, human rights and the human development approach. The literature review also explores models and barriers to inclusive further education. Current recommendations and legislation pertaining to people with disabilities accessing education will also be discussed.

Chapter three looks at the philosophical underpinnings of the research design, in how my epistemological and ontological stance and methodology influenced the research. The data collection and analysis methods are then described, with the ethical considerations discussed. The limits of the study are also acknowledged.

Chapter four presents the findings and identifies key themes and provides a voice for participants.

Chapter five discusses the findings from the research in relation to the literature explored in chapter two and places the learning from the research in the overall context of adult education.

Chapter six concludes the thesis with the strengths and weaknesses of the research, discussing the implications, recommendations and highlighting areas for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will draw on theory related to the research topic. Intellectual disability will be defined and what this label means for the individual will be discussed. Models of care will be examined, as will social inclusion. Policy and legislation promoting access to education for people with disabilities will be explored with particular emphasis placed on the further education sector. Three models of education will be presented in an Irish and international context. The connection between feminism and disability will also be highlighted, as will the power of politics

Critical theory and critical pedagogy will be used to relate theory to practice, through this lens; I will attempt to make sense of my social world with the aim of transforming it (Freire 1972, p.28). Brookfield (2005) proposes that critical theory comprises of their core assumptions:

1. Western open democracies are highly unequal societies in which economic inequity, racism, class discrimination are empirical realities.
2. The way this state of affairs is reproduced and made to seem normal, natural and inevitable 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)

Defining Intellectual Disability

Intellectual Disability is a term for describing individuals with significant developmental delays; it is considered the most politically correct terms; in the past, these individuals were often referred to as retarded, handicapped or having a learning disability. According to Costello and Webster, the words,

‘disability, impairment and handicap are often used interchangeably and propose that it is important to understand each word and to use it accurately

as how we give meaning to something influences our behaviour, if we define a disabled person as unable, an object of pity, we treat them as such' (cited in Share and Mc Elwee, 2005, p. 276).

Barnes and Mercer believe 'the perception of disabled people being unfortunate arises because they are unable to enjoy the social and material benefits of modern society' (2010, p. 28). Barnes and Mercer refer to western society as regarding disability as 'an individual failing and a personal tragedy' (2010, p. 1). Barnes and Mercer further propose that, as a direct result of these terms and perceptions, they 'have provided the explanations for the wide-ranging social disadvantages and dependence and the justification for routine intervention in disabled people's lives'. Barnes and Mercer cite Thomas (1982, p. 4); 'This approach is further confirmed in public attitudes towards the victims that emphasize imaginative concern, mawkish sentimentality, indifference, rejection and hostility'.

Barnes and Mercer (2011, p. 20) acknowledge that the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH) (WHO, 1990) has had the most influential contribution in breaking away from the traditional medical model of disability to the more social model. This has been achieved by recognising 'impairment' as the underlying cause of 'disability' and or 'handicap', as well as identifying and highlighting the 'social handicap'. Barnes and Mercer (2011, p.24) cite Beatrice Wright's emphasis on the 'ways of behaving prescribed by society' 'that 'impairment' is not a sufficient condition for social 'handicap'. Therefore, one cannot dismiss the impact the social environment has on individuals with disabilities (1960, p. 3). To have a disability is to have "something wrong with you" (Oliver, 1996, p. 30). Various designations have been used to represent different manners of terminology for those with disabilities:

The Irish National Association for Adults with an Intellectual Disability (NAMHI) defines intellectual disability as

'A greater than average difficulty in learning. A person is considered to have an intellectual disability when the following factors are present: general intellectual functioning is significantly below average; significant deficits exist in adaptive skills and the condition is present from childhood' (NAMHI, 2005)

Intellectual Disability can be categorised into four levels; mild, moderate, severe and profound (Gates, 1997). The DSM-V refers to intellectual disability on an IQ scale; mild being an IQ of 50-55 to 70, Moderate 35-40 to 50-55, Severe 20-25 to 35-40, and profound having an IQ below 20-25.

The Disability Act 2006 defines “intellectual disability”, in relation to a person over the age of 5 years, defined by the concurrent existence of:

- A. Significant sub-average general intellectual functioning; and
- B. Significant deficits in adaptive behaviour- each of which became manifest before the age of 18 years; (Government of Ireland, 2006, Disability Act 2006, 3(6).

The Irish National Intellectual Disability Database (NIDD) was established in 1995. It is a database of information about people who are receiving intellectual disability services or who are in need of these services. The objective of the database is to ensure that accurate information is available about the needs of people with intellectual disabilities; it also predicts future service requirements. Services are planned and co-coordinated on the basis of the information contained in the database. The most recent statistics, 2013, indicate there are 27,691 people with intellectual disabilities; this shows an increase of 2,078 compared to the database figures from 2008. According to the database:

- 9,018 of those registered are under 18 years,
- 9,190 are registered as having a mild intellectual disability,
- 11,234 are registered as having a moderate intellectual disability.

Interestingly, there were only 32 individuals registered as attending third level education (NIDD, 2013). Unfortunately, no further information was provided on the database to ascertain whether the 32 individuals were attending further education, 3rd level, university or a combination of all three.

Freire and Critical Pedagogy

Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1972) linked education with the concept of liberation. I believe Freire's concept of 'thematizes' and thematic investigation is a vital starting point in decoding the totality of people with IDs' lives. One must consider the contextual reality of their being in an able bodied world in order to reveal situations of oppression that creates limits on their human-world relationships. For the purpose of this research the relationship is people with ID and the challenges they face in accessing further education. In order for me to understand the phenomenon as a whole, I need to break it down into key components to create meaning as a whole. 'The more active an attitude men take in regards to the exploration of their thematic, the more they deepened their critical awareness of reality, and in spelling out those thematic, take possession of the reality through conscientization' (Freire 1972. P, 54).

Common Factors within Intellectual Disability

Having defined intellectual disability as a term, we will now look at the broader implications of intellectual disability under several headings, such as social models of care, human rights and education.

Disability as a Social Construct

All people are born equal. It is when society compares one person to another that people then become labelled as different, difference is 'socially constructed' (O'Brien, 1989, p. 5). The Leeds Archives cite Aldrecht & Levy; 'disability definitions are not rationally determined but socially constructed. Despite the objective reality, what becomes a disability is determined by the social meaning individuals attach to physical and mental impairments' (1981, p. 14). In other words, limits are placed on people with disabilities not by themselves but by other able bodied citizens. Aldrecht & Levy further propose that 'fundamentally disability is defined by public policy' and that 'disability is whatever policy says it is'. I reject this, as legislation and policy are easier to change than culture, attitudes and beliefs. The task now is to move towards deconstructing the view that disability is a 'problem to be managed' and identify how to ensure they have equal opportunities. A Learning Disability is not indicative of low

intelligence. People with learning disabilities sometimes have difficulty achieving their intellectual level because of a deficit in one or more of the ways the brain processes information

Wolfensberger (1992) highlighted the impact of discrimination on people with disabilities. He referred to 'dis-ableism' as devaluing stereotypes that develop into discriminatory behaviour and states that 'disability is often in the eye of the beholder', wearing a hearing aid may make it harder to be accepted by others than being actually hard of hearing. The term 'learning disability' reflects society's views on specific areas of performance. Society makes assumptions, seeing the 'disability' first. We decide what a person is capable of, what information should be shared. Thus, we need to achieve a balance between over and under protection.

When the focus on impairment overrides the individual as a person, this can result in the individual being devalued by their society and community. Harris et al. (1971) first referred to the impact of impairment and disability on valued social roles and relationships. Wolfensberger (1983) further expanded on their work and developed 'Social Role Valorisation Theory'. SRV is the name given to a concept for transacting human relationships. The goal of SRV is to create or support socially valued roles for all people in their society. The more roles a person has, the more valued those roles are, and the more chance a person has of experiencing the good things in life. Wolfensberger proposes two ways of accomplishing this:

- 1) Enhancing the competencies of people and
- 2) Enhancing the social image of people.

Len Barton (2000) proposed that 'dis-ableism' is one element of social exclusion. He proposed that; 1) there are many compounding forms of exclusion, 2) It is not natural but socially constructed, 3) There is no single factor that can remove it, and 4) It is in constant need of conceptual analysis. .

If one is to view disability as a social construct, then we must acknowledge that all theories about the world are grounded in a particular perspective and world view and that knowledge is partial and incomplete. Therefore, perspectives and world views can be altered and

changed. Deconstructing socially constructed views of people with disabilities can be achieved through integration, inclusion and participation.

Social Model of Care

The medical model of disability focused on peoples specific impairments; its underlying assumptions are that people with disabilities are different from the norm and that they need to be helped and, if possible, cured, so that they might conform to the norm. This model also believed that the best way to help them conform was to place them in large institutions segregated from society. In the early 1970s, the medical model of caring for people with disabilities was starting to be challenged and rejected by people with disabilities. It was as a result of this challenge that the social model of disability began to emerge. The central shift in thinking was that disablement arose from the environment and organisation of society rather from the individual with the impairment. O'Brien and O'Brien (1989) challenge the assumptions that people had 'special needs which could not be met in ordinary settings'. They describe the five valued experiences that all people seek out: relationships, choice, contributing, sharing ordinary places and dignity. They propose that all services for people with disabilities should be designed on these five valued experiences. In order for services to achieve this, service provision should be based on five principles:

1. Community Participation
2. Promoting Choice
3. Supporting Contribution
4. Encouraging Valued Social Roles
5. Community Presence (Share and Mc Elwee, 2005, p. 281)

The philosophy was that individuals with a learning disability have the same needs as everyone else and need support in having their needs met. He influenced the social model of care which is 'rights based', not a 'charity'. The social model of care believes that the problem lies with the able bodied in society. People with disabilities have a voice and it must be listened to. One of the biggest challenges for us is to discover how to give individuals with intellectual disabilities the primary say in what type of support is provided. People may have impairment but they become disabled by society that excludes them from full

participation. The cause is not with the individual but within society. The locus of control needs to be with the disabled person.

It is not individual limitations, of whatever kind, which are the cause of the problem but society's failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organisation. The consequences of this failure does not simply and randomly fall on individuals but falls systematically upon disabled people as a group who experience this failure as discrimination, institutionalised throughout society. Disability is now seen as a consequence of social, attitudinal and environmental barriers that prevent people from participating in society, from gaining an adequate quality of life; 'a multi-dimensional concept involving personal well-being is experienced when a person's basic needs are met and when he or she has the opportunity to pursue and achieve goals in major life settings' (Felce, 1997, p. 143).

Oliver (2004, p. 21) argues that the social model of disability is about nothing more complicated than a clear focus on the economic, environmental and cultural barriers encountered by people who are viewed by others as having some sort of impairment – whether physical, mental or intellectual. Barnes and Mercer argue that 'the social model approach breaks the traditional causal link between impairment and disability' and the need to look at 'how far, and in what ways, society restricts opportunities to engage in mainstream economic and social activities and renders people with impairments more or less dependent (2011, p. 30).

Micro policies from organisations and stake holders representing, advocating and lobbying for the rights of people with disabilities have long opposed the institutionalisation of people with disabilities and highlighted the benefits of social inclusion for this marginalised and stratified group. However, these requests for institutional reform have gone unheard of for many years. That is until now, with the introduction of macro policies such as the 'Disability act', 'New Directions' and 'A time to move on from congregated settings; and A strategy for Community Inclusion' by the HSE. These are all now initiating change and closing our institutions in favour of community inclusion and integration.

Social Inclusion in Ireland

This study was funded by the Equality Authority and the National Disability Authority and investigated the extent of social exclusion for people with disabilities under the following headings: Education, Earnings, Poverty and Deprivation, and Social Life and Social Participation. The report highlighted that people with disabilities face many barriers to full participation. On almost all the measures studied, people with disability fare worse than others in their own age group, and this reflects the degree to which they are hampered in their daily lives by their illness or disability. They also found that people with disability were more likely to be affected by attitudes and found themselves socially excluded as a result of the public's perception of them. The report concluded that the focus should now be on the need to change societal conditions to accommodate the needs of the disabled person. Those with disabilities should be able to participate in activities such as education, employment and leisure along with everyone else.

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Inclusion Ireland

Inclusion Ireland is the national organisation for people with intellectual disabilities and their families in Ireland. Their core focus is on the realisation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Ireland was one of the first signatories to the CRPD. To date, the CRPD has not been ratified by Ireland, almost 8 years later. This sends a message to people with a disability, that they are not a priority to the Irish government.

The CRPD contains a very strong statement on the provision of education throughout the lifespan. If ratified, the CRPD will commit the Irish government to supporting people with a disability in mainstream, inclusive education settings.

In a recent Submission to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, *The Right to Education of Persons with Disabilities in Ireland March 2015*, Inclusion Ireland highlighted a recent report by WALK, which examined people with a disability and their access to further education in Ireland. While there are some examples of good practice, there are few people with an intellectual disability in mainstream further education. Of the 18,275 people, aged over 18, that have registered as having an intellectual disability, only 32 attend 3rd level education. The WALK report noted there is evidence of negative attitudes towards people with an intellectual disability around their ability to learn. There is also a stigma around intellectual disability resulting in a “chill factor” in people accessing mainstream provision. There are also low expectations for people with an intellectual disability, culminating in a belief that they cannot achieve. There are also structural barriers for people, such as a lack of courses at FETAC level 3 and below. There has also been a historical lack of training for educators in further mainstream education around disability.

Human Rights

Human rights include the right to be treated with the same dignity and respect as other members of society. Human rights, up to now, focus on protection from abuse of power, particularly abuse of power by the state. People with disabilities were only recognised when there was abuse of power by the state. Human rights are not just about protection against power, they are also about restoring power to the person.

‘The current political and social imperative demands the inclusion of people with learning disabilities in community life, and in the full range of human experience. This is supported by human rights legislation, which gives expression to the fundamental rights of all people’ (Gates, 2004, p. 458)

The SOLAS further education and training strategy, 2014-2019, proposed to merge the Equality Authority and the Human Rights Commission into a newly established, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. Public bodies will have to have due regard in the performance of their functions to: human rights and equality; to eliminate discrimination; and to promote equality of opportunity and treatment. Contemporary German philosopher Alex Honneth focuses on how individuals experience three different forms of recognition; love, rights and esteem and that self esteem is reinforced through recognition of rights and is important for self confidence and self respect (1995, p.121). Honneth also proposes that ‘having rights that are recognised leads to self esteem’ (1995, p.122). However the opposites of love, rights and self-esteem are three forms of disrespect; neglect abuse and humiliation, which can lead to loss of self esteem that may be damaged through the denial of rights (Honneth 1995, p.249-250). Lynch & Baker (2005) propose ‘To promote egalitarian ways of seeing the world, students must be educated about the subject of equality and other cognate concepts such as human rights and social justice’ (p. 147).

The Human Development approach

Amartya Sen identified the Human Development Approach (2001, 2010) as a quality of life measurement. The human development model states that the state must recognise that some citizens are at a distinct disadvantage and need more support than others, and, in terms of funding, these individuals should be prioritised so that they have the freedom to make decisions and choices about their lives. The theory promotes that, all things being equal, people should be free to make informed decisions/choices on health, education and political matters. Martha Nussbaum (2011, p. 18) redefined Human Development as the Capabilities Approach. She refers to capability as ‘freedom’ and asks what each person is able to do and to be. The Capabilities Approach takes each person as an end, the total well-being and the opportunities afforded to that person. It focuses on ‘choice or freedom’ and proposes that ‘good societies should be promoting for their people a set of opportunities, or substantial freedoms, which people then may or may not exercise in action, the choice is theirs’. Nussbaum (2011) pluralises “capabilities” in order to emphasize that the most important elements of peoples’ quality of life are multiple and qualitatively distinct. Nussbaum (2011), highlights that ‘health, bodily integrity, education and other aspects of an individuals’ life cannot be reduced to a single metric measurement without distortion’.

Nussbaum in 2011, further developed Sen's economic theory into a normative social justice theory. She refers to Sen and Jon Elster's theory on 'social malleability of preferences and satisfactions'. In other words, preferences are not hard wired; they respond to societal conditions, when society has put some things out of reach for some people, they typically learn not to want those things. They form what Sen and Elster call adaptive preferences. Sometimes, people learn not to want the goods in the first place, because these goods were made "off limits" for people because of their gender, race, class or disability. For example, Irish women in the 1970s accepted that there was a cap on their education and that there was a "bar" on public service careers when you get married. Other marginalized groups also internalize their second class status by accepting to live in institutions and accepting to work in sheltered workshops as they are not capable of participating in further education. This acceptance of the limits placed on individuals with intellectual disabilities and the notion that they are incapable of participating in further education cannot be accepted. According to the Stanford Archives, strong acknowledgment of human diversity is one of the key theoretical driving forces of the capability approach. Its criticism of other normative approaches is often fuelled by, and based on, the claim that full human diversity among people is insufficiently acknowledged in many normative theories, such as theories of distributive justice. This also explains why the capability approach is often favourably regarded by feminist philosophers, or philosophers concerned with care and disability issues, since one of their main complaints about mainstream moral and political philosophy has precisely been the relative invisibility of the fate of those people whose lives did not correspond to that of an able-bodied, non-dependent, care giving-free individual who belongs to the dominant ethnic, racial and religious group. People of colour, marginalized people, the disabled and many women do not fit that picture. Capabilities are not just abilities residing inside a person but also the freedoms or opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social and economic environment (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 20).

The Reproduction of Inequality in Education

In acknowledging the primary site for socialisation as the family we must also recognise the second site as the education system. Connolly highlights ‘very significant inequalities persist in the educational system in spite of the apparent equal opportunities provision Connolly (1996, p. 35). Lynch (1991, p.4) suggests that those who benefit from the education system are the middle class and in particular men. Connolly (1996, p. 36) identifies the casualties by highlighting; the two major marginal groups as women and working class people, are not served adequately by the formal educational system’. I propose to add a third casualty to; people with disabilities and in particular those ID.

This is an unjust system that needs to be highlighted and exposed in the public arena. The process of ‘conscientization’ Freire (1972, p.23) is now required by exposing these private issues as social issues, connecting the personal to the political.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2011) recognises the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, it advocates for an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:

- The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
- The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
- Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.
- Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.
- Enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community.
- Ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others.

The UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunity for People with Disability in 1993 signalled a major shift in thinking about disability policy. In Ireland, it had a major influence on the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities. The rules aim to make sure that all people with disabilities can exercise the same rights and obligations as other citizens and set out what needs to happen to make social inclusion a reality, such as access to information, transport, education, employment and income support. Adopted by the Council of Europe in April 2006, the Disability Action Plan 2006- 2015 contains a number of specific actions including participation in political, public and cultural life, education, information and communication, employment, accessibility of the built environment, and transport.

Inclusion Ireland Position Paper 26 4.6 has called on Dept. of Education and Skills as a matter of priority to publish a plan to implementation all sections of the NDS including the EPSEN Act 2004. Young adults with an intellectual disability, those on the autism spectrum and those with an acquired brain injury exiting school have the right to participate in and benefit from educational opportunities. The practice of transferring these young people to the health sector is incompatible with their right to further compensatory or adapted education.

New Directions (2012-2016) is the HSE policy for supports services to adults with a disability. According to New Directions, supports should be individualized, outcome-focused supports, which enable adults with a disability to live a life of their choosing in their community, in accordance with their own wishes. In researching the policy, people with disabilities were clear that they want to do worthwhile things that fit with their interests and aspirations for their lives. Training and work are very important to them. In line with O'Brien (1989), they want to do ordinary things in ordinary places and be part of their community. They want support to be independent and they want to be able to make choices and plans for their lives. They also want to have the support they need to do that. According to New Directions, the personal supports that should in future be available to an adult with disability are:

1. support for making choices and plans;
2. support for making transitions and progression;
3. support for inclusion in one's local community;
4. support for accessing education and formal learning;

5. support for maximising independence;
6. support for personal and social development;
7. support for health and wellbeing;
8. support for accessing bridging programmes to vocational training;
9. support for accessing vocational training and work opportunities;
10. support for personal expression and creativity;
11. support for having meaningful social roles;
12. Support for influencing service policy and practice.

The *Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004* states that it endeavours to an act to make further provision, having regard to the common good and in a manner that is informed by best international practice, for the education of people with special educational needs, to provide that the education of people with such needs shall, wherever possible. It endeavours to do so in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs, to provide that people with special educational needs shall have the same right to avail of, and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers who do not have such needs. To participate within the level of their capacity, in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives.

Section 30 states that one of the functions of the ESPN is to review the provision made for adults with disabilities to avail of higher education and adult and continuing education, rehabilitation and training and to publish reports on the results of such reviews (which reviews may include recommendations as to the manner in which such provision could be improved);

- to advise all educational institutions concerning best practice in respect of the education of adults who have disabilities;
- to advise the Minister in relation to any matter relating to the education of children and others with disabilities;
- to consult with such voluntary bodies as the Council considers appropriate, (being bodies whose objects relate to the promotion of the interests of, or the provision of support services to, persons with disabilities) for the purposes of ensuring that their

knowledge and expertise can inform the development of policy by the Council and the planning and provision of support services.

Despite all the above calls for inclusive education and an ideology of inclusive education, we are reproducing inequality in FE over and over again. Lynch & Baker (2005) propose that there are four major equality problems in education 1. The role of educational institutions in promoting social-class inequality. 2. Select admission and the ideology of the market. 3. Grouping and tracking: the ideology of 'ability'. 4. Curriculum and assessment matters: bias towards linguistic intelligences. I concur with Lynch & Baker in saying that we need to make our educational institutions truly egalitarian and that 'equality in education can only be achieved if we recognise the deeply integrated relationship that exists between education and the economic, political, socio-cultural and affective systems in society' (p.132)

Models of inclusive education

Noonan (2011) highlights three models of inclusive education identified by Hart, Grigal, Sax, Martinez & Will (2006), which are the most widely used internationally.

1. Substantially Separate Model
2. Mixed Program/Mixed Hybrid Model
3. Inclusive Individual Support Model

The substantially separate model

Programmes are often staffed by special education teachers and are generally housed separately within the college. Students only take part in classes with other students with disabilities and 'typically don't enjoy on-going sustained interaction with the general student body' (Hart et al., 2004).

Mixed program/mixed hybrid model

Programmes normally have a separate programme base on campus. While students with intellectual disabilities may take part in regular college courses with the general student body, they mainly follow a separate curriculum with other intellectually disabled students. Students

may participate in social activities with their non-intellectually disabled peers. The main focus of this model is on ‘functional life skills and employment objectives’ (Grigal & Hart, 2010).

Inclusive individual support model

Students with intellectual disabilities are invited to participate in courses for audit or credit in regular college courses, certificate programmes, and or degree programmes, along with the general student population. The intellectually disabled students ‘are not part of a specially designed programme for students with disabilities, but individuals who avail themselves of existing supports available through the college...and other relevant support agencies’ (Weir, 2004, p. 67). There is no program base on campus. Services are driven by the student’s vision and career goals, and students receive individualised support throughout the course of their studies. No limitations are imposed on the student by a ‘programme’ and students, therefore, have access to a whole range of college courses and social activities.

The Alberta Model

Alberta, Canada, has more Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Initiatives and more experience with Inclusive Post-Secondary Education than any jurisdiction in the world. Initiated by families with the support of advocates in 1987, the University of Alberta became the first university to offer Inclusive Post-Secondary Education. Since then, 19 post-secondary institutions across the province offer inclusive education opportunities to students with intellectual disabilities.

Students attend regular college and university classes through Inclusive Post-Secondary Education. Students enrol in faculties and programs including Education, Business, Nursing, Kinesiology, Classics, Public Relations, Physical Education, Recreation and Arts, to name a few. In class, fellow classmates offer assistance by doing such things as sharing notes, including in-group work and encouraging discussion. Students with developmental

disabilities take part in the same learning activities as their peers, such as in assignments, practicums, exams, and study groups and is successful by adapting and modifying materials and experiences as necessary. Students, classmates, instructors and Inclusive Post-Secondary facilitators work together to create inclusive learning experiences for all. Students supported by Inclusive Post-Secondary Education seek to expand their student role by becoming involved in extracurricular activities such as clubs, student associations, recreation, and social activities.

Barriers to Inclusive Higher Education

Adams and Brown carried out a study on the experiences of people with disabilities in higher education. Their study highlighted issues and barriers to inclusion from individuals with disabilities such as dyslexia, panic attacks, arthritis, deaf/hearing impediment, diabetes, mental health issues, wheel chair users, mobility issues and epilepsy, however, it failed to include the experiences of people with intellectual disabilities. Adams and Brown (2006, p. 14) refer to Tomlinson's (1996) report which stressed that

‘inclusive learning is an educational idea fundamental to good teaching and learning practices, for most higher education institutions, this will require a significant cultural shift, from seeing disabled students as outsiders coming in to an institution which openly embraces all’

Adams & Brown (2006, p. 12) state that ‘barriers may be structural, organizational, behavioural and attitudinal but all are underpinned by a society that, despite the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation in many countries, still does not fully embrace the inclusion of disabled people’. An attitude can be defined as ‘a favourable or unfavourable evaluative reaction toward something or someone, having pre-existing attitudes can lead one to become close minded, resistant to change and biased to the way information is interpreted’ (Brehm, Kessin, and Fein, 2005, p. 64). Societal attitudes are linked to perceptions and stereotypes. Freire (1972) proposed that sensitive educators need to set aside their own assumptions in order to be able to hear the needs of the learner.

Feminist Perspectives on Disability

I have chosen to include a feminist perspective, as my enquiry into people with intellectual disabilities accessing further education lies outside the dominant traditions of education. Feminist research can be used as a catalyst for consciousness rising when structures of power and agency need to be adjusted and viewed through an alternative lens. I feel that a feminist methodology has a broad vision of research that can be used to research any marginalised or stratified group in society and challenge socially constructed views of people with intellectual disabilities.

Feminist research actively seeks to remove the power imbalance between the research and subject; it seeks to change social inequality. It must be acknowledged that there is a gap between reality and the ideal. While the ideal is to promote equality and social change, there are many barriers to achieving this. Deconstructing the social constructs that have been imbedded in society for decades are a difficult task, as is convincing the stakeholders and funding agencies that change is good. The relationship between structure and agency is dynamic. As structures have been formed and influenced by and through social, political and historical contexts, we can seek to change and alter them.

Dorothy Smith's concept of bifurcation of consciousness, refers to a separation or split between the world as you actually experience it and the dominant view to which you must adapt e.g. a masculine point of view as the norm and everything else being the other. The notion of bifurcation of consciousness highlights that subordinate groups are conditioned to view the world from the perspective of the dominant group, as the dominant group's perspective is embedded in the institutions and practices of that world i.e. media, education, work force, religion, family, and is reinforced by patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. People with disabilities are marginalised because they are different. Barnes and Mercer (2010, p. 64) highlight the connection between 'feminist struggles to overturn patriarchy...and disabled people campaigns against their social exclusion'.

Patricia Hill Collins (1990), on Kimberley Crenshaw's concept of 'Intersectionality', highlights multiple different categories of discrimination and oppressive systems of power that serve to compound individuals. She looks at how the institutions and various social

statutes such as race, class, gender, sexuality, etc., are related to each other and serve to discriminate against those minority social statuses through historical, political, cultural and social lenses. We cannot understand why individuals with intellectual disabilities have been excluded from third level education without understanding how 'dis-ableism', and other discriminative institutions, intersects. There are any different types of discrimination; we cannot see them in isolation, as people often experience multiple forms of discrimination at the same time overlapping each other disability as a social construct. I now see how intersectionality can help us understand issues of coalition and alliance, building across lines of power to bring people from different marginalised groups together. We cannot look at intersectionality in singular dimensions; instead, we have to understand how gender, race and class influence each other. I now see the privileges that some people in society enjoy and the discrimination that is facilitated by hierarchal positions such as social class, race, being male or female or having a disability or not. Intersectionality highlights the multiple categories of potential discrimination or oppression that serve to compound individuals, further placing them at a disadvantage in society.

Exclusion is an everyday experience for people with disabilities. It can inform their expectations and aspirations, such as being identified as not belonging to the non-dominant group i.e. male hegemonic discourse. In the words of Simone de Bouvoieur the 'Other', the 'dominant group enjoys the privilege of remaining oblivious to the worldview of the other, or subordinate group, since the 'Other' is fully expected to accommodate to them'. The 'Other' not perfect like 'man' marginalised because of difference. Society views the 'able' as 'normal' and anyone outside this must be 'abnormal' female in a sexist society.

Barnes and Mercer highlight the work of disabled sociologist Paul Abberley (1987) and the way he linked his experiences to comparable writings from feminists and anti-racist writers, 'oppression is an all-inclusive concept which is located in hierarchal social relations and divisions' and that 'historically, biological arguments have been used to justify the oppression of both woman and black people', however, 'the biological element in disabled people oppression i.e. the impairment is far more real than its counterparts for women and other oppressed groups'. Impairment is often functionally limiting, unlike skin colour and sex, therefore, 'the biological difference is part of the oppression as they are unable to conform to the nondisabled ideal (Abberley, 1987, p.7 in Barnes and Mercer, 2011, p. 77-78).

Power & Education

Slattery (2003, p. 208) discusses Foucault in *Madness and Civilisation* (1965). He refers to,

‘how society has sought to define, explain and control the poor, the sick and the mad, and that ‘prior to the 19th century the state had no responsibility for such groups...however modern systems of definition and control began to emerge...the sick were hospitalised and confined to bed, the mad were defined as deviant, sinful or sick and confined to the madhouse and isolated from society at large’.

Slattery goes on to discuss Foucault’s theory that a discourse of ‘professional language and body of knowledge enhances the power and authority of the professionals to the extent that the patients are forced to subject themselves to state control’. In Giddens’ words (2004, p. 675);

‘According to Foucault power works through discourse to shape popular attitudes towards phenomena such as crime, madness or sexuality and that expert discourses established by those with power or authority can be countered only by competing expert discourses, therefore discourses can be used as a powerful tool to restrict alternative ways of thinking or speaking’.

Slattery refers to Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and the three forms of disciplinary power as ‘hierarchical observation, normative judgement and examination of patients or subjects’. He further proposes that the sick and insane submit themselves to treatment as a way of re-establishing normality and their re-entry back into normal society. Foucault also refers to ‘Panopticon’, the concept that ‘big brother’ is watching, promoting self-discipline. This serves to reiterate that power is not always negative and that individuals can be re-socialised by positive reinforcement.

Slattery (2003) refers to the C. W Mills and the ‘The power elite’, suggesting that the nature and distribution of power in society is dominated by key institutions. This is further reinforced by the idea put forward by Barach and Baratz (1962), that ‘key decisions are not made and certainly not debated in public or in the political arena but are made behind closed doors or simply never raised’. Slattery (2003, p. 172) goes on to highlight Mills’ works and

reiterates the point that ‘the government of the Power Elite, by the Power of the Elite, for the Power of the Elite’. He further proposes that the ‘Power Elite serves the interest of capitalism and its major corporations while the masses are generally excluded from power and offered a sham of democracy’. Stephen Lukes (1974) first defined power as; A influencing B in a manner that is contrary to B’s interests. He then identified power as three dimensional, involving elements of coercion; persuasion; persuaded by norms, values and media and internalised self-censorship. Luke’s also refers to ‘power as domination’.

When power is in the hands of a few, the distribution of power is uneven. Slattery (2003) refers to Thomas R. Dye (1979) and his suggestion that power elite is an oligarchy that needs to be investigated. Mills (1956) highlights that ‘the land of the free, is not as free as it thinks it is’; ‘We know that it’s not education which shapes society, but on the contrary, it is society which shapes education according to the interests of those who have power’ (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 36)

Gramsci & Hegemony

Gramsci refers to the concept of Hegemony as ‘a mechanism by which a consensus surrounding a particular ideology is normalised and maintained in society, even by those who benefit least from it (1971, p. 145) Gramsci believed that when an entire value and belief system saturates society and supports the status quo this is perceived as normal. This is central to the institutionalisation of people with intellectual disabilities and mental health issues; as they had no purpose in industrialisation, they could not contribute to society and, in fact, they were a strain on resources, as they needed to be taken care of. Society is created by human action but when the individual is constrained by outside forces; again, this is fundamental to the limited experiences and opportunities afforded to people with intellectual disabilities and mental health issues. Barnes and Mercer (2010, p. 28) refer to ‘the description of disabled people as useless arises because they are deemed unable to contribute to the economic good of the community’. Gramsci believed that as we have supported the status quo through ideology, then we can learn to challenge it through education and different institutions of civil society. This I believe is the key in ensuring access to FE for people with ID

Neo-Liberalism and Education

The neo-liberal agenda is driving the focus on a market driven economy and society. Finnegan (2008), Giroux (2004) and Harvey (2005; 2006) argue that neo-liberalism has re-configured the relationship between the state and the market. Viewed, through a neo-liberal ideological lens, which sees any outcome of the market as just, proper and natural, poverty and social problems become the mark of personal failure rather than systemic failures.

Finnegan (2008) argues that many aspects of neo-liberal policy are of obvious and immediate concern for educators. Neo-liberal public pedagogies operating across culture impose a form of lifelong learning based on the needs of the market. Finnegan (2008) further warns that this links a set of ideas many of which are ostensibly commonsensical, but are deployed in a way that suggests that education best functions according to market imperatives (Walsh, 2007). Managerialism is also having an impact on FE, it's not just about management rather it's about developing new systems of governance embedded with language and practices that underpin neo-liberalism, 'it is about restructuring social, political and economic structures to primarily focus on "...outputs rather than inputs for indicators of performance and accountability" (Lynch et al. 2014, p.4). There is no denying the influence this market driven discourse has had on the curriculum offered in further education. The relevance to people with intellectual disabilities accessing education is inextricably linked to the neo-liberal discourse on the further education sector. Given that SOLAS, formerly FÁS, is now responsible for the Education and Training Boards, linked with the neo-liberal discourse, one must be concerned for the future of people with disabilities accessing further education. Those who cannot 'keep up' will be left behind and deemed within the neo-liberal view, a 'failure'. Lynch views this as a "...distinct political project underpinned by the spirit of capitalism" Lynch et al, 2014, p.3) The SOLAS Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 will further support this argument.

SOLAS Further Education and Training Strategy, 2014 – 2019

SOLAS is responsible for the integration, coordination and funding of a wide range of further education and training programmes across 16 ETBs nationwide. The Further Education and Training Strategy (FET) maps out its strategy for delivering and funding education and

training for the next five years. The plan states that SOLAS will be tasked with ensuring the provision of 21st century high-quality FET programmes which are responsive to the needs of learners and the requirements of a 'changed and changing economy'. The FET Strategy also reflects the priorities articulated in the 'Action Plan for Jobs', 'Pathways to Work' the 'Action Plan for Jobs' is a key component of the plan.

The FET Strategy states that the concept of 'active inclusion' as enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society and this includes having a job. It means enabling every citizen, including those experiencing barriers to the labour market (for example, people with a disability, early school leavers or those with lower levels of skills) to fully participate in society; to access a range of quality services including education and training; and to have a job.

'The Vision for FET is that we will see real and positive impact in the following ways to complete qualifications, transition successfully into employment or where appropriate, move into higher level qualifications in FET or HET'

This vision confirms what the people in power are measuring i.e. performance and outcomes; therefore the learners needs are second place. This is a concerning document as on one hand it stresses the need for inclusion for all citizens, including those with disabilities. However it contradicts this claim by measuring success by gaining employment or advancing to further or higher education. What if people with ID cannot fit these criteria ? does this mean they cannot fully participate in society ?

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the context of where this research is placed in areas of intellectual disability and further education. It examined current macro and micro legislation and recommendations. It looked at models of care and disability as a social construct and the connections between feminism and disability were discussed. The next chapter will explain the design process and development of the research.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes my research philosophy and my ontological and epistemological stance. I will give an explanation and justification of the methodological framework that was utilised in conducting my research. I will refer to the ethical considerations used in my research, as I believe this is of particular importance when researching a vulnerable group without their input. Finally, I will also acknowledge the limitations of the research in this chapter.

Ontological perspective

According to Mertens' (2009) 'concepts of disability, feminism and minority are social constructed phenomena that mean different things to different people'. This socially constructed ontological perspective has undoubtedly influenced my decision to approach this research within a social constructionist and feminist paradigm. I have chosen to research intellectual disability and further education because I believe people with ID are excluded from accessing further education. This serves to further marginalise this stratified group of people. I feel the FE sector is excluding this group and, as an advocate for people with an ID, it needs to be further investigated. I believe that if people with ID gained access to FE the general student population, academics, society as well as the student would benefit. I have witnessed first-hand the transformative effect education has had on one individual with an intellectual disability as a result of accessing third level education.

Epistemological stance

It has been acknowledged that social researchers cannot separate their subjective experiences from the research. Ryan (2006, p. 18) states that 'investigating your own epistemologies and understanding how they affect you as a researcher is an essential part of the post-positivist approach'. According to Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009), ontology and epistemology are determinants of good social science and not methods. As a social researcher, I acknowledge that my ontological and epistemological perspectives are inextricably interwoven throughout

this research and cannot be separated and, as a result, I have tried to openly acknowledge this to the participants and to the reader.

Research Design

The conventional view of research is to ‘find out’ something new in relation to a phenomenon or problem. Problem setting is an intrinsically valuable scholarly activity. Good research is something that opens up to the nature of problems and sticks with hard questions. (Antonesa et.al, p. 19). This approach resonates with Freire’s ‘problem posing education’ (1970, p. 60) which problematises issues impacting on the daily lives of people affected by disadvantage and inequality. A problem posing research paradigm asks hard questions about casual factors behind problems. In this case, the phenomenon of access to FE for people with intellectual disabilities is problematised.

In researching my topic and searching for a suitable methodology I found myself lost in an array of options to choose from. I found it difficult to choose the correct or most suitable methods, strategies and approaches. I decided that choosing a research methodology that is in harmony with my epistemology, my way of knowing and my ontology, my way of being in this world, was important to me. The researcher’s approach to methodology is dependent on their perspective as, ‘their view of ontology effects, their epistemological persuasion which, in turn, effects their view of human nature, consequently, choice of methodology logically follows the assumptions the researcher has already made’ (Holden & Lynch, 2003, p. 3).

Therefore, in this chapter I have set out to critically evaluate why I have chosen a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006), based on the grounded theory approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967), namely, ‘a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p. 273).

Methodology

In keeping with the grounded theory approach I will describe my methodology from the ground up. I will explain my rationale in choosing the participants and the methods used to generate data. I chose to utilise qualitative research methods combined with a grounded theory approach as I felt the topic required a certain amount of discourse. As I value

experiential knowledge purposeful sampling was used in order to generate and extract rich data. I targeted specific people who have knowledge and power in my identified area. The research was carried out in two FE colleges, under the auspice of two separate Education and Training Boards (ETB). I was cognisant that I needed to talk to a range of people working in FE from management to frontline staff. In order to achieve a balanced view between the two colleges, interviews were carried out with two vice principals, two course co-ordinators, two Disability Officers and four tutors/lecturers. Qualitative research methods were used in the form of what can be described as unstructured and semi structured interviews, this technique can also be described as informal interviewing (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002, p. 121)

Prior to agreeing to participate in the interview, each proposed participant received a proposal letter outlining the purpose of the study (see Appendix A). They were advised of the procedure regarding the data collection for each interview. I assured them that all information would be treated with confidentiality and that each individual and their organisation would be anonymous. Anonymity was guaranteed by assigning each participant with a pseudonym. Prior to interview each participant was provided with an overview of the three different models of inclusive education and the semi structured questions. This was to enable the participants to reflect on the questions before the interview (see Appendix B). Interviews were carried out at a time and venue that suited the participants. All participants chose to be interviewed in their place of work. At the beginning of each interview, there was a brief discussion on the models of inclusive education and my reasons for choosing this particular research topic. The research questions were open ended, in terms of the range of possible answers. I hoped that this would allow me to ask specific questions related to the research topic while at the same time allowing the participants to expand and elaborate on personal opinion, experiences and ideas. Each interview was very different and lasted approximately thirty minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. I wanted the participants to name their world in a Freirean sense and hoped that this would be achieved by forwarding the transcripts to the interviewees, in order to provide them an opportunity to read and evaluate their responses and advise of any changes/alterations they would like to make prior to coding and analysing. My aim was to create a dialogue between equals through an on-going negotiation of dialogue (Freire 1972, p. 53). Kincheloe and McLaren note that 'everyone involved in Freire's (1972) critical research, not just the researcher, joined in the process of investigation, examination, criticism and reinvestigation (2005, p.305). The purpose of reading and self-transcribing allowed me to get a better overall sense of the interview and deduce the findings from the interviews later on.

Qualitative Research

Mertens (2005, p. 231), Lincoln and Guba (2000) identify qualitative methods as the preferred methods for researchers working in a constructivist paradigm. Qualitative research enables the researcher to gain an understanding of the social constructions held by participants. Mertens (2005) reaffirms qualitative methods, in agreement with Peck and Furman (1992), and notes that researchers have used qualitative methods to identify the fundamental roles of ideology, organizational dynamics, and the social-political process in shaping policy and practice in special education (p.231). The ability to provide insight into the social-political process has been emphasised by Reinhartz, (1992). Boeije (2010) states that, ‘through qualitative research, participants are given an opportunity to share their story, pass on their knowledge, and provide their own perspective on a range of topics’ (p.62).

I was aware that qualitative research and the data extracted would be reliant on my performance as an interviewer, as well as on my skills as an analytical interpreter of the data collated. The responses to the questions provide the foundation of the data analysis. The themes were extracted based on the experiences and opinions of the interviewees. Throughout the interview process, I reflected on my methodology and discussed the methods with my supervisor. If I was not generating the right data, I was aware that I may need to look at who I was interviewing and evaluate if I was using the right questions and correct methods. Boeije (2010) highlights the importance of the interviewer having a ‘rapport’ with the interviewees. I also feel that there needs to be trust, as the participants need to be sure that I will honour my part of the contract and protect them, as I have previously worked with the target participants. One must also acknowledge the disadvantages of qualitative interviewing. Seale (1999) speaks of the need to reflect on one’s suppositions and beliefs so that the researcher can understand how their personal history and perspective might influence the study. I have a subjective influence in the research topic and there may be bias, as I chose who to interview. As stated previously, having worked with the participants, being mindful that they are aware of my long history working with people with intellectual disabilities, I took into consideration Charmaz (2006) 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), also known as the interviewer effect. In an attempt to address this prior to conducting each interview, I

acknowledged my background in ID but I also explained that my experience teaching in FE had provided me first hand with experience of trying to teach students of varying educational backgrounds and abilities, keeping everyone interested without losing the attention of others, while also meeting the learning outcomes. I acknowledged the challenges this imposed on me as a teacher. I hoped this would help participants to be honest in their answers and feel free to express their views on the topic.

According to learn higher, the advantages of qualitative research are that it provides depth and detail. It looks deeper than analysing ranks and counts by recording attitudes, feelings and behaviours. It creates openness; encouraging people to expand on their responses can open up new topic areas not initially considered. It simulates people's individual experiences; a detailed picture can be built up about why people act in certain ways and their feelings about these actions.

Grounded Theory

Charmaz (2006) refers to constructivist grounded theory methods as 'systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories "grounded" in the data themselves (p.2)'. The defining characteristics of grounded theory is that the theoretical propositions are not stated at the outset, rather, generalisations (theory) emerge out of the data themselves and not prior to data collection (Mertens, 2015, p. 242). In other words, concepts were generated from the data collected from the lived experiences and views of the participants. This post positivist approach will also focus on concepts of discourse, the power/knowledge relationship and the value of narrative peoples lived and professional experiences, while, at the same time, being aware of the need to be reflective in my evaluation of the data collected (Ryan, 2006, p. 22). Antonesa observed that constructivist grounded theory to be the most appropriate methodology, which allows the researcher to remain true to epistemological and political beliefs whilst remaining open in the research process.

Documentary analysis was also used to discuss legislation, statistics and recommendations relevant to the research question. As a post-positivist researcher, I feel that purposive sampling is vital in order to produce rich data from within the field. Purposive or theoretical sampling can be defined as;

‘A method of data collection based on concepts/themes derived from data. The purpose of theoretical sampling is to collect data from, places, people and events that will maximise opportunities to develop concepts in terms of their properties, dimension, uncover variations, and identify relationships between concepts’ (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 143)

Knowledge and experience help us to understand the world as a powerful resource. As I value experiential knowledge, the participants were chosen based on their knowledge, experience and power in the field of further education. All participants had over a decade of experience in further education;

‘Knowledge should be a resource of and for the people who create, hold and share it. Knowledge and values are culturally, socially, and temporally contingent. Knowledge is filtered through the knower. The researcher must recognise and explore the unique conditions and characteristics of the issue under study. The characteristics of the knower will influence the creation of knowledge; critical Self-reflection is necessary’ (Mertens, 2005, pp. 17-18)

Data Collection

A multi-method approach was used for data collection including a literature review and a series of key interviews from individuals. This multi-method approach is referred to as “triangulation,” a research technique essential for corroborating evidence and leading to more confident results (Yin, 2003). Mertens (2005) refers to triangulation as using multiple methods and multiple data sources to support and strengthen interpretations and conclusions in qualitative research. However, Mertens also refers to Guba and Lincoln (1989), warning that triangulation should not be used to gloss over legitimate differences in interpretations of data. They further highlight that diversity should be preserved in the research so that the voices of the least empowered are not lost.

Interpretation and Analysis

I was fortunate in that my first two interviews generated rich data that enabled me to adapt questions for subsequent interviews in order to get right to the core of the research question. As mentioned earlier, by using a grounded theory approach from the outset, concepts and themes were generated from the lived experiences of the participants; subsequent interviews were adjusted to include these themes. This proved to be extremely valuable, as, had this not happened, the data collated in subsequent interviews may not have answered the research

question and may have required follow up interviews, which participants may or may not have been willing or available to participate in.

The participants' responses to the questions provided the foundation of data analysis. The themes were derived from the experiences and opinions of the interviewees. Using a constructivist approach to grounded theory, I recognised that categories and concepts are not inherent in the data. It is through the interactions with the field and the narrowing of the research questions via the constructed theoretical framework that the researcher creates the categories and concepts that will form the fundamentals of the research (Charmaz, 2006).

Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive & based on the social, political, historical & economic lens the researcher views the data from. Analysing the data for themes or categories, means the researcher filters the data through a personal lens that is situated in a specific socio-political & historical moment (Cheswell, 2003, p. 182). It is vital to be aware of one's ontological & epistemological stance; 'This reflexivity typifies research & the personal-self becomes inseparable from the researcher-self. It also acknowledges that all inquiry is laden with values' (Mertens, 2003, in Cheswell, 2003, p. 182).

During initial coding, memos were made noting re-occurring themes and sub themes. After all interviews had been completed, considerable time was spent reading the transcripts to familiarise myself with the participants' responses. Colour coding was used to highlight themes. Further in-depth analysis teased out the motivators and influencing factors behind the themes. According to Braun and Clarke 'a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data' (2006, p. 82). Themes were identified using thematic analysis. Consequently, the themes and their correlation with the literature review will be discussed in chapter five.

Ethical Considerations

Boeiji (2010, p. 54) refers to Miles and Huberman (1994) 'Competence Boundaries' and the fact that qualitative analysis is demanding on the researchers interpretive skills that requires supervision; 'Unanalysed data or incorrect interpretations that give way to erroneous findings

could potentially harm different stake holders'. Production of knowledge is itself an ethical endeavour. It must be acknowledged that having a reflexive ethical approach to the study was difficult at times. Re-evaluating interviews and rewriting analysis to ensure confidentiality, anonymity, professional integrity, as well as moral sensitivity, was trying, however, it was imperative in this study. Data analysis involves decisions about what lines of analysis to pursue and which to put to one side. Choosing not to go down a particular route may have ethical implications: decisions made at this stage may silence certain voices and give undue prominence to others.

The collection and analysis of data for research raises a number of ethical issues. The researcher has certain obligations and responsibilities in considering the effects of the research on both the participants and the target population of the research thesis. As people with intellectual disabilities are a vulnerable group of individuals, it is imperative that the research methods used and data analysis is presented with moral and sensitive consideration, emulating utmost respect for all involved. Being aware that this research involves and concerns human beings, dilemmas of an ethical nature may arise. Therefore, in maintaining confidences in the field, all data will be treated as sensitive (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002, p. 226). There are also political considerations in ensuring that my participants' views, opinions and suggestions are not used for any political agenda or personal gain, ensuring that the researcher demonstrates professional integrity at all times (Beauchamp, 1994, p. 3; Seale, 2006, pp. 118-119). Beneficence is maximising good outcomes for science, humanity and the individual research participants while avoiding or minimizing unnecessary harm, risk or wrong, balancing benefits against risks. Non-maleficence is the obligation to avoid harm, respecting and protecting the individuals' identity and autonomy and receiving the individuals' informed consent is vital when carrying out social research.

In an attempt to address any ethical issues, a number of measures were undertaken prior to interviews being carried out. As mentioned earlier, participants received an information sheet outlining the research question, contact details for the researcher and supervisor. The purpose of the study and the intended use of the data were outlined. In order to ensure confidentiality, participants were assured that the data collated would be stored in a locked cabinet, and that all recordings would be destroyed within a six month time frame. Participants were assured that could terminate the interview at any stage and that their decision would be respected. They were also assured that they had the right to withdraw their data up to time of

publication; 'Research participants should be made aware of their right to refuse participation whenever or for whatever reason they wish' (Sociological Association of Ireland, 2009). The option of receiving a copy of the interview transcript for approval or adjustment prior to inclusion in the thesis was also explained. Each participant was given a code number that was included on each transcript. Anonymity was guaranteed by assigning each participant a pseudonym. As informed consent is a key principle of research, after reading the information sheet, participants were asked to sign a consent form stating their voluntary participation in the research (see Appendix C). Informed consent is intended to ensure that the participants are placed in a situation where they can decide, in full knowledge of the risks and benefits of the study, whether and how to participate (Endecott, 2004 in Boeije, 2010, p. 45). Respect for participants is embodied in the informed consent process. Informed consent is designed to empower the individual to make a voluntary informed decision regarding their participation in the research. Gaining informed consent is a procedure that aims to support the principle of individual autonomy and it is widely agreed to be a safeguard for the rights of human subjects participating knowingly and voluntarily in research Milgram (2004).

Limitations

This research has inevitable limitations due to the constraints of the researcher, predominantly in relation to time, resources and access. Not only is time needed for the interview but time is also needed to reflect on the responses and analyse the data. One must acknowledge the disadvantages in qualitative research. Participants may not feel comfortable speaking to me and may be guarded in what they say or reveal and the need to protect their professional integrity. I must acknowledge that I may give out unconscious signals, cues or body language that guide the participants to give answers that I wish to hear. I was also aware that I could affect the participants' response by the way the question is framed. How the analysis would be framed would consequently be effected by my ontological and epistemological perspective. How I view the topic through my lens will no doubt affect the research, as I cannot totally separate my subjective experiences from the research.

Due to the more time consuming collection of data, a small sample size was used and only nine participants were interviewed. As a result of this, it is less easy to generalise findings to that of the wider FE population. It can be difficult to make systematic comparisons; for

example, if people give widely differing responses that are highly subjective. The quality and richness of data collected is dependent on my skills as an interviewer and when analysing data. According to Mertens (2010) generaliseability refers to the researcher's ability to generalise the results from the sample to the population from which it was drawn. The ability to generalise results depends on how representative the sample is of the population. Mertens (2010) refers to how Firestone (1993) recognised that the post-positivist conceptualisation of generalisation based on sample to population extrapolation was not appropriate for qualitative research. Mertens (2010), Firestone (1993) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to case to case translation as a suitable method for transferability. With this approach, the burden of proof for generalisability lies with the reader and the researcher is responsible for providing the thick description that allows the reader to make a judgement about the applicability of the research to another setting. As the research was only conducted in two FE colleges, this limits the generalisation of the findings. However, the fact that purposeful sampling was used in order to generate and extract rich data, as the participants involved had knowledge and power in the research topic by using a range of people working in FE from management to frontline staff in two different FE colleges, which come under the auspice of two different ETBs i.e. two different management structures. The themes generated were identified by staff in both colleges.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the methodologies and the background to my research philosophy. In doing this, I have examined my ontological and epistemological stances as a researcher. I have acknowledged that they are inextricably interwoven through the research process. I also identified my approach within the social constructionist and feminist paradigms and justified my reasons for employing qualitative research methods. I have highlighted ethical issues pertinent to this research, as it must be acknowledged that it is research relating to a marginalised group of people within which they do not have a voice. Finally, I have acknowledged the limitations of this small piece of research, as well as issues around generalisability and transferability.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this chapter, I will contextualise the findings in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter two. I will also explore where this research sits within the context of further education and its practice. As acknowledged previously, the findings and analysis have been generated through my own personal lens. I have no doubt that my ontology and epistemology have influenced how they are presented. The primary focus of this research was to discover what the challenges and barriers are to inclusive further education for people with disabilities from the perspective of adult educators working in FE. As my initial research has informed me that some of the obstacles were funding issues, lack of interest, and fear and attitudes of academic staff. I hoped that it would be a pilot study and that by inviting adult educators to be my participants that it would be a conscious raising exercise. Freire refers to the process of informed committed action through reflection praxis; challenging common sense ideas in order to create knowledge for structural change at a social, economic and political level. I initially thought that the main barriers to inclusive education were the adult educators and that their lack of understanding and empathy for people with disabilities could be challenged and perhaps even changed by this piece of research. However; I discovered that while some of my preconceived ideas may be legitimised there are stronger and more covert undercurrents at play. Concepts such as power, control, resistance, neoliberalism and new managerialism emerged throughout the analysis.

Contextualising the study

As previously mentioned the research was carried out in two FE colleges, under the auspice of two separate ETBs. I was cognisant of the need to talk to a range of people working in FE from management to frontline staff. There were ten participants in total, four women and six men. In order to achieve a balanced view between the two colleges, interviews were carried out with two vice principals, two course co-ordinators, two disability officers and four tutors/lecturers. Using thematic coding I have attempted to generate interconnected themes. I will present my findings under particular headings listed below, while using quotes from the transcribed interviews to illustrate the meanings of the headings and thus, giving a voice to my research participants.

- Funding for the college and the students
- Training
- The Neo-liberal influence on further education
- Social Inclusion
- Measuring outputs
- Policy change

Models of Inclusive Education

Each interview began with a discussion around the three models of inclusive education. Four participants said they could envisage the Inclusive Individual Support Model. Three participants were in favour of the Mixed Hybrid Model. Two participants could envisage both the mixed hybrid model and the inclusive individual model. One participant could envisage all three models, depending on the course. No participants stated that they were in favour of the substantially separate model.

Martin: Yes my instinct is I would love to see a fully inclusive programme for people with ID...I would love to get there but with planning. I would not stop at inclusion in a classroom why not go the next level and teach a class.

***Nuala:** We should integrate not isolate, especially in social care to be able to understand not only for the mainstream students but for the students to see it.*

***Orla:** Yes these methods will work, as there is a need to give people an opportunity to learn in different ways and different approaches will develop the best in the learners with an intellectual disability.*

***Laura:** I think the Inclusive individual support model would be the only model that there would be room for. There would be no room for a separate curriculum.*

***Grace:** Sometimes the appropriate model is a specialised class within a mainstream setting depending on level of ID. If students cannot do level 5, it is important that they still have the experience of going to college.*

***Donal:** Certainly in a separate wing in the college you would have these people together. We haven't even brought this methodology into the disability students we have, we do integrate at the moment.*

***David:** I would favour would be the mixed hybrid model and inclusive individual model these models can be with resources available. I can see no reason why people with ID should be excluded. The level of ID would be a factor in terms of participation I think that it would be wonderful for many of our students particularly for any that haven't got contact with people with ID.*

***Fergus:** Does it change the nature of the class for the other people? What is the best thing to do should you have a class set aside for people with disabilities, should you have a quota system & integrate as best you can?*

***Brian:** I think the three models could work in our college, but not all three would work in every course. For instance the media management or animation degrees would probably be unsuitable for anyone with an intellectual disability (depending on the level of impairment), however arts courses, music performance courses...could be very beneficial, and all three models could be envisaged.*

Ethos

Several participants referred to the fact that 33 VECs have been replaced by 16 ETBs governed by SOLAS. The switch from working under one government agency to another seemed to be a contentious issue for the participants. Reflecting on these conversations I cannot ignore the sense of deflated-ness that I had felt from my participants. The fact that they felt they had lost their autonomy and room for flexibility was no longer an option under SOLAS. The sense of frustration that they could no longer offer courses on a part time evening basis. This was further compounded by the fact that new staff commencing with ETBs were being offered a different working time contract that provided for education and training all year round. This threatened their mid-term and summer breaks, their working year as they know it. There was an air of uncertainty in that the decisions were being made without their input and consultation.

***Grace:** We don't work for the department of education anymore .Things have changed now that we are under the auspice of SOLAS, it's exactly the same people and ethos of FAS and they are losing the ethos of the ETB.*

***Donal:** Now that we have inherited the old FAS systems, under SOLAS which a lot of people don't like, things have changed it's not the same.*

Martin: *It's not the same, SOLAS want training throughout the year and these Momentum courses are run all year including the summer months. New starters are been given contracts that threaten our working year as we know it.*

The process

All nine participants indicated that the process surrounding inclusive education, which includes funding, is a huge barrier. Incorporated within the funding remit are funding for the college, resources for extra supports, extra support staff, special needs assistants, disability officers and assistive technology. The participants informed me of me their frustrations with 'the process' and how the process does not leave room for a holistic approach to FE. The need for alternative assessment methods suited to the individual with ID was highlighted.

Grace: *The process you have to go through is very hard because there is no funding for level 3. Funding models and granting models don't lend themselves to ID. Where they need a level 4 but can't get any funding. They won't fund students, we have a student who needs support and a part time course and they said absolutely no. We had a student here with ME he has health difficulties and couldn't manage a full day. He got tired easily. So can't officially do part time because he won't get funding for their taxi or PA. I think funding for supports for students to do part time courses and funding for students to do level 3 & 4 is needed to be put in place.*

Donal: *The most problematic is that the government won't support the 2nd year. It's on a grant scheme and you need to have support systems for the second year. Not even on an ETB level it's on a funding level and the dept has to change their policy.*

Martin: *From a value point of view I think myself that social inclusion should be as valued as a labour incentive person, whether that is across the board there are other factors like trying to be internationally competitive and getting people back into further education.*

Fergus: *They would need to find an alternative assessment methodology the standard one wouldn't do. They would need a specialised curriculum.*

David: *They would have to meet different individual targets that would be a problem you wouldn't want to disappoint all students and staff if you set up someone with ID and they fail.*

Neo-liberal influence on further education

Four participants made reference to neo-liberal discourse and its impact on further education:

Fergus: *It is increasingly becoming like that with Solas need to see a return for their investment in education but the return in that kind of investment is not as easily measured as someone coming in & leaving with qualification, going to work, getting off the dole or continuing in further education.*

Martin: *The other thing is social inclusion. When you weight it up what is the perspective are we value judging based on economic output or value judging based on human dignity of a person so maybe there is a mix of the two and there has to be some sort of target or drive from external funding bodies like Solas.*

Donal: *Now that we have inherited the old FAS systems witch a lot of people don't like and now SOLAS are looking for statistics of each course and want to know how many students, what were the completion rates,*

why did people drop out, it's a statistical analysis. It's dangerous in that way because if you want good statistics you wouldn't take on students with ID. It could drive the system that way. It isn't a good way to go. Not for an Educational Institution maybe a training institution to show skills and job that's that purpose but from an educational perspective, you do need to be accountable but not in that way of statistical driven.

Laura: Hopefully they get a job and contribute to society.

Social Inclusion

Six participants raised concerns about exclusion and self-esteem for the students with intellectual disabilities:

Martin: Is that what society should do for social inclusion for people to participate or is society is saying this is money well spent in order to give people who are at a disadvantage an opportunity to experience College. There would have to be a realistic plan or a road map for inclusion of disabilities. We need teach people how to communicate and how to engage with a person with an ID. There is a lot to learn & share from experience. Why is a person with an ID more important or deserving than someone who was made redundant and trying to get back into training.

Fergus: One of the main difficulties you can get with someone with disability is that they are isolated not through anyone's fault but if you are sitting with your PA you are separated. Sometimes if you are deaf or have difficulties communicating these are further obstacles to integration with the other students. That can be a huge social dispersion for people & difficult to engineer that. When there are limitations to what goes on in a room, sometimes there can be a feeling of the tail wagging a dog. There can be resentments. I think there are advantages generally in all aspect of human life & in understanding differences.

Grace: There are benefits as well if there is a class it's good to have inclusive but it makes students more aware as they go through life but there is a tipping point in a class.

Donal: To re-educate people also as there might be a fear, so change the mind-set of the whole community. Mainstream and inclusion in all aspects.

Laura: Social exclusion from peers in the classroom. I mean if they are not accepted by their peers their self-esteem may diminish.

Brian: For students with I.D: Self-esteem issues

Measuring Outcomes

Six participants raised concerns around the outcomes that are valued and the impact SOLAS has had on the FE sector. The participants highlighted how the shift to an outcomes orientated production line does not allow for personal development and enrichment; and the significant consequences this was having on their teaching.

Martin: From a value point of view I think myself that social inclusion should be as valued as a labour incentive person, whether that is across the board there are other factors like trying to be internationally competitive and getting people back into further education. Martin went on to discuss how outputs are measured. In respect of the report the only boxes that are there are those that go on to job market or higher education. There is nothing to stop them putting in a box for social inclusion. I suppose what is the purpose of the courses is it just certification or to lead to higher education, certification is the only outcome of a programme. Is it certification is it social exclusion. There's nothing in there about how a person would grow or how was

participation in this programme. I have concerns re the database we have projections and expectant numbers for Sept they want to know how many would get certification, how many would gone on to jobs.

Grace: *The form is for Solas and very FAS orientated and very politically incorrect I really don't understand the decision to put the FE box and Employment box. It's exactly the same people and ethos of FAS and they are losing the ethos of the ETB. Staff & teachers are under pressure to get full rewards. Changing profile of students would make teaching difficult. There is a responsibility on the teacher to get results or they will be called up to management to explain why. There is too much pressure on everybody for results and outcomes ...compatible with funding. Students are gaining, self-confidence and self-awareness self-esteem self-worth doing an ordinary thing*

Fergus: *Personal development in some cases as much as vocational. For people with disabilities it is measured more by a personal effect. It might save money but also make a big difference to the person. We want everybody to get something out of it. Let them benefit more socially. Let them do one or two modules.*

Donal: *There is only a few choices, complete course, go onto FE, or employment. The broader economic gain whether that keeps a person healthy or out of other social services, that's never measured as a gain so that is not in the box. If you want a quality analysis you need to write and not tick boxes.*

Orla: *This group of people will develop lifelong learning skill that will assist their independent living and thinking.*

Laura: Social interaction and participation is not valued.

These statements further highlight that SOLAS has changed the emphasis from 'education' to 'training'. There were also concerns that they now have to apply to SOLAS for funding and that the granting of such funds is based on the results students achieve, this measured solely on whether the student gains access to employment, further or higher education.

Policy Change

Five participants highlighted that in order for further education to be inclusive there needs to be guidance and policy changes from those in power:

Donal: Most colleges would say we are not taking this on unless there's a policy...there's no point going on unless infrastructure is there. It would be a mess for everyone.

Fergus: We have had students who have taken a couple of modules one year & a couple the next year but the systems doesn't allow for it, it had to be done illegally If you are a principal & you have taken 15 students but only 10 complete, not good for your figures. You can't put everyone into the same academic year & do all the modules at the same time. It is a modular system. FE is entirely based on modular systems, why don't look at those advantages of that & let them do one or two modules a year. We have to look at structural blocks to letting people attend for one or two modules. As a board you have to make a decision that you have are going to do it & accept it like a pilot project. We should write Special needs into our policies & documents & review it.

Nuala: If you broke into 2 modules a year that would be a good possibility & maybe we could figure out and see how someone could have that over connection with a mainstream class. We have students with learning difficulties but not to that level.

Martin: We need expert advice from outside to make it feasible. If there was a pilot approach from academic to say this is how it can work. Person with ID to take a programme over 2 to 3 years. Stake holders have opinions, senior management are often drivers of these things but have to be a realist plan or road map. It should be the driven from Solas it should be a national strategy.

David: The institutions need to make a decision if would they take it on and create the right culture and primarily structural changes.

Summary of key findings

The participants' relayed their concerns to me with regard to the ethos of the new ETB's under SOLAS having an impact on their teaching. They acknowledged the possible benefits of inclusive education for people with ID in FE. However they are undergoing changes that are out of their control and as a result of this shift they have identified key areas they feel must be addressed before FE can become inclusive. Some of the identifies areas were Ethos, process, the neo-liberal influence on further education, social inclusion, Measuring outputs and policy change. These themes were derived from the interactions and observations that occurred during the field research. These findings will be analysed in greater detail in chapter five, both in the context of the literature review and in the overall context of further education.

Analysis

Introduction

The analysis of my findings was constructed through a constant comparative approach between the literature and conversations with participants (Charmaz 2006, p.163). The need for me as a researcher to read and re-read the transcripts over and over again while referring back and forth to the literature was vital in order to generate discursive themes. While some themes emerged from the onset, uncovering the covert themes proved to be a challenge. I must admit my preconceived ideas that FE was not accessible to people with ID was due to the lack of interest, and fear and attitudes of academic staff; were blown out of the water. The realisation that there are far more powerful discourses at play has been a huge learning curve for me as a researcher.

Ethos

I was surprised to find that the change in government department to which my participants now find themselves working under; is having an impact on the ethos of the college. The autonomy they had in offering courses over two years as opposed to one and the option to run part time evening education is no longer available under the auspice of SOLAS. The Solas Action Plan (SAP) document states ‘SOLAS will be tasked with ensuring the provision of high quality FET programs which are responsive to the needs of learners’ (2014-2019) However, I have found little evidence of this. Through the participants sharing their experiences and feelings in relation to the new governing body and their ethos; I have deduced that this has been demoralising and demotivating for them as adult educators. Having regard to individual students needs and abilities appeared to be important to them. Consequently, under the new SOLAS ethos, the lack of these was having a major impact on them. The concept of care in FE is being put on the back burner or out of sight out of mind. Another demoralising effect of the changing ethos on my participants has been the move from working under the Department of Education (DE) to working under the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE). This change in department can be viewed as a change in their ethos from education to training, redefining their role and position. This is resonated by Freire (1971) ‘the language

of the people, cannot exist without thought; and neither language nor thought can exist without a structure to which they refer' (p. 69). I therefore found within my analysis that the change in ethos has deconstructed my participants' philosophy of education and their way of working in the sector. Moreover this change in ethos is not conducive with person centred education and therefore limits opportunities for people with ID accessing FE.

Consultation and Process

Reflecting on the interviews, a sub theme to Ethos emerged as consultation and process.

The White Paper on Adult Education – Learning for Life (2000) proposed that

‘people with disabilities should be targeted by every Adult Education programme so that they may avail of integrated mainstream options on an equal basis; disability awareness training should be developed and provided for Adult Education and training staff generally in order to promote awareness of the barriers facing students with disabilities’.

It also referred to

‘the need for dialogue with disability groups and individual participants as to how programmes could be adapted to their needs; to share practice on how barriers could be overcome and that the existing third-level fund under which additional supports (adaptive technology, readers, interpreters, care assistance and transport etc.) are made available should be expanded to cover the other areas of Adult Education’.

Fifteen years on and these recommendations have not still not been addressed. As my participants shared their frustration with regard to the clinical manner in which the process has been and continues to be formalised with little or no consultation or regard for their professional experience. Not having the autonomy to make considerations for individual students' abilities and needs.

My participants highlighted the need for policy changes to include people with intellectual disabilities. They also referred to needing a road map. Donal: *‘There's no point going on*

unless infrastructure is there'. Fergus: *'We should write Special needs into our policies & documents & review it'*. Martin: *'We need expert advice from outside to make it feasible...Stake holders have opinions, senior management are often drivers of these things but have to be a realist plan or road map. It should be the driven from Solas it should be a national strategy'*.

These responses are backed up in the National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan 2013-2016. It acknowledged that systems 'can indirectly exclude people with disabilities if the architecture, policies, information or service delivery, are not geared to include people with a range of disabilities. Aldrecht & Levy (1981) propose that fundamentally, disability is defined by public policy' and that 'disability' is whatever policy says it is'(1981, p 14). While I concur with the notion that policy needs to be implemented, I reject that, as legislation and policy are easier to change than culture, attitudes and beliefs. The task now is to move towards deconstructing the view that disability is a 'problem to be managed' and identify how to ensure they have equal opportunities.

Resources

From the findings, it is clear that resources and funding are a vital a vital commodity that must be addressed in order for further education to be accessible for people with intellectual disabilities. There are several components to resources and funding.

Participants reinforced the need for resources in the form of assistive technology and personal support. Fergus referred to *'resources & supports are important for example a disability officer, technical equipment, personnel who offer support for language and literacy'*. Michael stated that *'funding is huge you need resources, like personnel for note taking'*. Donal identified the need for *'more supports to be put in place to reach any shortfall, materials being accessible, technology for personal assistants'*.

Student Grants

An additional problem identified by my participants is the lack of funding for supports and student grants for people with disabilities on part-time and FETAC level 3 & 4 courses. There are no grants available to students with disabilities enrolled in part-time courses, access or foundation courses. For many people with intellectual disabilities, the challenge of completing eight modules in one academic year is not an option. The option of taking two, three, or four modules per academic year is not available, as funding is only available for one year per student. The need to be flexible and to offer the experience of accessing further education on a modular basis was highlighted by participants. As Grace stated: *'It's very hard because there is no funding for level 3. Funding models and granting models don't lend themselves to ID. Where they need a level 4 but can't get any funding and there are no grants or funding for part time courses'*.

New Managerialism and Neo-liberalism

The neo-liberal agenda is now the driving force behind the focus of a market driven economy. This ideology views the outcomes of the market as natural thus; poverty and social problems become personal failures as opposed to systemic failures. Neo-liberalism operates on the concept that everything has a price or it should be given one. The relevance to people with intellectual disabilities accessing education is inextricably linked to the neo-liberal discourse on the further education sector. Given that SOLAS, formerly FÁS is now responsible for the ETB's in line with the neo-liberal discourse, one must be concerned for the future of people with disabilities accessing further education. Finnegan (2008) warned that many aspects of neo-liberal policy are of obvious and immediate concern for educators. Seven years on this is a notion shared by the participants. Fergus: *'Solas need to see a return for their investment in education'*. Donal: *'Now that we have inherited the old FAS systems with a lot of people don't like and now SOLAS are looking for statistics of each course'*. Laura: *'Hopefully they get a job and contribute to society'*. This is synonymous with the neoliberal system of governance imbued with the language of values and practices that are focused more on outputs than inputs as indicators of performance and accountability (Lynch et al, 2014, p.4). Grummell argues that value for the tax payer is being channelled through the idea of 'how to capture performance of further education' (2014, p. 127

Education and Social Inclusion

The UN Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities (2011) state, under Article 24, that:

‘State parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong-learning directed to: the full development of human development potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity’.

However, to date, these rights have not yet been ratified by the Irish government.

Attitudes can hinder people with intellectual disabilities accessing further education; evidence of this can be heard in the voices of participants.

***Brian:** ‘When there are limitations to what goes on in a room, sometimes there can be a feeling of the tail wagging a dog. There can be resentments. I think there are advantages generally in all aspect of human life & in understanding differences’.*

***Grace:** ‘There are benefits as well if there is a class it's good to have inclusive but it makes students more aware as they go through life but there is a tipping point in a class’.*

***Donal:** ‘To re-educate people also as there might be a fear, so change the mind-set of the whole community’.*

This is reinforced by the Further Education and Training Strategy 2014 -2019, which states that:

Active Inclusion describes the concept of ‘active inclusion’ as enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society...including those with barriers to participation such as persons with a disability to stay engaged, complete qualifications, transition successfully into employment or where appropriate, move into higher level qualifications in further and higher education.

However, as yet, there has been little done to address the issues raised in this research thesis.

A study commissioned by the ERSI found that people with disabilities were more likely to be affected by attitudes and could find themselves socially excluded as result of the public perception of them. The report concluded that the focus should now be on the need to change societal conditions to accommodate the needs of the disabled person. Those with disabilities should be able to participate in activities such as education, employment and leisure along with everyone else.

Measuring outcomes

My participants raised concerns with SOLAS in regards to how and what they measure and value as outputs. My participants highlighted how the shift to an outcomes orientated production line does not allow for personal development and enrichment. They also revealed the significant consequences this was having on their teaching. These statements further highlight how SOLAS has changed the emphasis from 'education' to 'training'. There were also concerns that they now have to apply to SOLAS for funding and that the granting of such funds is based on the results students achieve. This is solely measured on whether the student gains access to employment, further or higher education. Grummell points out that 'what learning occurs for individual learners and for society is being filtered through an employment discourse; consequently this is also having a direct influence on what counts as knowledge, what knowledge is being valued and what is rendered invisible and not valued (2014, p. 127) .

Martin: 'From a value point of view I think myself that social inclusion should be as valued as a labour incentive person...There's nothing in there about how a person would grow...I have concerns re the database'.

Grace: 'The form is for Solas and very FAS orientated and very politically incorrect I really don't understand the decision to put the FE box and Employment box. There is too much pressure on everybody for results and outcomes ...compatible with funding. Students are gaining, self-confidence and

self-awareness self-esteem self-worth doing an ordinary thing but they don't measure that'.

Conclusion

The chapter has linked the findings with the literature discussed in chapter two. The findings and analysis correlate with current disability literature. I must admit my preconceived ideas that FE was not accessible to people with ID was due to the lack of interest, and fear and attitudes of academic staff; were blown out of the water. The realisation that there are far more powerful discourses at play has been a huge learning curve for me as a researcher.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This research examined the challenges and barriers to people with intellectual disabilities accessing further education using qualitative research. The process involved a grounded theory approach and used nine participants who are engaged in further education as its research participants. It is apparent from this field research that a wide range of challenges and barriers exist for people with intellectual disabilities accessing further education.

The era of segregated special education schools are a thing of the past; they are now frowned upon as bad practice. Inclusive education at primary and post primary level is way ahead of further education. The numbers of students with intellectual disabilities applying for places in further education colleges are very low at present; those that are applying have to be encouraged and advocated for. This is in my opinion directly linked to Sen and Nausbaum's (2001) (2011) social malleability of preferences and satisfactions. In other words, preferences are not hard wired; they respond to societal conditions, when society has put some things out of reach for some people, they typically learn not to want those things; they form, what Sen and Elster (2010) call, 'adaptive preferences'. Sometimes people learn not to want the goods in the first place, because these goods were put off limits for people because of their gender, race, class or disability. However, as people with ID progress through mainstream primary and post primary education, they will of course be applying for and expecting access to further education just like their peers.

Therefore, Solas, Education and Training Boards and Further Education colleges must review their policies, put infrastructure, funding and supports in place in order to accommodate these people. The research highlights that many of these pragmatic issues could be addressed through training, structural supports and access to funding and other technological and

personal supports. However, socially constructed beliefs on the subject will take a lot more time and experience to change.

Areas of further study

The research has the capacity to be studied in a much deeper and broader level. In terms of gaining a wider perspective on the subject, other colleges, under the auspice of different education and training boards, could be included. The challenges and barriers could be researched from the perspective of the individual with the intellectual disability. They could also be researched from mainstream students, families, intellectual disability service providers and stakeholders.

Reflection

On a personal level, the research was interesting to work on. I had the opportunity to gain an insight into the challenges and barriers people with intellectual disabilities face in accessing further education. It was particularly interesting to see the perspective from inside the FE and to interview front line staff responsible for the delivery of further education.

Education is a right and is necessary in living a life that is driven by our own aspirations. Each and every one of us should be supported to reach and achieve self-actualisation, regardless of the supports required be that monetary or personal. Glasser (1998) identifies the basic needs for any person to live a full and meaning full life as; to have power; to be free; to have fun; to survive; and to belong.

Diversity is part of the human condition, and systems or structures designed for 'typical' people can be a barrier to those who are equal but different. The concept of equality recognises diversity that we are all different.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Proposal Letter

Dear Participant

I am a student in NUI Maynooth studying for an MA ED in Adult and Community Education. The focus of my research is on inclusive learning for people with intellectual disabilities at 3rd level and in particular FE. I would like to explore the challenges and feasibility of inclusive education for people with intellectual disabilities in FE colleges and the challenges/benefits involved.

I would be very grateful if you would agree to participate in a 30 minute interview (approx.). Your participation would be completely voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. If for any reason you wish to withdraw from the interview at any stage your decision will be respected. Your right to withdraw your data up to time of publication will also be respected.

Anonymity will be assured for all participants and all identifying information will be altered. Interview recordings and transcripts will only be available to myself and my supervisor and are only for verification purposes of the interviews actually being completed. They will be maintained in a locked cabinet for six months after this they will be deleted. When transcribing the interviews pseudonyms will be given to each participant.

The data will be made available to you at any time and if you wish a copy of the interview transcript for approval or adjustment prior to inclusion in my thesis. The data collected will be included in my thesis.

Should you require any further details please do not hesitate to contact me by email helena.doody@sjog.ie or alternatively on 0879975349. My supervisor is Fergal Finnegan, should you require you can contact him by email fergal.finnegan@nuim.ie or 01 7086059.

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. Please be reassured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Yours Sincerely

Helena Doody

16th March 2015

Appendix B: Suggested discussion topics/questions

There have been many calls for inclusive education at 3rd and FE level for people with intellectual disabilities. Trinity College, NUI Maynooth, Galway University are just a few who have introduced inclusive education initiatives. Noonan (2012) highlights three different models of inclusion at 3rd level education:

The substantially separate model

Programmes are often staffed by special education teachers and are generally housed separately within the college. Students only take part in classes with other students with disabilities.

Mixed program/mixed hybrid model

Programmes normally have a separate programme base on campus. Students with intellectual disabilities take part in regular college courses with the general student body, they mainly follow a separate curriculum.

Inclusive individual support model

Students with intellectual disabilities are invited to participate in courses for audit or credit in regular college courses, certificate programmes, and or degree programmes along with the general student population.

- 1. Do you think any of these models could work in the FE college you work in?**
- 2. What supports would be required if such an initiative was to be introduced?**

3. What do you think the obstacles/pit falls or challenges of such an initiative might be for;

- a) Students with intellectual disabilities?
- b) Academic and support?
- c) Mainstream students?

4. How might these be addressed or over come?

5. What do you think the benefits of such an initiative might be for?

- a) Students with intellectual disabilities?
- b) Academic Staff?
- c) Mainstream students?

6. Do you have anything you would like to add?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix C: Certificate of Informed Consent

I have been invited to participate in research on people with intellectual disabilities accessing 3rd level education in Further Education Colleges.

I have read the foregoing information pertaining to the research.

I have been provided with the opportunity to ask questions.

I consent to participating in the study and I am aware that I can withdraw at any time.

Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date: _____

