WHAT ARE SOME OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF ACCREDITATION ON CARE IN ADULT EDUCATION?

LISA MCEVOY

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Supervisor: Camilla Fitzsimons

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Abstract

The role of the adult educator is changing. This may be attributed to economic factors, changes in policy or changes to structures within educational institutions and providers, to name but a few. In recent times, alterations have occurred within the accreditation system in Ireland, such as the development and implementation of the Common Awards System by FETAC.

This research examines how these changes to accreditation are currently impacting on care in adult education in Ireland, in the midst of this new Era. It presents a rationale for providing a caring environment, indicates the importance of caring in adult education and through research, demonstrates evidence of care in the adult learning environment.

A critical approach to research was carried out with educators and learners in adult education. An exploration of recent changes in accreditation was completed, and the implications of these changes are examined through a neo-liberal lens.

An examination of care in terms of power explores the possibility of neo-liberal discourse within the current accreditation system. In changing times, this research identifies possibility for counter hegemonic action, in order to challenge neo-liberal ideology and promote care in adult education.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I don't believe you can run an education system in a business point of view… your continued existence is based on you producing so many Certs at level 5, Level 6, level 4, level 3, without having, am, the actual students, and their needs factored into that equation… it simply doesn't work like that, because, people can't fit into mathematical equations.

Tutor working in Adult Education

Rationale for the research

In my view, care should be an integral aspect of adult education. It is my belief that educators working with adults have a responsibility to create a caring learning environment. This belief stems from several things. One of the main attractions to complete this research on the chosen topic was the work of Nel Noddings. I first came across the work of Noddings as a student on the H.Dip in Adult and Community Education.

Prior to this encounter I was not familiar with the concept of care in adult education, and *ethics of care* in a classroom. I could identify with the theories involved and felt I implemented a lot of Noddings (1989) ideas on a daily basis. Similarly, Lynch's work, (2009) particularly in relation to concentric care circles and the research she carried out through *care conversations* fascinated me.

With experience working in community development and residential care, I could identify more with the place of care in an educational environment, and particularly within adult education, when you consider the varied needs of adults their and reasons for returning to education.

On introducing dialogue to a group, I could see first-hand the learning that occurred when learners were able to relate theoretical concepts to their own ideas and experiences. They could clarify their own thoughts and voice their own opinions on topical issues. This approach to me was contributing towards the promotion of care in the learning environment.

When the Common Awards System was introduced by FETAC a lot of changes were brought about that I felt had a direct impact on the learning environment. A lot more paperwork had to be completed, which meant less time to consider learners needs, less time to teach. Module descriptors were changed and courses became a lot more content focused and curriculum based. Assessment details were more specific leaving little scope for individuality. Monitoring became a huge issue with the introduction of the Internal Verification Process along with the External Authentication that was previously in place. With this again came more paperwork. When I reviewed what was currently happening within the accreditation system, I started to question the implications of these changes.

The increased workload was having implications on my role as the tutor and was having an effect on the caring learning environment. Subsequently, such changes were indirectly impacting on adult learners. More of my time was spend on filling out forms and engaging in accountable activity, as opposed to teaching adults.

It is hoped that this research will investigate the extent of the changes to the accreditation system, and in turn, identify some of the implications of these changes on care in adult education.

This thesis is mostly presented in thematic form, in order to portray an accurate picture of the inquiry in light of the research question. This research aims to examine some of the implications of accreditation on care in adult education. In order to do this an explanation is required of the terms used in the research.

What is Adult Education?

Adult education may seem difficult to define due to the many forms of educational provision currently available for adults in Ireland. The White Paper on Adult Education, learning for Life (2000) offers a definition of adult education as "systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training."

However, when you consider adults who are currently engaging in adult education, this meaning may not be extensive enough and possibly may be exclusive of many.

Community Education is outlined by AONTAS[1] as education that offers adults a learner-centred approach that contribute towards positive personal, social and economic outcomes. Community Education is grounded on principles of justice, equality, social inclusion and citizenship. When you combine adult and community education, an inclusive definition is presented, catering for the needs of all adult learners.

Adults access education in many ways, for a variety of reasons. Some may have had a negative experience during childhood schooling and wish to return to education in later life to improve on their educational experience. Some adults participate in specific training courses to fulfil employment requirements. However, in addition to this, adults without prior initial training or education have collected in community settings initially as a social outlet and then progressed to participating in education; whether it is through accredited programmes or non-accredited programmes.

It is evident that there are contrasting views on defining what adult education is; however the commonalities between all would suggest that adult education is where adults form a collective group as part of a learning environment. This is the definition that is thought of when adult education is referred to as part of this thesis.

What is care?

Caring has been predominantly associated with looking after someone or something and has historically been affiliated with a feminine role in society. Mothers care for their children. A high percentage of carers of the elderly, of children and of the disabled and sick have been female. However, care in adult education takes on a different role. Adult educators should fulfil the requirements of a caring, learning environment by firstly catering for the diverse needs of students. Adult educators can be caring by providing a range of approaches to learning for students; to include dialogic encounters and opportunities to reflect on their own experiences.

By maintaining care in adult education the needs of learners would be better met and the learning experience of adults improved.

To take this a step further, in order to truly uphold a caring role, adult educators should ensure the content of the programmes or courses being delivered are not only true to student's needs, but include an awareness of how to care and reference to relevant societal issues. This can then contribute to the personal transformation of the learner and also contribute towards social change; keeping true to philosophy of adult education. By being caring towards learners, they in turn will become caring adults. This thesis aims to explore some of the implications of accreditation on these discussed elements of care in adult education.

What is Accreditation?

Accreditation generally is concerned with attributing merit or award for accomplishment or work completed, in this case, for educational attainment. FETAC are the main awarding body in Ireland for adult education courses up to level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Significant changes are happening regarding accreditation in Ireland and these changes no doubt are effecting adult education. This research will discuss the current accreditation system in Ireland, examine why changes are happening within the system and subsequently, explore some of the implications of these changes on care in adult education.

What is power?

Power distribution is an issue that needs to be addressed when determining the reasons for changes to the accreditation system. Whoever holds the power has the ability to determine who, how or when things happen, regardless of why. There are persons in positions of authority, or positions of power, throughout society.

This research wishes to examine the implications of accreditation on care in adult education. Within that there is a bigger picture that addressed the reasons behind such changes. European influence is considered by the State when developing changes to accreditation structures.

This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two. In light of this influence, the State holds responsibility for introducing changes to policy.

It is the Management in institutions and organisations who are then responsible for adapting social, political and economic changes into the current accreditation system. Tutors are informed of changes and expected to implement these new approaches within the learning environment. Learners then are expected to put any new structures into practice and are at the bottom of the power hierarchy; more often than not unaware of their relevance in the power allocation. When the allocation of power is examined in this way, the consideration for learners needs has to be questioned. When you critically examine the way power is distributed, it could be suggested that a social, political and economic agenda is accounted for first and foremost. This approach is indicative of neo-liberal philosophy. When you examine the implications of accreditation through a neo-liberal lens, there are significant issues emerging that impact on care in adult education.

Neo-liberalism

Neo-liberalism is primarily concerned with expanding the private sector as a means of best increasing the growth of the economy. This in turn will generate profit. Within this there is an assumption that State provided services should become privatised, and markets deregulated. Services previously provided by the State are required to justify themselves in terms of economic development.

There is an assumption that wealth will filter down from the upper class to the lower and in his way, all of society benefits. However, again, when you examine this critically, neo-liberalism can have the opposite effect on social mobility. When you consider an increase in privatised services, there is a reliance on, for example, on computerised work as opposed to manual labour, as this will keep costs low. This will result in less jobs for paid workers. The upper class excel and the middle and lower class remain stagnant.

This research aims to examine the implications of accreditation on care in adult education. One avenue explored is how changes in the accreditation system can be attributed to neo-liberal ideology. This aspect is examined throughout the thesis when discussing care and power.

Structure of the Thesis

The purpose of this research is to explore the implications of accreditation on care in adult education. *Chapter One* introduces the key issues involved in the topic.

Chapter Two discusses relevant literature that needs to be examined when exploring the main themes within this inquiry. The development of adult education and the development of accreditation in Ireland is discussed. Policy development is highlighted within this. Key changes are identified that are impacting on adult education in recent times. A discussion of current literature on accreditation is presented.

The work of Nel Noddings is introduced and is central to this thesis as a contribution towards demonstrating the importance of care in adult education. The work of Freire and Gramsci is presented in order to provide a theoretical framework for the research. Ideas from each of these theorists are interwoven into the themes of this research. Power distribution in society is discussed and changes in the accreditation system are examined through a neo-liberal lens.

Chapter Three details the Methodology and the rationale for this research. The approach to the research, methods used and the reflexive journey of the researcher throughout the overall process is highlighted here.

Chapter Four portrays findings from the research. A thematic view of the data is presented in order to highlight the main issues from the semi-structured interviews and the focus group.

Chapter Five provides an analysis of the main issues received from the participants in light of the theory and literature presented in Chapter Two.

Chapter Six concludes the research with a summary of the thesis, using the thematic approach to the work that has been used throughout the work.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In keeping with the themes of the research it was impossible to separate theoretical influence with a review of related literature. The theoretical element of this Chapter explores the work of Nel Noddings, Freire and Gramsci. Rather than providing the reader with an a separate account of each individuals contribution to this work, their ideas are interlinked within the themes of the thesis; care and adult education, care and accreditation and care and power.

The literature reviewed is also presented within the core themes. An account of adult education in Ireland is provided and a discussion of the development of accreditation, including policy development, within this. Recent changes to the accreditation system are highlighted. A rationale is presented for these changes, which subsequently addresses power relations in adult education.

Introduction to Contributors

It is important to firstly provide an introduction to the key theorists addressed in this Chapter. Care is an underpinning theme of this research topic. In order to explore the importance of care, the work of Nel Noddings will be discussed. Through her work (1984, 1987, 2002) I wish to demonstrate how care can occur within the tutor learner relationship and present the overall benefits of providing a caring environment in adult education.

Paulo Freire (1921-1997) was a Brazilian philosopher and educationalist and is viewed as one of the most influential figures in adult education. His main work was concerned with developing critical pedagogy, promoting dialogue in education, as a contrast to the traditional "banking system of education. He highlighted oppression in society. The work of Freire is woven within the themes of this thesis.

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was an Italian writer and philosopher, with an interest in political and social issues. His contribution to the political and indirectly educational arena came mainly through the publication of the Prison Notebooks (1971), literature complied by Gramsci during his imprisonment under Mussolini's rule.

In terms of this research Chapter, the work of Gramsci is mainly references in relation to care and power and the distribution of power in society.

It is hoped that by included the work of the aforementioned theorists a theoretical framework can be provided. This framework aims to support this research question; and identify some of the implications of accreditation on care in adult education.

Care and Adult Education

The Caring Relationship

Nel Noddings (1987) is known for developing the notion of *ethics of care*. She describes a caring encounter as one which involves the carer and the cared for (Noddings, 2002). She explains this caring encounter in great detail. She states that in order for a caring encounter to take place, the carer A must first identify a need to be cared for in the cared for B. Following this identification, A must respond to B in some way. This response is what Noddings referred to as *receptive attention*, "the attention that characterises as consciousness in caring" (Noddings, 2002:17).

Finally in order to complete the encounter, the cared for, B must react to A and express how they have accepted or received the care offer. Noddings believes that this final part is essential for a successful caring encounter to take place. It is in this context that she refers to a caring encounter as being reciprocal.

Within this caring encounter Noddings identifies another characteristic called *motivational displacement* (Noddings, 2002: 18). This is where the energy and efforts of the carer are wholly directed towards catering for the needs of the cared for. If the cared for is in pain, the carer will want to relieve that pain, if the cared for needs to talk, the carer is there to listen" (Noddings, 2002: 17). The carer uses every effort to ensure that the individual needs of the individual are met.

However, Noddings (2002) continues and explains how sometimes motivational displacement can be blocked by the carer.

For example, the carer may simply misinterpret the needs of the cared for. Or, if the carer realises what is required in order to assist the cared for and simply decides, "I don't have time for this" (p.18).

Nel Noddings (2002:22) also makes the distinction between caring for and caring about. Caring for involves a personal encounter between the carer and the cared for. Caring about introduces more people into the equation. The *relationship* when caring about, is in most cases non- existent. Caring about introduces the public into the caring element. For example, donating to a charity or to a third world country may indicate caring. However, the commitment involved is not one of emotional attachment.

Noddings describes caring about in the following way: "one is attentive just so far. One assents with just so much enthusiasm. One acknowledges. One affirms. One contributes five dollars and goes on to other things" (Noddings, 1984: 112). It is evident how caring about has a strong impact on society and in particular it effects "our sense of justice" (Noddings, 1984: 112). An important point to note is how Noddings (1984) maintains that we learn to care about, through the experiences of being cared for.

Care and Education

Noddings sees education as being essential to the development of caring in society. She defines education as 'a constellation of encounters, both planned and unplanned, that promote growth through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, understanding and appreciation' (2002:283) She has argued that education from the care perspective has four key components: modelling, dialogue, practice and confirmation (Noddings, 2002).

Modelling describes how in order to care, learners should not be just asked to care, but given reasons why caring is a good thing to do. The caring behaviour should be role modelled and reciprocated. If we are not caring towards out students, we cannot expect them to care.

Noddings (2002) states that in order to demonstrate positive caring we must engage individuals in discussions and dialogue about caring.

She states the importance to talk directly about, and explore, our own experiences of caring encounters. She describes this as a form of self-reflection; if we can identify and analyse our own caring encounters, whether as carers or cared fors, we can then in turn create a better understanding of our own relationships. This in turn contributes to the quality of care we can then offer.

She argues that the experiences in which we are subjected to produce a type of 'mentality' (1998: 191). She maintains that practice in caring and reflection on that practice is a requirement if we want to produce people who will care for another.

Noddings (1998) draws particularly on the work of Martin Buber when she discusses confirmation. He describes confirmation as an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others (p.192). Something admirable is recognised within the person and "the carer" strives for that person to succeed.

While Noddings (1987, 2002, 2011) work is useful when discussing care related issues, several authors (Davion, 1993, Hassan, 2008) have compiled critiques of her work. In terms of the tutor learner relationship proposed in adult education circles, Noddings (2002) interpretation of this association can appear somewhat linear, especially considering the Freirean approach, where educators are learners in a group also.

Concentric Care Circles

Lynch (2009:35) discusses the notion of *concentric care circles* where three categories of work in the caring field are provided: work required to maintain primary care relations (love labour), secondary care relations (general care work) and tertiary care relations (solidarity work.)

A primary care relation is work that involves love labour; emotional commitment is required in order for a task to be carried out. A primary example of such work would be that of a parent looking after a child; work that develops a strong attachment and bond within the relationship overtime.

Several characteristics authenticate this type of work, which makes it clearly stand out from the other two. "Love labouring is generally characterised by relations of strong mutuality" (p.45).

There is a dependant involved in the relationship denoting an element of power. However the care recipient can show appreciation or acceptance of care and in this way the care reciprocates, similar to Noddings (2002) notion of reciprocal care.

Also, work within primary care relations is more than a set of tasks or goals; there are feelings involved. Individuals engaging in love labouring will encounter feelings of "attentiveness and responsiveness" and a desire for the care recipient to excel and progress (Lynch, 2009: 45). This may be indicative of adult educators, by encouraging their learners to succeed and promoting progression.

Physical and mental work are involved in love labouring as well as emotional work. Consider a parent looking after a young child. Food is provided for the child, he is dressed and washed, and there is an element of physical contact. The parent will hold that child in their thoughts, catering for their every interest and prioritising their needs. A large amount of thought within primary care giving is with regards to planning. Planning for the future needs of the recipient, their daily requirements.

A carer will question on a daily basis: have I the resources and appropriate means to care for this person today? Have I financial security to enable me to meet the needs of this person? Again, within love labouring there is an element of sacrifice, a moral obligation to put the care recipient first. This characteristic is true to love labouring and is not normally within the other two relations (Lynch, 2009: 46).

Secondary care relations do not require as many emotional sacrifices as primary care, given that generally the moral obligation to care is omitted from the relationship. Paid care work ideally should fall into this category.

However, it is easy to identify how the circles can become blurred depending on the individual situation. Time is a factor that can allow a relationship to move in between love labouring and general care work. If a carer is looking after someone for a long time, then indeed a strong attachment can take place, take for example in the case of an elderly person having a long term carer. In this situation the relationship may move from general care work to love labouring (Lynch, 2009: 46).

Within general care work however, there is less attachment involved and the emotional aspect of the work is considerably less than love labouring. The relationship ends with the end of a contract; again the time constraint prevents the relationship from progressing to love labour (Lynch, 2009: 47). Typical relationships that would belong in this category would be those between neighbours, distant family members and work colleagues.

Finally, tertiary care relations, or solidary work are those relationships that can occur without intimacy or personal involvement (Lynch, 2009: 48). Taxation aids those who we may, or most definitely will not meet. Campaigning for voluntary organisations or contributing towards a voluntary agency are examples of solidary work. Policy provision is yet another example. Financial transactions occur in a majority of cases in solidary work.The relationship is of little value to the carer and there is the question of reciprocity. Noddings might refer to this as "caring about" as opposed to "caring for" (Noddings, 2002: 22). In most cases the carer will receive no personal response from the carer, the reciprocal aspect or the final aspect of the relationship as described by Noddings comes from within, the self-affirmation or feeling of well being for contributing or caring. This indicates the strong sense of moral duty that is one of the main traits in this area of work.

Freire and Love

Freire too addresses the notion of caring when he speaks of teaching as an act of love (Freire:1993). He makes several references to the teacher as a carer and in turn highlights how this approach can contribute to conscientisation (Freire, 1970).

Freire discussed his love for teaching and spoke of his own experience being taught by a loving educator and how this implicated on him as a student.

> The gesture of the teacher affirmed in me a self confidence that obviously still had much room to grow, but it inspired in me a belief that I too had value and could work and produce results- results that clearly had their limits but that were a demonstration of my capacity, which up until that moment I would have been inclined to hide or not fully believe in.
>
> *(Freire, 1998).*

Shor and Freire (1987: 186) discuss the importance of allowing yourself to dream when teaching from a critical perspective. When you dream you allow yourself to believe that there is possibility for change. By dreaming it was felt that educators were more open to the possibility for transformation and this belief was into the learning environment by teaching as an act of love.

Freire (1998) was of the belief that "it is impossible to teach without the courage to love, without the courage to try a thousand times without giving in. In short it is impossible to teach without a forged intended and well-thought-out capacity to love". Freires views on love are important for adult educators to consider when creating a caring learning environment.

Approaches to Teaching Adults

Freire (1970) introduced the notion of the banking system of education- the didactic approach to teaching where students were "filled" with empty deposits of knowledge imparted on them. In this exchange there was no allowance for questioning and the relationship between student and learner was in no terms reciprocal.

By submitting to this type of teaching was, according to Freire, contributing to the struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed.

In contrast to this, Freire firmly believed in the importance of dialogue in the learning process and emphasised the importance of a dialogic exchange between student and student, student and teacher. This type of teaching reflects liberatory education, and education for the "practice of freedom" (Freire, 1970).

In contrast to the banking method, learners engaging in problem posing education, or liberatory education are more likely to develop critical consciousness (Freire, 1970). Critical consciousness creates an awareness of power struggle in society, an understanding of social contexts and the ability to recognise and challenge societal issues in order to contribute to social transformation (Leonard & Mclaren,1993:32).

Without this approach to education, teachers become the oppressors- "Leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people--they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress" (Freire, 1970). Gramsci (1971) like Freire, was an advocate of transformative learning, *broad education*, in the hope of promoting social change. When he discussed schooling, he was wary of the traditional approach to education, where children were like "small monsters, instructed for specific occupations and lacking in general ideas" (Gramsci, 1971).

While Freire has a lot of contribute to adult education, his extensive use of masculine language cannot be ignored. hooks (2004), an American feminist, identifies this flaw in his writings, yet explains why she continues to be influenced by Freires work.

> Think of the work as water that contains some dirt. Because you are thirsty you are not too proud to extract the dirt and be nourished by the water (p.50).

Care and Accreditation

It is envisaged that within this section an overview of accreditation in Ireland will be provided. Also, an awareness of views and reflections on the accreditation process will be presented in order to contribute to a critique of current changes in the Irish accreditation system. These changes will be later discussed in terms of the caring elements within them, in order to contribute towards answering this research question; what are some of the implications of accreditation on care in adult education?

Adult Education in Ireland

Adult education is a relatively new term; however there is evidence of adults learning throughout Irish history. Down through the years, community spirit generated rationale for development in both rural and urban areas, development that contributed immensely to the growth and promotion of community groups, women's education and in turn community education to date. However, prior to the development of the VECs, there was no *national* recognition of adult education practises in Ireland. The VEC's were established as a result of the 1930 Vocational Education Act, with a duty to establish "continuation education". (Vocational Education Act,1930). The Murphy Report in 1973 highlighted the next significant development and indicated issues in relation to adult literacy among adult learners, however, little action was taken on the recommendations of this report.

In 1979, the appointment of Adult Education Organisers instigated the development of annual learning programmes in Counties. The first funding was made available for adult education through the Adult Literacy and Community Education Budget through the Kenny Report in 1984. Community Education developed throughout the 80's and 90's and voluntary and community groups began to offer courses in personal development, adult literacy and various courses to meet learners needs. One of the most significant developments in this time was the emergence of women's groups. Women started to become more confident to move away from their traditional role in the home and adapt new personas in society.

With the overall development of community education adults were given what Ted Fleming (2004) refers to as a "second chance education."

The White paper on Adult Education, *Learning for Life* (2000), marked a significant milestone for the sector, with a formal recognition of adult education in policy development for the first time. The document also provided a specific definition of adult education, as highlighted in Chapter One and played a role in introducing the idea of lifelong learning into educational policy in Ireland.

There are various aspects of the White paper that discuss both directly and indirectly, care and accreditation in adult education. The main aspects of the document are highlighted below in order to give a view into how care and accreditation are perceived within this influential policy document.

When determining the vision for society, the White Paper (2000) identifies Consciousness Raising as a key theme. "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. It embraces a view of Adult Education as an empowering process of self-discovery towards personal and collective development" (2000:28).

This statement bears a lot of significance when you take the care of the learners into account. It gives responsibility to the adult educator to ensure when delivering programmes and facilitating groups to invite and encourage personal experiences as a means of empowerment into the learning environment.

The White paper (2000:154) recognises the importance of recognising the diverse range of intelligence that needs to be accounted for when accessing and accrediting learners work.

One of the key points introduced initially in the Green Paper (1995) and reiterated in the White paper (2000: 155) was how accreditation and certification "be available flexibly and frequently, in line with learners' needs". This vision also promotes a caring outlook on offering accreditation and an idealist view on how learners access certification.

The document (2000: 155) refers to the provision of "an all-embracing network of relationship between providers in the further and higher education and training sectors", highlighting the importance of the National Framework of Qualifications within this relationship. Prior to the establishment of QQI, learners who completed accredited courses at FETAC Level 6 and wished to progress further with their education were required to complete courses certified by HETAC. The progression from further education to higher education should be a process that is encouraged and cared for by the relevant institutions involved. It is momentous to see the recognition of this process, of this *relationship* identified by policy makers.

Another significant development within the adult education field was in relation to Teaching Council Registration. The Teaching Council is the regulator of the teaching profession. Under Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001, from 1 November 2013, all teachers employed in State-funded teaching positions in recognised schools will have to be registered with the Teaching Council in order to be paid from State funds. This will have a significant impact on adult and community education, considering that a lot of tutors working in the sector currently are not required to have any formal qualifications and have been delivering programmes due to extensive experience in a particular area.

A minority of courses have been approved by the Teaching Council in order to qualify teachers to work in the adult education sector. However, the content of these courses, and the requirements approved by the Teaching Council are part of a wider debate.

Teachers with formal teaching qualifications in second level teaching are currently qualified to teach adults by the State, with no experience working with adults or educational attainment in relation to approaches to adult learning; however, adult educators with teaching qualifications are currently not deemed suitable to deliver programmes in second level institutions. There is a certain inequality attached to this point, and certainly problematic when you consider the role of educators and the carried needs of learners.

Development of Accreditation in Ireland

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 was at the forefront of accreditation in Ireland, responsible for the development of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), previously NCVA[1].

The NQAI was established in 2001 to set up and maintain a framework of qualifications and to promote and simplify access, transfer and progression (NQAI, 2003a, p.5).

The Further Education and training Awards Council (FETAC) was the statutory awarding body for further education and training in Ireland, responsible for the certification of Awards from 1 to 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. Progression to level 7 relied on certification from HETAC, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC[1]).

The National Framework Qualifications (NFQ) was also introduced under The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act to be "a single, nationally and internationally accepted entity through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards" (NQAI, 2003b: 7). The NFQ is a system of ten levels, each of which has nationally agreed standards setting out what you are expected to know, understand and be able to do following successful completion of a programme. Nowadays there is a significant awareness of the NFQ and those working in the education system can identify the relevance of a particular course when placed on what is commonly referred to as *The Wheel* (NFQ).

Changes to Accreditation

It could be suggested that some of the changes that recently have occurred within the Irish accreditation System can be attributed to the Bologna Declaration. The Bologna Declaration (1999) aims to provide a system whereby higher education courses can be transferable across Europe, mainly due to a comparable European Credit transfer System (ECTS).

This ECTS allows students to acquire credits for accredited courses that can be built upon to achieve a European recognised qualification.

The Bologna Declaration[1], signed by Ireland, the United Kingdom and eighteen other countries, sets out specific objectives. Several of these objectives are significant to this research. Within the document there is a call for a European dimension in quality assurance, with comparable criteria and methods. There is a significant importance attached to developing courses of benefit to the European labour market. The ECTS was developed as part of the Bologna Declaration and already can be observed within the Common Awards System.

The CAS was introduced by FETAC and is currently being rolled out across the country on a staggered basis. All FETAC Awards will become part of the System by the end of 2014, when all accredited courses will equate to a certain number of credits that can be combined to achieve certain awards. Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) will be responsible for leading out Awards from the Common Awards System. On 6 November 2012, QQI was established replacing FETAC, HETAC and NQAI. Awards previously validated by FETAC and HETAC will now receive certification through QQI.

Each Award accredited will be part of the NFQ. The NFQ contains different types of awards — major, special purpose and supplemental, which in the CAS levels1 - 6, are generally achieved through the accumulation of minor awards. Minor awards are known as the building blocks of the common awards system (FETAC[2]). Minor Awards are the individual modules that are required to combine for a full certificate or major Award.

With the Common Awards System came changes for educators also. It is envisaged that this research will unravel some of these changes for tutors and identify the implications of such occurrences on care in adult education. The following literature examines some of the current views on accreditation.

Views on Accreditation

Accreditation can bring a fear that significant changes will be made to the content of programmes.

Freire (1987) refers to how some educational programmes can be shaped to suit economic needs. He discusses how, in order to promote the transformation of learners, to contribute to a process of reflection or *praxis*, economic and social issues should be discussed regardless of the subject content (Freire, 1987:49). He maintained that regardless of the content there should be room to address such societal issues with "sacrificing the content of the program" (p.49). He discusses how educators can use teacher talk and still use a problem posing approach, and implies there is opportunity to be critical of the system while teaching inside it (p.39).

Deirdre Keyes (2004) presents a variety of perspectives of tutors working in adult education. She too refers to the significance of engaging in dialogue in adult education and the importance of not offering "the same to more" in adult education centres, as stated by Ohliger (1974) citied in Keyes (2004).

Keyes (2004) demonstrates how tutors are mindful of student's needs, and fearful of accreditation taking away the major focus from the student to the subject (p.71). There was a concern raised regarding the voluntary attendance of students and how the curriculum should be student led as opposed to curriculum lead.

She raised the debate regarding the value of the certificate. Some tutors felt that many of the learners were satisfied with the ability to express themselves and "they really do not care about a certificate" (p. 72). Tutors questioned the amount of time students were going to be given to complete assessment and the value of the work to the learner, considering the extensive syllabus within current modules.

Hussey and Smith (2002: 232), while not entirely dismissive of learning outcomes, stressed the importance of understanding their value. "The proper interpretation of these outcomes must emerge from the context and prevailing activities and experiences of the students: they cannot be, in themselves, either clear or precise and do not specify objectively measurable entities" (2002: 232). They too lean towards problem posing education as opposed to curriculum lead programmes.

In keeping true to adult education philosophy as outlined by Jarvis (1987), Dainton (2010:29) suggests that students should be consulted on how their learning is assessed. She calls for an assessment where students can be involved in their lifelong learning in consultation with tutors and the education system. Although acknowledged as a challenge, she states that any deviation from this suggested assessment of adult education will succumb to a "reductionist accountability and the little test" (p. 29), referring to unplanned examinations given to a group of students as a means of assessing learning for accreditation purposes.

Bloom's Taxonomy, created by educational psychologist Dr Benjamin Bloom, was introduced in order to promote higher forms of thinking in education, such as analysing and evaluating, as opposed to just remembering facts, a condition of banking education (Freire, 1970). Three types of learning were identified: cognitive: mental skills (*Knowledge*), affective: growth in feelings or emotional areas (*Attitude or self*) and psychomotor: manual or physical skills (*Skills*) (Bloom, 1956).

Adams (2010) introduces these principles of learning developed by Bloom (1956) and discusses the levels of cognitive learning in the theory. It could be suggested that these levels are comparable with FETAC module descriptors when you consider the wording used in learning outcomes; including knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

The language used in such descriptors was highlighted as a potential problem within accredited programmes. An example is given (Dainton, 2010:225) of how a learning outcome starting with "describe" invites students to give a description of something, but does not allow for the complexity of accuracy, or level of thought attributed to the description.

It is due to the discretion of the assessor how marks are given, alongside FETAC marking systems, and in turn due to the assessor's interpretation of "how well" something is described. "The learning outcome itself indicates only the general nature of what is expected" (p.226).

In her research, Kelly (1994) mentions a request for accreditation from community education. Providers of non-accredited programmes were hopeful that accreditation would be expanded to include a range of courses; therefore promoting inclusion of adult education and providing benefits to the learners. The question asked was why not accreditation? In light of the implications of recent changes to accreditation, the question that is now being asked is *why* accreditation? (Keyes, 2004).

To summarise, general issues in relation to accreditation included issues with the actual descriptors of the programmes themselves, a fear of accreditation forcing programmes to become curriculum lead as opposed to student lead, which in turn challenges problem posing education and questions whos needs are being met. These points are central in exploring this research question and examining some of the implications of accreditation on care in adult education.

Future of Accreditation

The Future of Accreditation will be shaped by many things. There is a European influence, discussed previously within this Chapter, that will have a significant part to play. Some of the objectives set out in the Bologna Declaration have only recently come to light within Irish accreditation systems.

For example, the implications of the switch to QQI are not yet fully realised by educators. The development of the CAS is only currently being rolled out. As stated earlier, this process will not be complete until the end of 2014.

As part of The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, Section 4.13 introduces the Green Paper on Programme Accreditation (QQI[1]).

The document is available online for consultation until September 2013. It discusses the various issues in relation to validation and delivery of programmes which will impact on how accreditation is carried out in the future. One of the key points made is in relation to achieving minor awards; there is a vision in the report that in future practice learners will be encouraged to complete major Awards in a particular area.

This document will have a part to play in the future of accredited programmes in Ireland; again reiterating a longing for Major Awards.

SOLAS, Seirbhísí Oideachais Leanunaigh Agus Scileanna, is the new further education and training authority. All services in relation to further education and training will now come under this umbrella. Within this, FAS will be disbanded and local Education and Training Boards will replace VECs. The completion of legislation for these new authorities has not yet been finalised, however, the Further Education and Training (SOLAS) Bill 2013 was discussed at the Dail on Wednesday 12 June 2013 and details of the debate should soon become available.

It is difficult to predict how the future of accreditation will be shaped due to the all the newness attached to the adult education system in Ireland. To address this research question, in relation to care, tutors have highlighted within the literature the importance of keeping learners needs central to the process. This appears to be a commonality within tutors and key to adult education philosophy.

Adult education, and adult education philosophy, is different to traditional schooling in many ways. One way how it differs is through the varied methods of assessment used, whether accredited or non-accredited, in contrast to the traditional end of year examination.

The approach that is taken to adult learning is important within this. The White Paper highlights this while including in its core principles the importance of keeping the learner central to the process, a process of "construction rather than instruction". In addition to this the document gives precedent to "a core learning objective of preparing the learner for a life of learning rather than for a terminal, end-of-learning examination" (2000:31).

When Freire (1998) discusses the responsibility of the educator he stresses the importance of not falling into a meritocratic environment without risk or questioning.

He states that "intellectuals who memorise everything, reading for hours on end, slaves to the text, fearful of taking a risk, speaking as if they were reciting from memory, fail to make any concrete connections between what they have read and what is happening in the world, the country or the local community. They repeat what has been read with precision but rarely teach anything of personal value" (Freire, 1998).

Keyes (2002:73) questions the quality of education in future programmes. She too highlights how "standardised curricula and outcomes are likely to reinforce traditional teacher, student roles and encourage standardised approaches". She calls for clarity on the future of adult education due to a feeling of uncertainty from tutors working in a predominantly meritocratic system.

Dainton (2010) questions how accountability should be carried out in adult education. Adult learners returning to education may very well have negative experiences of assessment in traditional school systems. Dainton (2010) gives an example where a manager asked a tutor of a non-accredited course to include an examination in order to assess learning of students. The introduction of a surprise "little test" at the end of a lesson may bring up mixed views for learners in a class and can have damaged consequences for some (p. 29).

In order to receive continued funding, an element of accountability is required; however, the means in which it is carried out is debatable. The end of year examination is the most traditional form of assessment leading to accreditation, yet when you consider philosophy of adult education, the value of such an approach is problematic. There is evidence within this Chapter that tutors are aware of and work towards meeting the needs of learners. A meritocratic approach would create problems meeting those needs, and in turn, problems creating a caring environment. The key question posed within this research is asking if accreditation is having an impact in this way and what therefore are the implications of accreditation on care in adult education?

Care and Power

As discussed in Chapter One, the distribution of power is evident within accreditation systems. This Chapter has so far examined the European influence that shapes policy development in relation to accreditation. It will now examine views on power and how these views can be useful within this research question- what are some of the implications of accreditation on care in adult education?

Power and Society

Freire (1970, 1987) discusses power in terms of division in society. True to Marxist ideology, he holds the view that there is indeed a clear division in society, between the ruling elite and the working class or in Freirean terms the oppressors and the oppressed. He believed that individuals in society belonged to either grouping, there was little allowance for fluctuation between the two.

The oppressors, those in a position of power, present the dominant society and exploit the working class. In this way, it could be suggested that there is an omission of care in this relationship. Noddings (2012) maintains that if the leaders in education, politics, society, are caring, this will provide positive results for all involved.

Gramsci, too was supportive of the claim that there exists a ruling class in society. Hegemony, in terms of Gramscian ideology, is "a social condition in which all aspects of social reality are dominated or supportive of a single class" (Gramsci, citied in Mayo, 1999:35).

Hegemonic practice can be identifies in adult education, when you consider managerial structures in education institutions. Tutors of adult education are answerable to higher authorities, in relation to curriculum planning, assessment procedures and general class instruction. New policy development and changes in structures are due to decisions made by the ruling hegemony, mainly governmental institutions responsible for the implementation of economic and political strategies.

There is an element of social mobility attached to hegemonic distribution in adult education.

The tutor, while *oppressed* by managerial power, too can uphold a hegemonic position by enforcing social and political procedures. This occurs by increasing the workload of learners, lessening class instruction and cutting back on time to complete assessment. This deviation is in contrast to Freires (1970) notion of oppression, where the dominant class, generally cannot be altered.

Gramsci (1971) makes reference to how every social group or class in society contains numerous intellectuals, all working for the economic, social and political obligations of the social group under the instruction of the elite. He stresses how this elite should possess certain qualities or traits that will enable the organisation and implementation required for the needs of the dominant hegemony to be met. "The intellectuals are the dominant groups "deputies" exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government" (p.54). This is true for all types of institutions, inclusive of educational establishments.

This dominant hegemonic figure is also at the core of the selection of additional appropriate intellectuals from other classes; used to perform and deliver the political and economic agenda of the hegemonic group.

These organic intellectuals *(*Gramsci, 1971) will possess specific talents and abilities that will enable them to carry out certain tasks, again on route to meeting hegemonic needs. However, organic individuals work to meet the needs of the specific class and are prominent in sourcing consented *counter hegemonic* ideas, as a contribution towards social change.

Gramcsi believes that it is due to the connection to institutions that power struggle takes place, and due to this a "war of manoeuvre"*,* a frontal attack on the ruling hegemony would not be successful in promoting social change (Mayo, 1999:83).

In contrast to this, Gramsci promotes a counter hegemonic approach, a "war of position", where an inclusive societal approach is used to challenge the existing hegemony (p. 84). Gramsci did not believe that radical rebellious activity from lower class or oppressed groups would be successful if challenging the dominant hegemony.

He indicates how one must firstly be aware of coercive power at play within hegemonic practice. There is an element of consent or acceptance on the part of those dominated; even though there is an awareness of the wrong doing, there is no strong resistance either. Counter hegemonic activity can be carried by organic intellectuals, who can challenge hegemonic systems and promote transformative change.

Both Gramsci's and Freire's work are useful in determining where power lies in our current accreditation system. If we are to consider recent developments in adult education and predict where the accreditation process is now leading us, there are questions to be asked in relation to the allocation of power. When we examine this more closely, it could be suggested that a top-down approach currently determines how power is distributed. This is indicative of neo-liberal policy.

Neo-liberalism: The Hegemonic Agenda

As stated in Chapter One, neo-liberalism is primarily concerned with expanding economic growth. It has been associated with political leaders such a Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, Tony Blair to name but a few. Hardiman (2011:23) discusses some of the characteristics of neo-liberalism and states how the approach is associated with "deregulation of the economy, privatization of state owned enterprises and liberalization of trade and industry regulation nationally and globally and the restructuring and downsizing of the public sector.

" Today, neo-liberal discourse can be identified within the political and economic agenda in Ireland." Lynch (2006) recognises how Irish society currently seems to be privatising public services previously available through the State, and forcing individuals to pay for services, as a means of contribution to the market value of the economy. When you consider how adult education is provided in Ireland, this approach may appear problematic. Adult education in its majority is provided publicly by the State, considering the VECs are the main providers of adult education in Ireland.

There is a fear that when you apply a neo-liberal lens, education will be viewed in terms of its value to generate profit. This is an interesting point when you consider the nature of the courses that are currently being promoted in adult education. For example, technological and pharmaceutical courses, recognised in other European countries are promoted. Programmes of a caring nature appear to be the forgotten element in labour market initiatives.

Springboard initiatives encourage the unemployed back into the workforce by allowing them to access courses free of charge. The courses that are part of the initiative are directly link to vacancies in the economy and appear to be for example, of a technological or pharmaceutical nature, or linked to renewable energies, the way of the future. There is little value for the economy in having students pursue a course of a practical nature, or subsequently, of a non-accredited nature.

Giroux (2003) discussed the apparent importance of students growing up corporate, and states the language required of today is the language of the market as opposed to language of democracy. Within this approach there is very little scope for the development of learners needs, or indeed for the promotion of care. Finnegan (2008) addresses these issues and reiterates the feelings of Giroux on the responsibility of the media in promoting neo-liberal ideology.

On a related point, Apple (2003) discusses technology and its influence on the future of the market; he makes the point that technological positions that are currently being promoted and worked towards by the economy will in time disempower people and deskill workers.

When you critically examine courses such as those outlined above, that set out to train workers to obtain a certain set of skills, a range of problems can be identified. Within very specific, often manualised training programmes, there is very little flexibility for dialogic encounter, problem posing education, or for student led participation.

Instead, a learning environment previously committed to promoting social change and transformative learning, reverts to a meritocratic *banking system* of education, primarily aimed at getting the Certification and subsequently justifies a student's existence within a competitive global labour market.

This research aims to explore the implications of accreditation on care in adult education. By reverting to neo-liberal discourse, current changes in accreditation can prove problematic for the promotion of care on the learning environment.

The foundation of Lynches work regarding care is based around what she defines as "affective equality" (Lynch, 2009:12). She declares how care and love are deemed as personal issues and seem to have no importance in political, sociological, legal or economic matters (Lynch, 2009:12).

She refers to how the work of the caregiver, those who look after dependant others, whether they are children, sick or disabled, seems to have little significance or recognition within political, sociological, legal or economic issues, when she feels caring should be at the core.

This forgotten element "generates two very important forms of inequality: inequality in the degree to which people's needs for love and care are satisfied, and inequality in the work that goes into satisfying them. These are the core of what we call affective inequality" (Lynch, 2009:12).

When recent changes in accreditation are examined, it could be suggested that this affective domain is indeed a neglected aspect in Irish society. There are clear issues for the development of adult education within a neo-liberal agenda. The possibility of abolishing State funded programmes may be an option in the case where they may not generate profit. Non accredited training courses cannot generally be attributed to economic development. For example, accredited courses are valued by the CAS and subsequently the ECTS. Awards are recognised internationally and transferable across Europe.

This increases possibilities for employment, as is not the case for the majority of non-accredited courses.

Shor and Freire (1987: 47) discuss how "there is a radical separation on the curriculum between the programs that do the most concrete training for jobs and the programs that do the most critical reflection. Such job separation reduces the capacity of workers to challenge the system". Neo-liberalism encourages accountability and measurable outcomes in order to justify economic growth. There is little value attached to personal transformation of the learner, or care of the individual.

Hussey and Smith discuss the power relations in play when you consider the reasons for establishing learning outcomes and the lack of understanding of those, generally management, who have implemented them. They describe how learning outcomes are generally sought and applauded by management, yet their usefulness is questioned by teachers in the education system (p.225). Teachers themselves can identify the problems within current programmes.

For example, Keyes (2004) discusses the current fear from tutors that within the current accreditation system, students may become consumers, falling through a system, as opposed to being active participants. By taking a neo-liberal approach within an educational context, there is very little room left to encourage critical reflection, problem posing education and indeed contribution towards transformation.

With such an approach to education provision there are clear issues raised regarding the impact of such an approach on care in adult education. It is envisaged that these issues will be highlighted and addressed within this research.

Conclusion
This Chapter outlines literature and theory in relation to care and care work.. An introduction to adult education and accreditation was provided and policy development in relation to adult education in Ireland was discussed.

Power relations currently at play were identified and changes to accreditation in Ireland were examined through a neo-liberal lens.

There was evidence in this section to show where care has been accounted for and omitted when it comes to accreditation. Tutors views on changes to accreditation expressed issues that impact on care in adult education. The following Chapter provides an outlook on how this research was carried out, in order to explore additional experiences of tutors on the identified topics.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research aims to examine the impact accreditation has on care in adult education, and within this, any apparent reasons for recent changes to the caring role of the tutor. By conducting qualitative research I wish to investigate current issues in relation to accreditation for adult educators, in order to examine the impact on the learning environment.

For the purpose of this research I completed semi-structured interviews with six tutors with experience working with adults on accredited programmes. After I collated the initial findings, I completed a focus group with learners engaged in an adult education programme that was known to me.

Tutors expressed concerns that they may be identified within this research. For this reason, I have not included individual details of any individual. I have omitted anything that could possibly identify anyone that has contributed this thesis, for example, name, name of Centre, or name of course being delivered.

An overview of these participants is as follows. All of the tutors interviewed are currently teaching adults. Collectively they have experience in delivering programmes to students within several VECs such as PLC, VTOS, BTEI, Youthreach and adult literacy programmes. In addition to this there were tutors delivering programmes within Local Development/Partnership companies and FAS.

Ontological Position

"Ontology is the study of being, concerned with "what is" within the nature of reality" (Crotty,1998:10). The ontological position of the researcher determines the theoretical framework from which they work, and from which will shape the research. When considering how I was going to conduct this research, I was of the belief that I would not reach an overall conclusion to my question; there would not be a definitive truth attached to the work.

I was primarily interested in tutor's experiences, and in turn their interpretations in relation to the research topic. I was interested in exploring their views on how accreditation was impacting on care in adult education, partly due to my own experiences working within adult education.

For these reasons, considering my own motivations for doing this research, I decided that my ontological position stemmed from a post- positivist approach. Post-positivist research principles "emphasise meaning and the creation of new knowledge, and are able to support committed social movements, that is, movements that aspire to change the world and contribute towards social justice" (Ryan, 2006:12). I envisaged that with the development of this thesis new knowledge would be created in relation to how accreditation was impacting on care in adult education. Furthermore, I felt that the findings collated as part of this work may contribute towards the voice of adult education practices in society, where care should be central to the process.

Epistemological Position

There are several aspects to be considered when determining my own epistemological position and how I interpret knowledge to be constructed. There are three main approaches that underpin how this research was conducted. I have carried out this research mainly through a critical lens and have drawn on the work of several critical theorists namely Freire and Gramsci to support my claims.

There is a feminist approach that needs to be named within this research also; considering that care is a key theme and is predominantly a feminine issue and also due to the feminist contribution to the literature. Social constructionism was also a central factor in determining how the research would be conducted.

Social Constructionism

Alvesson (2009:23) identifies how social constructionism can be associated with critical theory. I am interested in the experiences of the tutors involved in delivering accredited programmes in adult education, in relation to how they perceive accreditation to be impacted on care in adult education.

The knowledge that I hope to generate is constructed within social parameters and free from the assumption that there will be a concluding truth as a result of this work. What is knowledge is determined through observation, dialogue and social experience. While the main approach to this piece is within a critical paradigm, for this reason the research takes a social constructionist view also and this needs to be acknowledged.

Approach to Critical Theory

As stated previously, this research was carried out through a critical lens, yet acknowledging the feminist approach that is embedded in critical theory. Creswell (2000:125) states "when we refer to the lens, we mean that the inquirer uses a viewpoint for establishing validity in a study. Qualitative inquirers bring to their studies a different lens toward validity than that brought to traditional, quantitative studies."

There are a range of world views in relation to the characteristics or critical theory and it is important that for the purpose of this research the approach taken is fully understood. Kincheloe and McClaren (2005) present alternative views on how and why critical research is conducted. It is impossible within this research to explore all possibilities; therefore the most relevant attributes of the approach to this research question are outlined below.

One of the key characteristics of critical theory that is central to this inquiry is the acceptance that all thought is "fundamentally mediated by power relations that are socially and historically constituted". Kincheloe and McClaren (2005: 304). When you consider educational provision in Ireland there is evidence of hierarchical social control that dominates all else within the structure of the system.

Political agenda could be considered important and filters through the operation of the institution. Current changes in accreditation carry too an external agenda. It could be suggested that neo-liberal ideology is central to the rationale for recent changes. This suggestion emerges within the findings of this research.

A second aspect is that "the relationship between concept and object and between signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalist production and consumption (Kincheloe and McClaren, 2005: 304).

When you consider the relationship between tutor and learner, this critical approach reiterates what is discussed in *Chapter Two* in relation to oppression. Within the current accreditation system, tutors are engaged in a power struggle and governed by management structures. By surrendering to the dominating hegemony, the role of the tutor changes from the oppressed to the oppressor, and inflicts power on the learners in order to carry out the demands of the elite.

I am working in the adult education sector and for this reason I see firsthand the state of the accreditation system and the implications on all involved in the process. I feel a lot of work has been undertaken by philosophers, theorists, universities and policy makers in order for adult education to be recognised in its own right; with a separate entity and a different approach in comparison to other aspects of education.

The methods and approaches suggested by Freire (1970, 1984) for example should be adapted by adult educators and encouraged in order to continue with and improve on positive learning experiences for adults. Both Nodding's (1987, 2001, 2002) and Lynch's (2009) views on care and care work are extremely useful in developing core learning experiences in a caring environment. I have experienced first-hand the benefits for learners who engage in learning experiences that encourage critical thinking, originality and promote the placement of current issues, and political developments within the wider context, for example the reasons behind such changes and their impact on Irish society as a whole.

If it is the case that changes in accreditation are having negative impacts on adult education, there is a question that needs to be raised at policy level. In talking to adult educators this research aims to discover their own ideas and experiences on these issues and in turn make recommendations as to how change can be potentially created.

Purposive Sampling

I have chosen to use purposive sampling as I felt my research would benefit most from selecting interviewees who are currently involved in or have experience in tutoring on an adult education programme and have experience in or are currently delivering an accredited course. In order to select interviewees who fit both of these criteria, purposive sampling would be an appropriate method. Denzin and Lincoln (1994:202) citied in Silverman (2010:141) state "many qualitative researchers employ… purposive, not random, sampling methods. They seek out groups and settings individuals where… the processes being studied are most likely to occur."

I felt it would also be interesting to get the views of tutors who have experience delivering both accredited and non-accredited courses in order to compare the dynamics in each teaching environment.

As a post-positivist researcher I was open to discovering what issues would emerge from tutors. However, when I involved in the research I realised there were significant issues, in relation to power relations for example, that had to be explored. I adapted my interview questions in order to explore some of the emerging themes. I had the flexibility to do this using semi structured interviews. Bell (2005:157) states" One major advantage of the interview is its adaptability. A skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which the questionnaire can never do."

On doing this I felt I gave a voice to the participants to raise current concerns for them which are so relevant to what is happening in the accreditation system today.

Richie (2003:36) discusses how interviews provide "an opportunity for detailed investigation of peoples personal perspectives - for in-depth understanding of the personal context within which the research phenomena are located and for very detailed subject coverage." I felt that the both the tutors and learners interviewed in this research were comfortable enough to share their personal experiences with me and contribute to unfolding the issues raised.

By using semi structured interviews I feel I have unravelled tutors own experiences of accreditation and how they view its current role in relation to care within the learning environment. Using a focus group demonstrated to me that the same issues that were impacting on the role of the tutor were having similar effects on learners experiences of adult education.

Semi-Structured Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with tutors delivering FETAC courses in a range of settings. I interviewed 6 tutors in total who collectively had experience in delivering programmes for VECs (BTEI, PLC VTOS and adult literacy programmes), Partnership/ Development Companies and Fas. Semi-structured interviews provide "qualitative depth by allowing interviewees to talk about the subject within their own frame of reference…. this allows the meanings that individuals attribute to events and relationships to be understood on their own terms. Second, it thereby provides a greater understanding of the subject's point of view" (May, 2011: 136).

Originally I had decided to conduct this research with tutors delivering on BTEI courses only. However, on reflection, I felt the type of programme involved is irrelevant within this research as the primary aim of this work is to examine the impact of accreditation on care. Relationships form between learners and tutors regardless of the type of programme it is. Tutors delivering on any accredited courses would be expected to use a caring approach to meet their learning outcomes and I felt it would be interesting to see the rationale for choosing particular teaching methodologies.

I developed a list of questions to ask tutors and from the themes that developed in these interviews I developed questions to use in the focus group.

The Focus Group
The initial inquiry of this research was to determine the implications of accreditation of care in adult education for tutors.

However, I decided to complete a focus group with learners afterwards to find out if the same issues were emerging for them. I conducted a focus group using questions based on the findings from the interviews with tutors.

The focus group was conducted with students participating on an accredited programme in a further education Centre. The FETAC Level 5 course was of a practical nature and delivered from September to May on an annual basis. I spoke to the group prior to completing the focus group to explain the purpose of my research and answer any questions they might have. They were all given to option to participate in the research. Six students agreed to be part of the focus group and all completed the consent forms prior to the interview.

The questions used for the focus group were developed based on the themes emerging from the interviews with the tutors. In this way I was capable of tracing similarities and differences in how accreditation was affecting tutors and learners in adult education.

Ethical Considerations

At the onset, the issues in relation to ethics within this research appeared fairly straightforward. I developed a set of questions that I showed to each of the interviewees prior to the interview. I explained the purpose of the research and what would happen with the results. I explained to each participant that they would receive a copy of the transcripts and could change/ omit anything that they wished and that they had the option to withdraw any information that had been given to me at any time. Each interviewee gave written consent to participate in the research.

When I started my very first interview I was genuinely surprised with how honest the tutor was and was shocked with the information that was given to me. Issues came up in relation to caring within the learning environment, without asking any direct questions on the topic.

Additionally, topical issues were discussed in relation to recent changes in accreditation and the impact they were having on tutors. The findings from the research forced me to think critically about the participants who were involved in the research and how important it was that their identity be protected.

Etherington (2004:227) addresses the issue of power in research and relates to how the stories we pick up on may not be the ones that the person meant to have and "struggled to have out in the open". One particular interviewee came to me afterwards and asked that any information he had submitted be withdrawn from the research. No reason was given for the sudden change of heart. I accepted his request and no information from this tutor was used in my research.

In a time where there is huge uncertainty for tutors, in relation to contracts, permanency and competition overall, I felt there was an element of fear that emerged from several interviewees afterwards, and that the information they gave be confidential. I felt I had an *ethic of care* (Noddings, 1987) to the participants of this research in that regard. In this way, ethical issues in relation to confidentiality were central to this research. Confidentiality became a central issue, due to the complexity of the issues identified by tutors. For this reason, no information was included in this research that could link ny tutor to any of the findings.

From an additional ethical perspective, it is important to mention that the group of students in the focus group were not my own students, but participants on a course I was aware of. I discussed my research with the participants in the focus group prior to the interview. Again, I explained that they would receive a copy of the transcripts and could change or omit anything, with the option to withdraw from the research altogether. Written consent was obtained from the participants in the focus group.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity was an integral aspect of this process. Within post-positivism the notion of an objective or detached researcher is seen as a myth. It is recognised that as a researcher you bring your life experiences, values and ways of viewing the world to bear on how you approach any topic (Ryan, 2006).

As I was completing my interviews, researching literature and collating the findings I too was part of the accreditation process as a tutor of adult education. I found myself maddened at the increased expectations of FETAC due to the implementation of the Common Awards System. The paperwork, the "tick-box" exercises were eating away at time that could be better spend reviewing class preparation, developing relationships with and learning experiences for students. There was a central focus on accountability- written evidence was required for a seemingly ridiculous amount of targets. It was during this time, due to my own involvement in the research, that I became certain of my own ontological position as a post-positivist researcher.

I was aware of the implications of the system on tutors, even from my own participation in the process, but more so after collating the findings from the interviews. I became more interested in how the current accreditation system was impacting on learners. Due to this, I decided to conduct a focus group with learners to unravel their own views and experiences on accredited programmes.

This deviation from the initial research plan denoted reflexivity on my behalf as the researcher. Within this post positivist approach to research, I considered reflexivity to be an essential aspect of the process, and considered a definite contribution to the overall findings.

Limitations of the Research

It has to be acknowledged that there is extensive literature available completed within a critical paradigm. It could be suggested that Giroux and McClaren for example could offer significant contribution to the theoretical framework underpinning this research. There was also a definite feminist approach to this research that could have been explored further. However, within the limitations of this study, I have chosen to refer to theories of most relevance to the issues emerging.

Similarly, the research itself could have been conducted differently. A larger percentage of tutors could have been interviewed and a more detailed analysis of a collective account of their views completed. I was unaware of the findings the research would project and I was unprepared for the importance and relevance of the topics discussed to current issues in society.
Again, within the timeframe for this piece it would not be feasible to conduct additional research, however, there is huge possibility for this area to be explored further.

The focus group was introduced after the initial research took place. Originally I had not intended completing research with learners. However, as a means of complementing the findings from the tutors, I decided to complete this interview. At the onset I could have interviewed learners on a one to one basis and provided a better comparative analysis of tutors and learners views. However, again within the constraints of this piece this was not possible, but is yet another avenue to be explored in further research.

Conclusion

Within this Chapter, I have named my ontological position and explored my epistemological approach to the work. I discussed the methodologies used within this research and described the process that was carried out in relation to confidentiality and ethical issues, prior to conducting the research. I have provided a reflexive account of my journey in this process.

Semi-structured interviews with tutors and a focus group with learners form the research conducted. Within this research, an exploration of the implications of accreditation on care in adult education was carried out. The following Chapter outlines the findings that were collated from the research.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This Chapter presents a summary of the findings derived from the research. As mentioned in Chapter Three, a significant issue developed in relation to confidentiality from the research, and a genuine concern from tutors regarding the possibility of being identified within the findings. Again, for this ethical reason, I have not included individual details of any individual participating in the research.

Semi-structured interviews took place with six tutors. A focus group was completed with six learners participating on a FETAC accredited course of a practical nature, in an Adult Education Centre.

Care and Adult Education

Tutors were asked questions in relation to their own relationship with the learners, however, information came up indirectly in relation to caring through discussion on other topics. The following is a presentation of the findings that were produced in relation to care in adult education.

Care and the Tutor Learner Relationship

There was evidence among the interviewees that they tried to build a positive relationship with learners from the onset. They spoke of discussing their own experiences with students at the initial meeting in order to project an element of understanding to the group.

> *…well when i start out, every time i start out a new class,I tell them I was a mature student, I tell them that I was 25 when I went back to learn… I tell them that I understand exactly where they are coming from, I understand fear, how tired you are going to be for the first few weeks because you are just focusing so much…*

Students in the focus group spoke of the help they received on the course and pointed out the support they received from tutors if they required extra help.

> *…(names tutor) is very helpful and if you had any problems or didn't understand anything completely she would give you a hand , if you didn't know where to access the research, she would give you tips on where to go…*

An additional student stated:

> *We had to do presentations and stuff, they were good, a bit nerve wrecking, but (names tutor) helped us then again though, she helped us a good bit.*

It was clear from the focus group that a positive relationship existed between the learners and the students on the course.

Approaches to Teaching Adults

There appeared to be a general understanding among the tutors as to how adult learning should be approached. There was genuine respect for the adults in the learning environment and recognition of difference in approaching the teaching of adults. The following statement reiterates the feelings of the tutors:

> *…I suppose the first thing you have to respect is that they are adults and not to treat them as children, as adults you want them to behave as adults and my main thing is that you are here because you want to be here it is not like in school where you are here because your parents force you to come…*

There appeared to be genuine effort put forward by tutors to put the needs of the learners first. A range of teaching methods were explored by tutors delivering a wide variety of programmes, such as teacher presentation, demonstration, powerpoint, discussion and roleplay. There was evidence of effort on the tutors part to divert from traditional banking methods of teaching.

> *… we would kind of sit and chat, but they're not used to dialogue, they are not used to learning through groupwork, they would much prefer if you just wrote everything up on the blackboard or give them a handout and they copy it all down, so it's kind of been a bit of a challenge to get them into this way of thinking. I have used a little bit of roleplay and they really really enjoyed that… they were saying we still learned but we didn't have to do all the writing, and , so, they liked that…*

This tutor was aware of the benefits of dialogue in education yet attempted to introduce it slowly to a group. Roleplay was then used and enjoyed by the class. There was obviously an element of planning here on the behalf of the tutor.

Issues associated with writing came up again for another tutor.

> *…Ah, yeah, I tend not to get them to write down reams of stuff that is never going to be used again, like the only thing that I would get to write down would be like, say, the format of a letter, if, ah, the letter in the communications. So I would get them to write down one, say, to get them used to it, and they could then submit that, once, they might have to then maybe, edit it, or proofread it and make sure that it is ok for the folder, but I don't tend to get them to copy down loads of stuff just for the sake of it…*

Students in the focus group demonstrated the balance they received between practical and theoretical direction.

> *We did practical every Thursday, we used a textbook, but mostly for reference, alot of the stuff you would look up yourself on the internet, everything was fairly assessable and it was great to be able to discuss it then in class, the theory, in groupwork like.*

Care and Accreditation

Entry Requirements for Courses

There were huge issues brought up by all of the tutors interviewed in relation to students needs not being met at interview level. The focus appeared to be not on the learners needs, but more of a need to fill places in the individual courses in order to produce certification at the end of the process.

> *If you do have a Junior Cert, then, you can go into Leaving Cert Applied, but they don't do anything about analysing where the person is, now, we have, having said that, there is a few people that come in and they have paperwork with them, to say things like, they have ADHD and ADD and all these learning difficulties, but, because we are being, because our existence is based on the amount of certs that we produce, am, they are just told, yeah, you go on into Leaving Cert, they mightn't be capable of going into Leaving Cert*

An additional tutor confirmed the previous point.

> *… when they come for an interview they are told, well, we have level 5, level 4, level 3, level 2, … well first of all they say to them have you got your Junior Cert and if they don't have their Junior cert then, well, oh no, you can't, if you don't have a Junior Cert you can go into FETAC*

Issues with literacy were common among half of the tutors interviewed. There was no initial assessment at the start and tutors only realised problems when they gave out the first assignment. This point was reiterated again when a tutor talked about a literacy assessment carried out by the Co-Ordinator of the Centre.

> *… he is the Co-Ordinator of all the students, he took everyone in to do what he called a literacy assessment, and I dont know, Lisa, what he did but seemingly, they're all fine, its only confidence issues..they are ok to go on a level 4..*

The implications of students providing difficulties in a class that could have been avoided at the start were summed up by one tutor:

> *…they are going to start trouble in the classes and theres behaviour problems, to cover up the fact that some of them aren't able for it…*

Accredited Versus Non- accredited

There was an obvious difference felt by tutors in relation to accredited and non-accredited courses. There was a general consensus felt by tutors that courses of a non accredited nature included more self directed learning and derived more of a social meaning for participants.

> *am, it was very, very different…the women brought in their own bits and pieces and like… they had their own craft that they were doing… it was more... well it was more like a coffee morning, an outlet for them socially…*

This tutor remarks on how the accredited course was more of a social outlet for the participants. When asked if she felt the participants learned anything as part of this course she spoke of the relationship that occurred between herself and a woman on the course. It is important to note that this tutor had experience as an adult learner herself and was aware of Freirean ideology.

Q: Ok. And at the end of it do you feel like they learned anything?

A: yeah, one of the women actually did, i brought in a (names craft), it was for (names item), and she did that. And some of the other woman. ah, i would (names craft) in a different way, and they kind of went off saying yeah well, you know, there are different ways to do it and the way we did it isn't right, whereas when I was trying to show them initially, it was like, no, you're doing that wrong, and i was like, there's different ways to skin a cat, you know, so we kind of left with that. And I learned…, well i know this sounds very airy fairy but it was kind of Freirean in that we learned from each other…

There were numerous programmes and supports for students within education Centres of a non-accredited nature that were highly thought of by the tutors and attributed to personal development of the learners. Programmes such as Mentoring, Vision Boards and gratitude journals (*supposed to be the latest technology in personal development…)* were being delivered in further education centres.

Tutors carried out additional work with students that while attached to a course, was not recognised by accreditation.

… the kids were doing a course in retail …I was there to teach them how to dress or to get them measured for bras because they had never had a parent that would bring them out and get them measured for a bra….. to kind of give them a bit of encouragement… that was attached to the course, but my end of it wasnt accredited…

When asked about the differences in teaching accredited and non-accredited courses one tutor commented:

… well the FETAC, well it's more like work to rule isn't it, and ya kind of do what you have to, your specific learning outcomes, you have to get these targets, you have to do it all in a certain amount of time, you have to make sure that they have their projects, like it's totally different…

Suitability of course content
Several tutors interviewed were involved in teaching practical, less *academic* courses.

What was interesting was their perceptions on how the FETAC course content was not suited to the practical skills required for that particular area.

> *it's not preparing the students enough for jobs, like sometimes toy feel like you are preparing students to pass their exam, but that is not required for to work in the industry*

This point was echoed again by another tutor.

> *the accreditation, your certification, it doesn't match what is required to get a job. So sometimes I feel, am I preparing these people for lifeskills for a job, which i am trying to do, but also for the exam for the accreditation and certification, you are getting, they are two different wavelengths*

A third tutor commented and how the accredited course that she was delivering was not fitting the requirements of the industry.

> *am, not really, the fetac level 5 in the (names industry), wouldn't really be what is wanted in the (names area) going for employment unfortunately*

Problems were identified with modules, minor awards, within courses that were of little or no relevance to the actual practical skills required in the particular industries, yet a requirement to achieve the full FETAC certificate.

> *"….alot of people who have, like FETAC would not be known in the (names) industry, it would be better known in the academic side of it, so really, you know, they want to see on the job, can you perform, more practical, whereas with the FETAC different modules, like they would not require maybe communications, or word processing , you know, they want to know how you perform on the job, they only require the practical end of (names industry) and that's just one module of it"*

This issue was addressed in the focus group, where students did not feel they would use some of the content in future, or mentioned how it was irrelevant to the actual industry. The following extract summarises feelings on the issue.

> *I wouldn't use (names module) again anyway, the communications, well I think some of the stuff kind of builds your confidence a little bit, but then, most of the groupwork did anyway..*

Care and Power

Institutional Power and Accreditation

There was huge evidence of power being exercised in adult education institutions. Tutors spoke of how individuals involved in the education system had different viewpoints but commented on where the power lies.

> *…you see what's happening is, from a managers point of view, am, the Managers point of view and the teachers point of view and the students point of view, don't always match up. But the Manager is the only one that has the say…*

The question was raised again in relation to the importance of gaining certification, the responsibility of the tutor and the difference in viewpoints.

> *Yeah, and ah, Ive been even told, have you got your stuff done, have you got your certs for me, you know, and, its nothing bad like, it just means that you have, am, different cells going on, you have the teachers in their cell, and you have the students in their cell and there doesn't seem to be joined up thinking on it*

Progression

One of the key issues that was raised by was tutors the lack of progression that was being made by students in some Centres, apart from the fact that they had received certification at level 4.

> *I think its disrespectful to the women aswell, because you know, they are going around in this circle, and they are never actually getting anywhere...some of them have been there for ten years, and one of those women did say to me that she cant read or write.*

Again, another tutor spoke of how a football course was introduced in place of a crafts course, as it would appeal more to the male population in the school.

> *…the manager, (name) decided to introduce this, which is really queer because it's like what he is trying to do is keep the numbers in (names Centre). So say, just like the football, just say he had a brilliant course, a (names craft) course, which was a fabulous course, for the kids to do but it's like they never leave (Centre). They are finished and they are going back into this sheltered enclosure...*

Accountability

When discussing recent changes in their role, tutors commented on the increase in paperwork that has to be completed.

> *…well, putting together the actual module, one of the big things we'll say, coming through the years was if you could get your students to do a folder full of worksheets and work like that, the focus was on the amount of work you could get them to do, the amount of understanding that would be shown by the work they were doing, but, putting together the modules for this year, there's more pages that I have to put in that they have to put in, which seems to me to be (laughs) shocking like. And the amount then that you have, you have to sign every page, every page has to be ticked.*

There appeared to be a tremendous effect on that role of the tutor and it was felt that there was more of a focus on administrative duties involved in the accreditation proves than the actual teaching.

> *"it is , just too much focus on the accreditation, like you spend too much time, like checking the work, feeding back the work, correcting it again, its all on the paper, rather than to see can they actually do the job so is do think tutors spend more time with paper in their hands rather than teaching."*

Again this point was echoed.

> *…it is paper trail, they do need to see evidence of what you have been doing, like, evidence as in what you are going to teach, how you taught it, evidence, ah, what feedback you gave, how you gave it, but it's really, this could be all time that could be given to teaching them, rather than talking about teaching them.*

Education as a Business

The issue was raised in relation to the evolving business nature of education. Following from this came the rational for such a suggestion.

> *…one of the big flaws we have here, is, we have, ah, I don't believe you can run an education system in a business point of view, am, what I mean by that is, if you have am, if you have an organisation, like the VEC or like (names specific programme), they're told, well your continued existence is based on you producing so many certs at level 5, Level 6, level 4, level 3, without having, am, the actual students, and their needs factored into that equation, because, it doesn't simply work like that, because, people can't fit into mathematical equations…*

Value of Accreditation

The point was made regarding how a substantial emphasis was placed on the certification. This had implications on the role of the tutor.

> *you have all these people coming from different standpoints, well, if you are a manager of this place well, all you need to do is produce certs, if you are a teacher in this place, well, if you don't produce certs, your actual professional qualifications and your abilities are being questioned, that why, how come the (named subject) can produce 12 certs and you can't produce 12 certs.*

There appeared to be genuine concern regarding the value of the certification for the students. There was a negativity attached to the actual qualification.

> *…you have people coming to (names Centre), and some of them have huge goals and it makes you feel very bad like, and it makes you feel as though, you know, this is a young person here and they want, this is supposed to be second chance education and you feel like saying to them, look, you shouldn't be here, because this qualification that I'm going to try and teach you, won't do you any good…*

The following extract was a sentiment shared by many. Tutors identified the efforts of the students by were sympathetic in relation to the value of the course.

> *…and from my point of view as a tutor, I have to kind of try and stop myself saying to a young person, look, this is going to be no good to you, you know and you are putting all this work into it.*

Tutors were asked if their students ever reported any learning achieved from the course.

> *One of the girls said, like yeah, we do, like the education is great and we learn stuff, but she couldn't remember the name of the course, she couldn't remember what we had done. Now she did remember that we had done the ah, you know the roleplay and the interviews and things, and they had enjoyed it and had fun…*

Time

Time was a central issue to how courses were delivered and also a dominant problem for tutors.

And why do you think you cannot give the time?

…well now, when we started first, when it was called the NCVA, am, it was built as a thing where you could take all the time you wanted, am, if the person was ready, in the , am, the spring, you could put them in in the Spring, but he might not be ready until Nov, but in the last few years we have decided not only are we not getting it in the Spring, but the deadline for putting in work has been put forward, to an earlier time, and that makes things even worse, we still do the best we can but in an ideal situation.

Tutors discussed having to deliver courses where the content has increased in less the time given previously; in one case the time given in a course was reduced by three months. The implications of this approach to accreditation was summarised by this tutor.

… the implications are that you put through less people because physically the ones that slip through the cracks in the education system will now slip through the cracks of FETAC aswell because there is too much of a time pressure being out on…

An additional tutor gave his view on how the issue with time impacted on the students.

Am, well some of the students would have found, well, the speed that work was going through, am a problem, and they would have said things like well, I have my module covered, or i have my, ah, work done, but i don't understand any of it

When one interviewee approached the issues, including time with Management, several suggestions were made as to how the workload could be completed in time, however, the needs of the group did not appear to be a factor.

well initially, I would have got in touch with a guy, from (names centre) … i would kind of approach the subject of OMG I don't think I am doing this properly, and I don't think there is enough time, as some of these girls have literacy problems and he would say stuff like, well you know, they don't have to write it, you can video tape it or you can record it, but they didn't want to video tape it or record it, they really didn't want to do that, and I really didn't have the experience to know, how to do that, or how to develop something to do

One tutor expressed concerns regarding the abilities of her students, in relation to the time they were being given to complete modules. She approached the subject with her line manager and the response was as follows:

She said she knew it was a bit ambitious, but we needed to get them to work towards a full Award

Tutors expressed an awareness of the pressure they were under to get students to achieve certification.

... ah, the other point Id like to make it that am, with the way the thing is set up at the moment, for, ah, I do FETAC Level 3, you find yourself on the one hand trying to teach and you are teaching away there and on the other hand you have to be conscious of the fact you have to produce this document at the end, even if the student is not ready, you have to push them and push them and push them to do it, and I find what's happening there is, you are diminishing the subject further by not giving it the time that you need to teach it

An additional tutor remarked on the difference between suggested guidelines for the time spent delivering a course and the actual time that is given within a Centre and presented a reason for the time constraint..

And from a teachers point of view then, coming from the other side, you don't get, I know it says on the, some of the module descriptors, about, am 100 hours, now, this is 100 hours for my course, and, ah you never get 100 hours. Because they are not in all that time like, the, and then you have management talking about, well, 100 hours is just guidelines, and, there's all this, pressure for the cert

Students in the focus group also commented how assignments were distributed, while content with the time given to complete assignments, they highlighting the extent of the workload.

…"we would always get enough time to do the stuff, am, then get a submitted deadline date and then feedback and another week to readjust it…"

An additional student commented:

…am, well communications given all the briefs at the start of the year to show us what was expected, so we were able to work on them throughout the year, it was just a matter of when you got an assignment you had to get stuck into it, you couldn't leave it, so i kept on top of it anyway

Overall the students received a minimum of one week, maximum two weeks to complete any assessment. All of these students were completing eight Level 5 FETAC modules over a nine month period.

Pressure for Standardisation

There was a consensus between some of the tutors in relation to the assessment element of accredited programmes, where they felt FETAC was not perceived in the same light as the Leaving Certificate. They felt tutors should not be allowed to devise exams, but rather a standard examination be introduced, "*along the broad lines of the Leaving Cert*".

> *There was a belief that FETAC had less of a value than the leaving Cert: … my daughter is going to, ah, a school …but, the head mistress was explaining how they did music and they did Leaving, the Leaving Cert and the Junior Cert and in a, in a tone lower, she says, "and we do FETAC, for the people who learn in a different way", and the actual tone of her voice suggested that it was nearly, ah, a dirty word…*

There was a suggestion to have

…more of a marketing presence for FETAC, that its sounds as though an awful lot more people are accepting it and to try and make the transition from the fact that the Leaving Cert is the only thing that is important…

The following passage summarises the views of all three tutors who called for a means of standardising FETAC.

> *… something on the same broad lines as the Leaving Cert will raise the profile of FETAC and raise the profile of what the accreditation means. Now I know over the last few years the level 6, level 7, level 8, university level, its improving, but it's still hasn't reached the same ah, standards or perceived standards as am, well we will say, ah, going from school, from the Leaving Cert into college, and it doesn't seem to have the same standing. There's a huge deficit there.*

When asked about recommendations for the accreditation system, the issue of an end of year exam was introduced again.

> *…that any of the modules that have to have exams set at the end of it, I would take them out of the hands of the tutor, or teacher, and make sure that somebody was brought in independently to supervise them, that would give the results, am, credibility, now I'm not saying, I'm not casting any aspersions on the tutors or anything like that but you know for the wider organisation and for the wider world and wider society…*

The students presented a contrasting view. They were involved in a practical exam which involved a final examination to assess practical skills.

> *…and the practical, well its unfortunate that its assessed on how you actually perform on that day, if there was a small percentage, say that the tutor, ah, say an average, included from throughout the year, because you can go in on the day and you might not be at your best*

One student gave the following recommendations as to how the course could be improved:

> *…continuous assessment rather than one final exam, one exam at the end maybe but, like say, we do practical every Thursday, if this could be taken account into your final marks, so it's not based on just one day…*

When the others in the group were questioned on this, one student gave a reason for the recommendation.

> *Because it's very hard on one day, like it's like the leaving cert, you could just come in on one day and just mess everything up, if, well for whatever reason, it's just a difficult one, because your years' work is based on just three and a half hours, it's just ridiculous.*

Tutor Support

The majority of the tutors interviewed relied on technology or internet support for assistance on their role and referred to actual personal support as being limited.

They said things like:

> *…we do not have a resource centre where you can pick up the phone and talk to anyone,* or

> *…our FESS website or the FETAC website will give you some information*

A very strong protocol for support highlighted by all tutors was that of other colleagues working in the sector. Peer Support was very evident among the interviewees and a lot of the tutors depended on this due to lack of availability of support.

> *…you just maybe ring a teacher from another centre, maybe they might have had the experience of it, or encountered a problem of it, but you are only bouncing off each other…*

Only one tutor felt that support was available from the Manager of the Centre. Other tutors had contacted management for support regarding a variety of issues. Examples of these situations are outlined below:

> *the biggest challenge is actually getting the FETAC modules together and knowing am I gauging it at the right level, and is the material that i am using appropriate, and, I just really find it very isolating, extremely isolating...*

The following came from a tutor new to the accreditation system.

> *I asked (names centre) for a marking system and I was sent out, am, it was actually nothing to do with Communications, it was like it was to do with Engineering and I was told that I was just to adapt it*

Future of Adult Education

There were fears among tutors regarding the establishment of SOLAS and what this would bring. A tutor commented on how now there are professional people working in adult education who are aware of the needs of learners. She determined that with the establishment of SOLAS there was a fear of tutors:

> *…going to go back to disheartened people who are just trying to meet what they have to meet, do what they have to do, fill in what they have to fill in, and get them out, and bring on the next batch, and sure that doesn't work for anyone, sure that's just mass production.*

When asked for recommendations for the future of adult education one tutor proposed a vision for the sector:

> *…go back to a point where the exams were student driven as opposed to having the amount of certs, am, to cut the Centres a bit more slack and say well depending on the amount of people that we have here, and depending on what level they are at, and I suppose, am, to try and kind of put some kind of assessment in place for people before they start it.*

Conclusion

There was significant evidence in these findings to suggest the majority of educators in a variety of ways portrayed genuine care for their learners. In turn there was a reciprocal element evident where learners addressed the positive relationship they had with their tutors and the support they received from them. A range of teaching methods were tried in a variety of learning contexts and dialogic encounters were explored.

There was evidence of substantial difference in the role of the tutor due to recent changes in the accreditation system. Time and accountability were significant factors. It was felt that increased paperwork contributed to less of a focus on direct teaching. There was evidence of neo-liberal discourse within new changes to the accreditation system. These changes indicated significant implications on care provided with adult education.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS

Introduction

This Chapter examines the findings in light of the literature presented in Chapter Two. Issues in relation to care are discussed. An analysis on accreditation, and the current changes within the accreditation system, is presented. Neo-liberal discourse is examined in terms of a contribution a rationale for these changes. In contributing towards the research question, this chapter provides a detailed exploration of the implications of accreditation on care in adult education.

Care and Adult Education

This piece demonstrated how care was evident in adult education through the findings. Both tutor and learner discuss issues in relation to care in the learning environment.

Care and Tutor Learner Relationship

Within the findings there was significant evidence of caring on the part of the educators. The emotional commitment in love labouring (Lynch, 2009) could be identified. A tutor shared her own experiences with the students in relation to being a mature student, starting out. The tutor considered the needs of the students and the fears they may have had commencing a new programme.

It could be suggested that this apparent approach is reflective of Freirean ideology (Freire, 1970). This positive attitude to adult learning that identifies learner individual needs *as* central to the process envisages a caring approach to learning and one which should be fostered. When an educator is passionate about their work they will strive to ensure the needs of the learners are met, similar to that of the trait within secondary care relations (Lynch, 2009).

The care provided by the tutor in this instance was outside of an educational context. Noddings (1999) believes "we want to do our very best for the objects of our care".

To have as our educational goal the production of caring, competent, loving, lovable people is not anti-intellectual; it demonstrates respect for the full range of human talents. This demonstrates how needs of learners not always be of an educational matter and this aspect is principal to adult education. There appears to be emotionality between tutor and learner, where the educator was empathetic towards the learners and possibly made them feel at ease prior to commencing a course. Tutors demonstrated how they too learned from their students:

> *…it was kind of Freirean in that we learned from each other.*

Freire (1970) maintains that educators too are learners in a group. When you consider the apparently linear relationship posed by Noddings (1987) this approach appears in direct contrast, reiterating the points made in the critique of her work.

Students in the focus group spoke highly of their tutors and mentioned how they were given advice, "*given tips on where to go*", confirming the relationship as outlined in Freirean ideology.

There was clear evidence of the four components of education as described by Noddings (2001, 2002). Tutors modelled caring behaviour by engaging in dialogue with learners, catering for their educational and personal needs, through accredited and non avccredited programmes. Freires (1998) notion of teaching through an act of love was clear within the findings. Tutors voiced concerns over how the apparent push for accreditation was impacting on their learners. In several instances, tutors approached Management to voice these concerns. One tutor expressed how "it makes you feel bad" seeing learners put extreme effort into a qualification that they, in some cases did not understand, and could not relate to the subject content.

Approach to Teaching Adults

A philosophical outlook on the teaching of adults was within the findings. Tutors recognised the different needs in learners and highlighted how adult education differs from traditional schooling. This presents a humanistic approach to education as discussed by Elias and Merriam (1980).

They mention how "a study of philosophies of adult education should produce professionals who question their own theories, practices, institutions, and assumptions as well as those of others" (p.251). This emphasises the importance of reflective practice and is key is planning learning experiences for adult learners. This element was clearly evident in the findings when tutors spoke of their views on the value of the accreditation, and how while teaching, you are conscious of the ill effect of your work on the students.

Fleming (2008) highlights and discusses how the way in which adults form attachments have a significant impact on the way in which they learn. He compares Bowlbys attachment theory to adult education. When learners are encouraged to engage in dialogue they are encouraged to introduce elements of their own experiences. This in turn can contribute to social change.

There was evidence in the findings of natural effort on behalf of the educator to introduce dialogue and a variety of teaching methods into the learning environment.

Students too emphasised the importance of dialogue and discussion in the classroom setting and highlighted how, after researching coursework, they were given the opportunity to come back and discuss their findings in class.

Freire (1980) promoted the use of dialogue as an aspect of problem posing education and a step towards social change. Newman (2006) speaks of how Freirean approaches are slowly introduced to a class and after time learners begin to recognise the relationship with the content to social, political and economic issues. By allowing a group to access material related to the course content and encouraging them to discuss their finds is a means of self directed learning (Knowles, 1980) and a step towards dialogic exchange. Noddings (2002) encourages dialogue in order to promote caring, and refers to it as a key component of education.

Some adult educators appeared to be extremely passionate about their work and put in extra effort, to ensure the needs of a group are met. There was evidence of planning, thinking about the needs of students prior to introducing new teaching methods. This planning too is a trait of love labouring and a key characteristic of primary care relations (Lynch, 2009).

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Freire (1970) was a believer in developing the relationship between the educator and the learner as a process of social change. Noddings too highlighted the importance of interaction in the learning environment. There was evidence in these findings of the relationship between carer and cared for (Noddings, 1987).

Care and Accreditation

Entry to courses

It could be suggested that neo-liberal discourse shined through the words of tutors discussing how learners accessed courses. Learners were allocated places on courses depending on what qualifications they had previously attained as a means of showing evidence of progression. Their behavioural and educational needs were second to meeting the needs of the Centre, as according to one tutor, "*our existence is based on the amount of certs that we produce*". This approach resulted on classroom management issues for tutors as students enrolled on courses based on these principles created trouble "*to cover up the fact that some of them are'nt able for it…*"

Value of Accreditation

Within a pressurised, apparent neo-liberal environment, is it very easy to fall into the trap and inflict students with a regurgitation of information that allows no questioning or inquiry into the how or why of the content. Learners redraft the content and present it in a neatly bound folder, expecting and no doubt receiving accreditation. The certification is developed and the process is complete. To accept that this is learning poses problems in itself. The tutors interviewed questioned this approached and stated how they did not expect students to complete unnecessary work.

Accredited versus Non Accredited Courses

Dainton (2010) and Keyes (2004) placed a value on courses of a non-accredited nature. This point was also highlighted by tutors in this study; regardless of the fact of the little values such courses prove to be to the economy. Tutors discussed how non accredited programmes in relation to personal development were being rolled out within education Centres.

Young students were given an opportunity to develop social skills under the tutorship of educators, yet these elements of programmes were not accredited. There was an emphasis on the social outlet that a non- accredited course provided that was not linked to accredited programmes. Lynch (2009) pointed out how care work is the forgotten domain in political and economic affairs. This point is highlighted given how accrediting courses in relation to personal or transformation learning are of little value to the economy.

Course Content

Both tutors and students of practical courses addressed how the programmes contained elements which they considered to be of no relevance to the particular skills required in the industry. Shor and Freire (1987:70) suggest rationale for designing such programmes. "Reading, writing and thinking have been defined as basic job skills for all careers, even though writing itself is a limited career choice for most students".

One of the specific objectives outlined in the Bologna Declaration (1999) was to provide courses to meet the needs of the labour market. By including generic modules with specific skills that can be adapted regardless of the actual interest or subject area of the individual, society is developing an employable group of people with a transferable set of skills.

This contributes to the likelihood of employment, regardless of the individual's needs, and subsequently promotes the growth of the economy. When you consider the nature of the courses currently being promoted, as outlined in Chapter Two, practical courses do not appear on the list.

Careers of a practical nature require manual practical skills and limited written skills, yet when students opt for accreditation in these areas they are met with additional requirements. FETAC Level 5 Communications was named by both tutors and students as being problematic as part of practical courses.

Care and Power

Institutional Power

Tutors interviewed expressed how the views of tutors and students don't always match up to that of management, yet "the manager is the only one that has the say". In Freirean (1970) terms, this comments presents an oppressive view of firstly the tutor and secondly the learner; there is an identification that not everyone involved in the Centre can voice their opinion; that the dominant voice is the voice of the oppressor, namely Management. This too demonstrates hegemonic practices, as highlighted by Gramsci (1971), where there is a dominant ruling hegemony in power. There is a question highlighted here too in relation to care, where the voice of learner or tutor are not taken into account.

Oppression

As portrayed within the findings, tutors currently delivering accredited programmes are responsible for a lot more nowadays due to recent changes, be it from the Common Awards System, general increased accountability measures in the system or due to additional targets regarding funding that need to be met. In this way they may appear oppressed, powerless in their role.

However, in order to comply with all these changes and new responsibilities, tutors then become the oppressors, with increased expectations from students, less time available to complete assessment and limited flexibility in the delivery of programmes. The role of the tutor deviates from oppressed to oppressor, in contrast to Freires view, by expecting students to churn out work in order to conform to learning outcomes. There is a level of oppressive social mobility that can be recognised.

Inequality

There was a call from some tutors to introduce a different approach to assessment for FETAC modules, something comparable with the leaving Certificate. They felt there was less of a value placed on FETAC programmes. By examining these points through a critical lens there are a variety of issues that emerge. When you consider the evolution of adult education, a certain inequality exists within the Irish educational framework.

Adult and indeed community education philosophy is viewed in a different light to that of the traditional meritocratic banking system of education. Fears were highlighted among adult educators (Keyes, 2004) of reverting to traditional style schooling, and this is not a new complexity. Illich (1970) calls for education systems to be deschooled, in light of churning out students in order to meet economic needs.

As stated in Chapter Two, the Teaching Council have recently introduced the notion of registration for teachers in further education. While a significant milestone for the professionalization of the sector; there exists too a level of exclusion; considering the educators in the field with extensive knowledge and experience.

There appeared to be a negativity felt by tutors in relation to the actual qualification at the end of the process. Tutors expressed genuine care for their learners when they maintained that the Certificate they would obtain, after all their hard work, would not do them any good. There was a certain inequality felt by tutors, attached to FETAC certification that was not attached to the Leaving Certificate.

Meeting Neo-liberal Needs

Throughout these findings there is a strong consensus that the recent changes in accreditation can be somewhat attributed to a neo-liberal agenda. These changes, as outlined within Chapter Four, are having significant implications on care in adult education.

The Bologna Declaration makes a strong case for the importance of courses meeting labour market needs. Others countries have realised this also. When discussing accreditation in the UK, Hussey and Smith (2002:221) describe a predominantly bureaucratic system and metaphorically state how "the new managerialism has created a situation in which the economic tail is vigorously wagging the educational dog." The White Paper on Adult Education (2000) appears somewhat philosophical in it's approach to adult education, describing it as "a process of self-discovery, of personal and collective development." The implementation of the view is somewhat questionable when you explore what is now happening in adult education.

Recent secret filming by RTE exposed serious misconduct in childcare facilities in Ireland. When commenting on this scandal, Coulter (2013) points out how in Ireland there is a current conflict between the pursuit of profit and the provision of care.

She discusses the evident drive by the State to privatise care and meet economic needs and continues to identify the problems that have arisen so far with this approach; abuse of the elderly, the disabled and only recently children. Within Chapter Four there is little regard demonstrated for learners in programmes, apart from that of the tutors.

When you consider the needs of the learners there is significant evidence of affective inequality (Lynch, 2009). The needs of the tutors and in turn the needs of the learners bear very little significance in what appears to be a neo-liberal agenda.

The needs of learners are outside of the equation altogether and little effort is being met into determining what these needs are from the onset. When you consider the needs that are being met in these findings, the political and economic requirements of a neo-liberal hegemony are prominent.

Accountability and Quality Assurance

Tutors commented on the increased administrative duties that are now required of them. They discussed how currently there is more of an emphasis on the paperwork required by the tutor than a demonstration of understanding from the students work.

Hussey and Smith (2002: 221) refer to how the learning environment is "wholly conducive to systematic monitoring, auditing and management". When you examine the findings, a similar suggestion could be presented in relation to the assessment and verification process involved in the Common Awards System.

Tutors felt there was too much of a focus on getting the Certification and an increase in paper trail.

> *…it is paper trail, they do need to see evidence of what you have been doing, like, evidence as in what you are going to teach, how you taught it, evidence, ah, what feedback you gave, how you gave it, but it's really, this could be all time that could be given to teaching them, rather than talking about teaching them.*

This is indicative of monitoring standards or quality assurance principles as required by the Bologna Declaration (1999). It could be assumed that European objectives are responsible for the increase in paperwork as described by tutors.

Education as a Business?

The findings expressed concern from the tutors that their existence was based on the production of Certificates, without consideration for the needs of the learners. This specific point was made by Bordieu (1998) citied in Finnegan (2008:580), when he states how neo-liberalism is based on a "pure mathematical fiction, where the desires and needs of the individuals are explained in terms of the calculus of economic self-interest". There is a hegemonic obligation to produce Certificates, in order to justify the needs of the institution. Certificates equate to employment possibility which in turn equates to a positive outlook in terms of the economy.

One, Two, Three, Get the Cert!!

All of the tutors interviewed expressed an issue with time. They were being given less time to deliver the same course content, and in one case, the time to deliver a FETAC Major Award was reduced by three months. One tutor expressed how due to this constraint, the learners who initially "slip through the cracks of the education system will now slip through the cracks of FETAC aswell*."*

There was no consideration for learners taken into account when the issue of time was addressed to Management. There was immense pressure felt by tutors to "get the Cert."

While students appeared to be content with the time given to complete assessment, they outlined the extensive workload that was applied; again, considering the limited timeframe available. When you consider the effects of these time restraints on the tutor learner relationship, Noddings (2002) notion of motivational displacement can be identified.

Time is also a definitive factor in determining where adult education and the relationships involved fit within concentric care circles, when you consider how relationships can move between love labouring and general care work. (Lynch, 2009). With less time with students, there is less opportunity for a significant relationship to develop. However, those on a full or even part time course delivered over a year or longer have less of an opportunity now to develop a significant relationship with the educator, due to the now limited timeframe available for the delivery of courses.

Within the constraints of the educational system, time was most definitely a dominating factor. Both tutors and students appear to be required to work within the parameters of a clock, which sometimes can be very unrealistic, if you are to consider the needs of the learners in a group, yet somewhat satisfactory when you consider the needs of the economy.

With students obtaining Major Awards they are on the first rung of the economic ladder. FETAC Major Awards, as discussed earlier are all now working towards being part of the CAS System. This system is comparable to that of the ECTS, where credits are attached to the Certificate, depending on the level and grade of the award achieved. These credits can then be used to gain entry to Higher Education, in specified courses. Again, on the way to meeting the objectives of the Bologna Declaration, with little regard for the care of learners in the process. Again there is a pressure, regardless of the needs of the students to reach the final hurdle and achieve the Certificate.

Again, through a process of oppression (Freire, 1980) the needs of the dominant discourse are met and neo-liberal needs, as outlined by Finnegan (2008) are accounted for.

Progression

There were several incidents highlighted in the findings where students' progression was taken into account second to keeping up the numbers in Centres or achieving certification. There was very little regard felt for the capabilities of learners from educational providers. When you apply a neo-liberal lens, this may be indicative of meeting the needs of the institution as a means of survival in economic circles; as opposed to caring and taking the needs of students into account. Again the notion of affective equality is evident (Lynch, 2009).

Tutor Support and Counter Hegemony

Several of the tutors interviewed relied on technological support for assistance. Tertiary care relations, or solidary work are those relationships that can occur without intimacy or personal involvement (Lynch, 2009, pg. 48). This support of a technologic nature may be attributed to this aspect of concentric care circles.

Collectively, the tutors interviewed received very little support from the management of the Centres. However, there was significant evidence in the findings to suggest opportunity for a counter hegemonic approach to challenging the issues that tutors are experiencing. There appeared to be a dependency on peer support, and it was evident that tutors were experiencing similarities in the problems they faced as educators.

Future of Adult Education

There were fears expressed by tutors regarding the future of adult education. The establishment of SOLAS brings uncertainty to the sector. Within the current accreditation system you have various roles that work to complete aspects of the process; the assessment, the Internal Verification, the External Verification. The tutor is central in this process and holds a wide range of adaptable skills to enable students to meet the needs of the assessment. The tutor, the main organic intellectual in the accreditation system, plays a central role in establishing the political and economic needs of the ruling hegemony.

When you examine this through a Gramscian lens, there is possibility for social change. AONTAS have developed a support group for adult learners.

A recommendation from the White paper (2000) was in relation to establishing a professional identity for adult educators. Perhaps if this action was completed, in addition to its aim of developing Professional Development in adult education, such a formation would be central to creating counter hegemonic structures to challenge the current accreditation process. In this way, adult educators who are aware of the needs of learners, could assist in ensuring care and caring approaches to learning are at the core of adult education practice.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Introduction

In this Chapter a summary of the main findings is presented. A collation of the Chapters demonstrates an overview of the research question; what are some of the implications of care in adult education?

Chapter One introduced the researcher and explained the topics used within the research.

Chapter Two examined the theoretical framework underpinning the research topic; by including the work of Noddings, Freire and Gramsci. An overview of adult education in Ireland was provided. Policy development was identified in terms of accreditation and an outline of changes to the accreditation system discussed.

Chapter Three examined the rational for the research, highlighting the critical paradigm from which the research was conducted and demonstrating the methods that were used in the process.

Chapter Four summarised a thematic view of findings from the semi-structured interviews and the focus group.

Chapter Five presented an analysis of the findings in comparison with the Contextual Framework presented in Chapter Two.

Care and Adult Education

It could be suggested that care is a natural thing, a natural response to a need in someone. This thesis demonstrates the importance of care in a wider context and its relevance to adult education. There was clear evidence in this piece that adult educators are indeed caring towards their learners. There was evidence of Noddings (1984, 2001, 2002, 2012) work on care. Tutors modelled caring roles, by developing programmes to suit the needs of their learners and identifying their requirements, not always of an educational context.

A selection of teaching methods were used within the learning environment. Within this, there was evidence of dialogic encounter introduced as a contribution towards problem posing education. It was recognised that teaching methods such as roleplay and less traditional style approaches to learning were enjoyed and remembered by the learners.

There was evidence of love labouring, where tutors expressed emotion towards learners. Secondary care relations was prominement within the findings, where within their professional role, tutors expressed care for their learners. Concentric care circles (Lynch, 2009) were interwoven throughout the research.

It could be suggested that there was an act of love (Freire, 1998) demonstrated within adult education practice. Tutors appeared to enjoy their work and expressed genuine care for the learners in their groups. There were several incidents in the findings where tutors demonstrated unhappiness with current changes in accreditation, and how these changes were impacting on the learners. Tutors recognised that learners needs were not paramount within the system and expressed this concern within the findings. This apparent sadness could possibly be attributed to an act of love as prescribed by Freire (1998).

Care and Accreditation

There were several dominant issues that arose when the interviewees were discussing accreditation. Time was a major factor affected by the changes to the accreditation system in Ireland. Tutors simultaneously remarked on the pressure they were under to get the students to achieve certification.

They spoke of the duration of courses being slashed time and time again, with little consideration for needs of learners.

At the initial stage of the process, the abilities and suitability of learners were not considered in a lot of cases prior to being accepted on courses. Here was a huge commitment from Centres to fill classes and get the numbers, irrespective of "where the student was at". Tutors spoke of the implications of this and how learners can become disruptive in class to cover up inability.

Accountability was a key issue resulting in additional work for tutors. Additional paperwork and an increase in general administrative procedure devalued the philosophical role of the adult educator. Many tutors were amazed at the value that was placed on ticking the page as opposed to spending time with learners.

In several instances there was a call for the traditional assessment; a recommendation that there be an external examination set for FETAC modules, "*along the broad lines of the Leaving Cert".* It could be suggested that the increase in workload creates pressure from the hegemonic structures to revert to traditional methods of teaching. The standardised curriculum, the textbook and the didactic approach to learning may be easier and easier to account for and measure. However, it was interesting to see the difference in opinion on this topic from the students; who were in opposition to the one day assessment and called for continued assessment of learning.

The Teaching Council has apart to play in the development of professional Development for Educators. The content of courses that are acceptable for adult educators to work with a group need to reflect the needs of adult learners and reflect philosophical approaches to adult learning that work, primarily as summarised by Freirean ideology. It could be proposed that by promoting problem posing education as a method for social change, Freire rejects neo-liberal discourse.

By encouraging educators to work with adults with no prior knowledge of facilitating such groups, or following an accredited course "teaching to teach" traditional banking methods, transformative adult learning is being contested and therefore succumbing to neo-liberal hegemony. This is an issue that needs to be addressed and organisations such as AONTAS, can play a part in challenging social policy.

Care and Power

Power and relations of power were prominent in the findings of this research. Hegemonic practice was evident in educational institutions. There was evidence of oppression, both from students and tutors alike. Tutors demonstrated how they are working within the constraints of a changing accreditation system. The implications of the Common Awards System appear to be that of an accountable nature, attached to numbers, figures and subsequently the allocation of funding. The point was made that education cannot be run as a business, yet this was a dominant wheel that was turn in in the direction of economic favour and in turn neo-liberal ideas.

Care did not appear to be taken into account in this piece when it came to the distribution of power. Organic intellectuals such as the educators in the system were given little opportunity to voice their opinion. Societal, economic and political needs decided the stratification of power. Ruling, predominantly neo-liberal needs were being met. There was little support given to educators of adults, apart from peer support sourced themselves. However, this support could be viewed as a counter hegemonic opportunity to contest changes in the accreditation system. Policy development needs to support such counter hegemonic activity. Only with this support, will change occur, and an inclusive accreditation system be available, that cares about the learners within it.

A Final Thought

This final Chapter provides a summary of the thesis. It gives an overview of care and the tutor learner relationship, care and accreditation and care and power, in light of this research project. It is envisaged that this overall piece has addressed the topics originally set out to investigate some of the implications of accreditation on care in adult education.

Neo-liberalism could be metaphorically described as the elephant in the room. We are aware of it, conscious of its dominant structure, yet very few dare to speak of it or of its evident impact on collective society.

It could be suggested that neo-liberal ideology is slowly disrupting effective adult education philosophy by quietly encouraging meritocratic "banking" methods of teaching (Freire, 1970). In this way, it is side stepping the care of both tutors and learners, as highlighted through the work of Noddings (1987, 2002) and Lynch (2009) and within the findings of this research. Neo-liberal discourse is to seeping into the learning environment, due to the economic and political ambition of the ruling hegemony.

This thesis has been compiled as a counter hegemonic contribution towards changing the current accreditation system. In this way it is hoped that care will return to the centre of the adult education system where learners' needs, as opposed to neo-liberal needs, are taken into account.

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APPENDICES

M.ED ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

LISA MCEVOY

Title of the Study: What are the Implications of Accreditation on Care in Adult Education?

My name is Lisa McEvoy and I am currently completing research as part of the M.Ed in Community and Adult Education. As part of this research I am interested in speaking to tutors who are delivering accredited programmes to adult learners. I wish to carry out one on one interviews to determine your views on accreditation working in adult education.

What will happen the results of the interviews?

Following the interview I will transcribe the conversation and identify any recurring themes that emerge with other tutor interviews. Aspects of the discussion will form part of the Findings chapter in my thesis. It is important to note that interview will not constitute any kind of counselling. All data that emerges as part of this research will be kept confidential. All participants in the research can access the data at their own discretion and are free to withdraw from the research at any time.

If you are interested in participating in this research, please complete the attached Consent form and return to myself, Lisa McEvoy. If you have any queries, please contact me on (087) 9928530

*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 assured that you concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner. You can also read more: http://research.nuim.ie/support-services/research-ethics*

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

M.ED ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

LISA MCEVOY

Title of the Study: What are the Implications of Accreditation on Care in Adult Education?

I give my consent to be interviewed as part of research conducted by Lisa McEvoy for the M.Ed Adult and Community Education. I am aware that the information gathered will be kept confidential and nothing will be included in the research that will identify me.

I am aware that this research does not constitute any form of counselling. I understand that I can access any data (e.g. audio, written transcripts etc.) compiled as a result of this research at any time. I know that I can also withdraw from this research at any time.

Signed: _____
(Participant)

Date: _____

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at **research.ethics@nuim.ie***. Please be assured that you concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner. You can also read more:* *http://research.nuim.ie/support-services/research-ethics*

M.ED ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

LISA MCEVOY

Title of the Study: What are the Implications of Accreditation on Care in Adult Education?

My name is Lisa McEvoy and I am currently completing research as part of the M.Ed in Community and Adult Education. As part of this research I am interested in speaking to adult learners who are participating on accredited courses. I wish to hold a focus group or discussion with a group of adult learners to find out their experiences on accredited programmes.

What will happen the results of the focus group?

Following the focus group I will transcribe the conversations and identify any recurring themes that emerge. Aspects of the discussion will form part of the Findings chapter in my thesis. It is important to note that this focus group will not constitute any kind of counselling. All data that emerges as part of this research will be kept confidential. All participants in the research can access the data at their own discretion and are free to withdraw from the research at any time.

If you are interested in participating in this research, please complete the attached Consent form and return to myself, Lisa McEvoy. If you have any queries, please contact me on (087) 9928530

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 assured that you concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner. You can also read more: http://research.nuim.ie/support-services/research-ethics*

M.ED ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

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I give my consent to be a participant in a focus group as part of research conducted by Lisa McEvoy for the M.Ed Adult and Community Education. I am aware that the information gathered will be kept confidential and nothing will be included in the research that will identify me.

I am aware that this research does not constitute any form of counselling. I understand that I can access any data (e.g. audio, written transcripts etc.) compiled as a result of this research at any time. I know that I can also withdraw from this research at any time.

Signed: _____
(Participant)

Date: _____

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at **research.ethics@nuim.ie***. Please be assured that you concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner. You can also read more:* *http://research.nuim.ie/support-services/research-ethics*