

**Adult Learners versus Policies:  
An Insight of Adult Education in the  
UK**

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## **Abstract**

This research evaluates adult education policies under the UK's New Labour Government between 1997 and 2010. It critically analyses the impact of globalisation and changes to new technology on both the conceptualisation and practice of adult education.

Personal experience and observations at an adult education centre in Greater London revealed notable changes in this sector over the decade 2001 – 2010, such as a decline in the number of courses offered and in the number of adults enrolling. The literature review has confirmed that a similar pattern has been observed within adult education across the UK, thus suggesting that the decline is not an issue of mismanagement in a specific centre. Research has indicated that the main reason for this decline is the increasing Government focus on solely vocational courses that lead to employment.

The research starts with a review of the effect of globalisation and rapid technological change on adult education policies internationally and in the UK. Next, recent national policies in adult education are explored in order to examine the UK Government's aims for and expectations of adult education. The research then draws on an inductive approach using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to analyse learners' choices and their journeys through education. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with practitioners (tutors and learning advisors) who worked closely with the learners and were therefore familiar with their needs and expectations.

The thesis concludes by arguing that 'gaining knowledge' (through adult education) helps adults to increase their self-esteem, improve their networking and acquire new skills, and these are much the same characteristics required for gainful employment. These qualities can be obtained not only through accredited courses but also through non-accredited (and non-vocational) courses. Finally, the study argues that it is important to understand that adult education must be primarily a means of offering learning to all adults, rather than a service with the narrow aim of satisfying only the labour market.

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction:**

### **The Milieu of Adult Education**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the understanding of adult education policy and practice in the UK and its role in modern society, through critical analysis of adult education from the perspective of the Labour Government (1997-2010), learners and practitioners. Currently, there is a great deal of debate (see Wolf 2002; Field 2001; Jackson 2003; Evans 2003; Jarvis 2009 and many others) about lifelong learning: What is it? What is it for? And what are its aims and purposes? I would suggest that, for learners, the enthusiasm for learning comes when there is some reason to learn, whether it is necessary for employability or fear of unemployment, a way of getting additional enjoyment, or just thoroughly desirable (Evans 2003). However, as Sandlin (2005) suggests, the concentration on vocational training within the Labour Government's policies and the linking of adult education to the job market has raised the question of "Whose interests does adult education ultimately serve?"

The argument of this research is that adult education provision is strongly linked with the job market, which limits the educational programmes offered annually. The research aim is to find out how far this approach succeeds in responding to the needs of both Government and adults. The thesis is comprised of six chapters: Chapter One introduces my observations as a result of the different posts I held in adult education and discusses a range of recent reports and statistics which focus on adult learners in the UK. Chapter Two offers a critical review for the effect of globalisation on education internationally and nationally. I argue that this has led to a shift in the concept from adult education to lifelong learning. Chapter Three investigates the Labour Government's aims and expectations of adult education in the period 1997 – 2010. Chapters Four and Five deal with research methods of data collection and data analysis, which were used to examine the effect of the policies on the learners who

attended courses in an average centre of adult education. Finally, Chapter Six discusses the findings and presents the conclusion of this research.

Accordingly, Chapter One outlines the changes to adult education programmes in the last decade in the UK. It highlights the professional and personal concerns that have grown out of my own experience of being an adult educator over the past ten years (2001 – 2010). Furthermore, it analyses adult education provision through statistics and reports with regard to the curriculum, exploring learners' needs and their decisions to learn. It will employ philosophical approaches to learning to discuss different motivations to learn, according to age, gender, class and also critically review the impact of different education policies on learners. In addition, this chapter explains the purpose of this study, the research question that underpins it, and the study's contribution to knowledge. First, it will critically review and differentiate between 'adult education' and 'lifelong learning'

## **1.2 Adult Education and Lifelong Learning**

Lifelong learning is often used as a synonym for adult education (Jenkins 2006), although they indicate different meanings. To differentiate between lifelong learning and adult education, firstly it is useful to distinguish between education and learning in general.

A generic definition of learning consists of the gaining of knowledge, skills or understanding, self-consciously or tacitly, anywhere, through individual and group processes, throughout a person's life (Livingstone *et al* 2008). Traditionally, the institutionalisation of learning has been regarded as education. Hence, learning is the process that occurs within individuals and education is the social provision of the opportunities to learn (and be taught) formally (Jarvis 2007). In other words, adult learning is considered to be a cognitive process internal to the learner; it is what the learner does in a learning-teaching transaction, as opposed to what the educator does. However, learning can also exist outside the context of education, it could occur in an unplanned or incidental situation as part of everyday life, but it is only the planned activities which can be termed as education (Merriam and Brockett 1997).

The core purpose of education is that learning must take place; the process can be classified as education only if it is undertaken with the intention of producing learning and only if the outcome includes intended learning (Titmus 1989). Accordingly, education can be defined as “any planned series of incidents, having a humanistic basis directed towards the participants’ learning and understanding” (Jarvis 1983, p5). Moreover, adult education could then be seen as the process of managing the external conditions that facilitate the internal change called learning, in adults (Brookfield 1986).

A number of terms are used interchangeably, to indicate different types of adult education (Jarvis *et al* 2003; Merriam and Brockett 1997; Aspin and Chapman 2000); generally, these terms point to the educational opportunities that are offered after formal schooling to adults who are over 16 years of age. For example, the term ‘continuing education’ is a generic term for any programme of study beyond compulsory education (vocational or non-vocational); these courses might be of a short-term nature that does not lead directly to a major higher education qualification (Harvey 2004). Additionally, Trowler (2003) differentiates between adult education and another term, “further education” arguing that further education, in the UK, is mainly for full-time students and its courses relate to the national vocational qualifications framework, while adult education offers a variety of day and evening courses, which could be academic, vocational or leisure-orientated. Jarvis (2007) agrees that in Britain, adult education came to imply ‘liberal’ education for adults, whereas further education assumed a more vocational meaning. A third term used for adult education is “community education” which may refer to any formal or informal education that takes place in the community. The main aim of this progressive approach to education is to help individuals and the community to tackle real issues in their lives, through community action and community-based learning (Jarvis 1990; Merriam and Brockett 1997; Tett 2006).

Internationally, different organisations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, and the European Union (EU) used different labels for adult education such as ‘lifelong learning’, ‘lifelong education’ and ‘recurrent education’ (Schuetze 2006). All these terms emphasise

learning as a lifelong process and also that adult education planning should be organised around that principle. Indeed, the key notion of lifelong education is that all individuals ought to have organised and systematic opportunities for instruction, study and learning throughout their lives. This is true whether the adults' goals are for rectifying earlier educational deficits, to acquire new skills, to upgrade themselves vocationally, to increase their understanding of the world around them, to develop their own personalities, or some other purposes (Cropley 1977; Lengrand 1989). According to Gelpi (1979), lifelong education can be regarded as a response to a single demand or a combination of them, such as social, existential, economic and cultural demands. While lifelong learning, as defined by Jarvis (2009):

... is the combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotion, beliefs and senses) – experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through combination) and integrated into the individual's biography, resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person. (p 10)

Indeed, lifelong learning, according to the European Union (European Commission 2006), includes the entire spectrum of formal, informal and non-formal learning. Thus, formal learning is any intentional learning that happens in a school, a training centre or on the job (Werquin 2007). Informal learning is any learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family, or leisure; it is often referred to as experiential learning and can, to a certain degree, be understood as accidental learning (Colardyn and Bjornavold 2004; Livingstone 2002). Non-formal learning refers to organised activities which could have learning objectives (in a course/with a teacher) or not (during work activity); learners are aware of their learning, and its duration could be long or short and vocational or non-vocational (Werquin 2007).

The European Union believes that lifelong learning must be understood as all learning activities undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence. It is not simply a summing up of traditional education programmes; a

lifelong learning approach puts the emphasis on the development of individual capabilities and the capacity of the person to learn. Murphy (2000) sees that the adoption of lifelong learning is strong in Human Resource Development (HRD), where it is seen as a way of allowing people to adapt skills to new technologies. It provides efficient training throughout a person's working life. Murphy explains that in the world of HRD and workplace training, humanist adult education concepts and philosophy, particularly the client-centred or learner-centred, have been appropriated in the pursuit of flexible and adaptable working. Lifelong learning, with its humanist focus on empowerment of the learner, is seen as a necessary component of imparting skills-training in the modern technological age.

The difference between lifelong learning and adult education is that lifelong learning refers to the process whereby individuals continue their self-directed efforts to develop their knowledge, skills, and attitudes over a lifetime while adult education is the organised and sequential learning experiences designed to meet the needs of adults (Ironside 1989). Indeed the literature has differentiated between learning and education, however it is important to note that learning is the central aim of education. Therefore, for (formal and non-formal) learning to happen educational opportunities should be available. As the learning definitions above agreed that learning is an individual act and self-motivated, to ensure that lifelong learning is taking place, a wide range of these opportunities should be provided to satisfy various motivations and needs such as learning to gain knowledge, skills or purely to understand the world and cope with new changes.

For the purposes of this study, the term 'adult education' is used to refer to the education programmes that are offered to adults in the form of short and long courses run by colleges or community centres, but excluding higher education, which is normally within the realm of universities. In other words, it focuses on the education of students over 16 years, who are attending vocational or non-vocational courses, after completing their compulsory education. Within this thesis, 'lifelong learning' refers to the learning activities undertaken by adult learners in those colleges and community centres.

### **1.3 Personal Experience and Concerns**

One of my initial observations as an adult educator, within the Adult and Community Centre where I started teaching in 2001, was the on-going problem of the low retention rate of learners despite the variety of courses offered of different lengths, and of both vocational and non-vocational nature. Most of the classes would start the first lesson with an average of seven students; after three weeks, the number would decrease. Normally the tutor would contact the missing students to hear different reasons like childcare issues, new employment, or health problems. Although a considerable deal of research has been conducted on retention issues, the problem persists. Davies (1999) explains that the low retention problem in adult education has drawn attention to the potential waste represented by students who enrol on adult education courses, but fail to complete them, and often leave without recording any measurable achievement in terms of recognised qualifications. Davies emphasises that there have been increased pressures from the Government and adult education authorities to demonstrate the ‘value for money’ in the use of public finance.

Instead of dealing with the retention problem and finding solutions for it, such as providing childcare for learners, the Labour Government has decided to focus on the funding of courses that are ‘value for money’, such as courses which lead adults to gain employment skills. Indeed, I have noticed that since 2003 there have been changes in the nature of the courses offered. There has been greater emphasis on purely vocational courses which are connected to the job market, rather than leisure courses, such as arts, fitness or those that are non-accredited (Taylor 2005). Overall, I observed that there has been a reduction in the number of courses offered, which in turn led to a reduction in the number of students joining. The profile of students has changed from the mature and the retired to younger learners (of working age, 16 – 64 years old). Moreover, the number of male learners has increased slightly compared to the number of female learners. Many courses have been closed due to the fact that there were insufficient numbers of people enrolling on them. Additionally, the volume of paperwork that learners and tutors need to fill in during the course increased immensely, for example individual learner plans, learning agreements, tutors’ feedback to learners, and learners’ self-evaluation of their learning during each

session. Another change took place early in the academic year 2009 – 2010, when the managers and curriculum coordinators were given a higher profile, by moving them from their bases in the colleges and community centres to the civic centre, to become part of the local government. This move gave a confused signal to the staff regarding the importance of the role of adult and community education, as it occurred at the same time as significant cuts in funding.

During the eleven years (2001- present) of my work on adult education in different London boroughs (Hounslow, Spelthorne and Uxbridge), I witnessed three different Prime Ministers – Blair (1997 – 2007), Brown (2007 – 2010) and Cameron (2010 – present). All approached adult education in the same way, viewing it through a labour market lens. At the same time, the rhetoric did not change, as the three consecutive governments emphasised their interest in the individuals' personal development and stressed the importance of education in the modern world to face the challenges of globalisation. This rhetoric reached its peak with Tony Blair and his famous mantra of “education, education, education” during the 1997 Labour Party election campaign. However, on the ground, the approach taken to adult education linked it to the labour market by funding primarily vocational courses that were aimed at providing employment skills. This limited the courses offered and decreased the number of learners enrolling, as these courses satisfied only a single need, while other needs, such as learning for knowledge, a hobby, self-development, to cope with new technology stood neglected.

I argue that adult education needs to re-address its priorities, i.e. whether it should satisfy the needs of learners or those of the economy and labour market. Admittedly, as McGivney (2005) says, this is not pretending that adult education was perfect with the traditional non-accredited adult curriculum. She stressed that the challenge for the adult education authorities (such as the Skills Funding Agency) is in meeting government priorities as well as supporting adult learning that falls outside those priorities. In other words, the challenge is to meet national priorities that are set by the government, achieve local targets set by the local authorities, and maintain other provisions to satisfy learners' needs. This is what I will address in this study.

## **1.4 The Milieu of Adult Education**

According to the figures published in 2009 by the Conservative Party, the number of learners studying in publicly funded adult education has dropped by a quarter over four academic years (from 2003/2004 to 2006/2007). The figures published by the Shadow Skills Secretary of that time - David Willetts (2009) - in Parliamentary Questions, show that 1.3 million places in adult education courses funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) had disappeared since 2003/4 - a reduction of a quarter - and the decline has been felt in every region. These reductions in numbers happened after the Labour Government cut the funding for non-vocational courses. In defence of the Government action, an advisor to John Denham, the Skills Secretary, said that the reason for the drop in the number of people enrolling in adult education was simple: "because we are targeting funding at the people who need it most, including at apprenticeships and longer-term vocational courses that actually help people get the jobs they want" (Kingston 2009, n.p.). Denham wondered "if it would be better for funding to be directed to courses such as holiday Spanish rather than giving real help to people now to get a job?" (Kingston 2009, n.p.).

Alan Tuckett, the Director of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) (2009), confirmed Willetts' facts regarding the decline in the number of learners on public adult courses. Tuckett explained that this decline was a consequence of the Government's focus on work-based training programmes such as Train to Gain (this was a service managed by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), designed to help businesses provide training to their employees). He pointed out that while the Train to Gain programme attracted 331,800 starts in 2007/08, an increase of 60 per cent on the year before, the numbers of adults taking publicly supported courses below Level 2 over the same period declined by 30 per cent.

Later, Wolf (2009) stressed that the Train to Gain programme was not successful either, as John Denham (2008) was complaining to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) Skills Summit saying: "My worry today is not that we have too little money in Train to Gain. It is that employers may not seize the opportunity of the budget we already have. You can't have an employer-led system without employers who are prepared to lead." (p 1). Wolf (2009) explained this failure as follows: "to



understand what is happening, one needs to understand that employers are not, on the whole, being offered *training* at all, let alone the training they want.” (p 43). She said that although these programmes were consistently described in official documentations as ‘demand-led’, employers could not actually request training that met their own perceived needs. They were instead offered a very different and far more circumscribed opportunity to have a limited subset of their workers accredited with one of a limited set of qualifications.

The Labour Government’s rhetoric with regards to the importance of an individual’s learning, the individual’s choice and the market, started with the Thatcher Government (1979 – 1990) (Johnson 1993) and was later inherited by the Labour Government. Gillies (2008) stated that consecutive Governments (since Thatcher’s) persisted in dismantling the institutions of professional planning (such as educational authorities in the regional or local councils) and marginalised the professional planners. Agencies such as the Learning and Skills Council and Skills Funding Agency have become a key resource of ‘governmentality’ (the term that Michel Foucault, the French philosopher, coined which refers to the procedures, techniques, institutions and knowledge that constitute empowering certain political programmes and policies (Foucault 1991)). In other words, instead of relying on expertise in the field to make decisions about the provision of adult education, such as local education authorities that are familiar with adults’ learning needs in their area, the Government relies on a system of procedures and instrumentality such as using self-evaluation, monitoring, customers’ feedback and statistics when taking decisions about the courses to be offered and ensuring that the Government’s aims are achieved.

When Fejes and Nicoll (2008) applied Foucault’s governmentality concept to adult education, they explained that the Government become “the power” which operates on the adults, “the subjects”, to shape their behaviour in a specific way. Fejes and Nicoll (2008) give an example: the Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) service was created in 1999 in order to support learners through discussion and dialogue to help them choose the right course, but in reality the choice was already restricted because of the reduction in the available courses. In other words, education policies introduced lifelong learning as a tool that makes everyone responsible for education and learning and abolishes the state’s obligation to provide welfare. In the meantime,

the learning programmes in adult education have been set according to the certain requirements determined by the Government and its own plans.

### **1.5 Whose Interests Does Adult Education Ultimately Serve?**

In the search for an answer to Sandlin's (2005) question on page one: "Whose interests does adult education ultimately serve?", the discussions above indicate that the Government controls the funding of adult education and therefore the decision of the type of courses offered is the Government's; although the decision to learn and join courses is the learner's.

Researchers have a different answer for the same question. For example, Lawson (1979) thinks that the provision of adult education programmes should accommodate the needs of individuals and/or the needs of the community. The best way to meet these needs is through giving the organiser or the professional authority what is needed to decide on priorities and to dispense scarce educational resources most effectively. Likewise, Brookfield (1986) agrees that lifelong learning is an empirical reality, and thus should not be considered a political strategy in that adults learn throughout the developmental stages of adulthood in response to life crises, for the innate joy of learning, and for specific purposes such as gaining skills in order to get employment. Brookfield (1986) points out that sometimes learning happens as a response to personal needs, such as the need to build an intimate relationship, or to deal with bereavement, which is difficult to categorise in terms of formal course offerings, but it does not mean it is any less significant to the individual. According to Brookfield (1986), adults are engaged in learning as a result of their own volition, and the decision to learn is the learner's. On the other hand, the voluntary nature of participation by adult learners also means that such participation can easily be withdrawn if learners feel that the activity does not meet their needs, or does not make any particular sense to them.

In order to understand the general principles of adult education such as its aims, objectives, and the relationship between education and society, we need to identify the philosophical underpinnings of it (Elias and Merriam 1995). As White and Brockett

(1987) pointed out, philosophy can be a tool for improving any practice and can be used to explain results and processes of that practice.

In exploring the different philosophical foundations of adult education in the literature, I found that there are five main approaches, all based on certain assumptions about human nature, the purpose of education, and the roles of the instructor and the learner. The following section describes the five approaches, drawing on the work of Griffin (1983), Elias and Merriam (1995), Spurgeon and Moore (1997), Price (1999), Tisdell and Taylor (2001), Smith (2002), Popovic (2006), and White & Brockett (1987). These are Humanist, Liberal, Progressive, Radical, and Behaviourist approaches.

**Humanist:** Humanistic adult education sets goals for the holistic development of persons toward their fullest potentials. Learning is understood to be personal, intrinsically motivated and rewarded, and largely dependent on learners' unique perceptual repertoires.

**Liberal:** a liberal approach to education's main objective is to help develop the adult, and attain a deeper understanding of those ultimate structures of reality (for example nature, mind, the past) by which life experience is shaped and governed.

**Progressive:** this approach emphasises the relationship between education and society, experience-centred education, vocational education, and democratic education. The purpose of learning in this approach is to support participants in society by giving learners practical knowledge and problem-solving skills.

**Radical:** this approach stresses the role of education as a means of bringing about major social change; education here is used to combat social, political, and economic oppression within society. It believes that education can be used to increase awareness of specific issues and, in turn, provide opportunities for change.

**Behaviourist:** this approach emphasises control, behavioural modification, learning through reinforcement and management by objectives. The aim of this approach is to promote behavioural modifications through education, with a strong environmental influence.

The five approaches argue collectively that the main focus of adult education should be the adult learner, albeit the aims of learning outcomes are very different. For example, the humanist and liberal approaches aim to provide learners with knowledge to develop the learner's thinking and help adults to face day-to-day problems. The radical and progressive approaches stress that in developing individuals then society will progress. Finally, the behaviourist approach believes that education could be used to shape desired behaviour.

In examining adult education provision in relation to the above approaches, there is a clear contradiction. If we are to believe that learning is a continuous process throughout life (lifelong learning) and lifelong education is a necessity for full human development, then only a liberal adult education can fulfil all requirements for an individual educational enterprise. However, in reality the adult education curriculum is behaviourist, through limiting adult education to providing labour to the job market, while the rhetoric is humanistic in its focus on individual growth and development (Elias and Merriam 1995). The impact of the Labour Government's behaviourist approach to adult education was clear in the decrease of the number of learners, as Willetts (2009) and Tuckett (2009) have declared (Chapter One - section 1.3). Hence, limiting the funding to only vocational courses had resulted in restricting the offer of courses to only those related to employment, which means that adults (such as pensioners) who seek learning for other reasons than gaining vocational skills would not be able to have their needs met by public adult education provision. Apart from this, as non-vocational courses and leisure courses were not funded, there were charges made to the programmes on offer, which means that only those who can afford it would join in, while others would miss the opportunity.

Arguably, there was a contradiction between the Labour Government's rhetoric and the reality. While the rhetoric called for learning aimed at personal improvement, Government funding focused on learning aimed at gaining skills for employment, with the courses on offer limited to this alone. This discrepancy between speech and action confused both adults and education providers regarding the objectives of adult learning and education. There should be clarification in addressing why adults should learn. Additionally, it should also be clarified as to what we are aiming for as

individuals, society and government, through learning. These questions indeed are the main focus of this study.

In order to investigate the aim of adult education, it is important to understand why adults choose to learn. Particularly, when adult education is not a compulsory education, which means that the decision to learn (or not) and the choice of the subject and time to study is according to the learner's interest or needs. Therefore, the following section will review different needs and motivations for learning, on the part of adults, in order to understand their decisions to learn.

## **1.6 Why Do Adults Learn?**

Motivation is what makes individuals behave or act in specific, purposeful ways. Applying this definition to adult education, Wlodkowski (1999) defines *motivation to learn* as a person's tendency to find learning activities meaningful and to benefit from them. In other words, being motivated to learn is the drive that makes adults participate in learning activities.

Motivation is a fundamental concern for adult educators, as it is important to understand learners' motives and actions with all the complexities that they entail, in order to identify and plan the learning activities that increase competence and to continue improved educational offerings (Burgess 1971; Howard 1989; Aldridge and Tuckett 2004; Cole *et al* 2004). Howard (1989) suggested that motivation is conceptualised in learning situations as having three stages, each with a different motivational focus:

- Pre-learning: immediately prior to a learning situation, prospective learners must be motivated to initially become involved in learning.
- During learning: while learning takes place, the learner must be motivated to continue and take an active part in learning activities.
- Post-learning: immediately following a learning situation, the learner must be motivated to apply what he has learnt

Howard believes that an individual's motivation in a learning situation would increase if that person is performing successfully in the classroom, or can see a benefit in taking the course, such as improved job performance or helping his or her family with

the newly- learnt skills. Indeed, it is always a challenge for adult educators to ensure that their learners are continually motivated during the course and stay interested in the learning process. When learners lose their motivation to learn, they may stop attending the course and drop out of it. In my experience, in order for adults to learn, they must have a reason to join the course. Later, during the course, the motivation might change positively or negatively according to the learner's experience. In other words, motivation might become stronger when learners enjoy the process of learning and feel that gaining new skills is beneficial, either for work or for daily life.

However, motivation might disappear or diminish during learning, if, for example, the learner is struggling to cope with the learning (the subject is hard) or if there are certain changes in the learner's personal circumstances. Indeed, Frank and Houghton (1997) and Cole *et al* (2004) point out that adults' learning motivation can change and learners might drop out of their course because of illness or financial problems. On the other hand, adults might not be motivated to participate in learning for different reasons, such as dispositional barriers (e.g. insufficient self-confidence and negative school experience); situational reasons (such as lack of time and interest) and structural impediments (e.g. lack of available educational opportunities, absence of child care, the lack of financing for studies or the lack of job opportunities) (Ahl 2006).

To participate in education is a personal decision for adults, as it is a decision to give up their free time and to commit to a new responsibility of attending the class regularly, doing the homework and possibly sitting an exam. Therefore, the adult learner should feel that there is an advantage to learning. Generally, the reasons for adults participating in education are to develop a career, gain a qualification to enhance their job prospects, satisfy an interest or cope with personal problems (e.g. bereavement) (Bariso 2008). Normally, adult learners have some expectations regarding the outcomes of the course before enrolling. These expectations relate to what the learners are eager to achieve by the end of the course. McGivney (1995) found that in addition to improving job prospects and developing existing knowledge, which are the two major aims for joining education, in reality, there are other outcomes of learning, as stated by the respondents in her survey such as: increased social contact, therapeutic benefits, physical and mental stimuli for older adults, or

increased confidence and self-esteem. These outcomes might not be the main objectives when adults participate in education, but are definitely considered important. Indeed, while for any government the outcome of learning is measured by counting the numbers of learners achieving qualifications (Field 2000), adults do not measure their learning outcomes in terms of qualifications alone. Adults see that learning can boost self-esteem, provide a focus in life, offer opportunities to practice new experiences and create choices. All these outcomes, side-by-side with gaining qualifications, are likely to lead to better job prospects and increased career opportunities (Collins *et al* 2000).

In addition, there are some other factors which may influence adults' motivation to learn and their choices, such as age, gender and class. The NIACE report (2004) *Young Adult Learners, Disaffection and Social Exclusion* stated that while 16-18 year olds are more inclined to move in and out of learning programmes, sampling different options, those aged 19 and over tend to prefer vocational courses. Certainly, age influences the motivation to learn in such a way that learners who are still of working age choose courses related to job-skills, especially due to the increasing effects of globalisation and the growing importance for the need to update skills continuously. Nevertheless, lately, I have seen learners of working age opt for art or fitness courses in order to relax and unwind at the end of a working day. At the same time, older learners are more likely to learn in order to cope with changing technology or to keep their mind active. Some also choose to gain knowledge in order to keep up with the younger generation and avoid feeling isolated. Thus, Dench and Regan (2000) confirm that the most important reason for learning, in the case of adults aged 50-71 years old, was an intellectual one; i.e. to increase knowledge, keep the brain active, and enjoy the challenges of learning new things. The second most important reason was a personal one, such as gaining qualifications for personal satisfaction, to do something with their time and to take their life towards a different direction. The third reason for learning was to improve job prospects. The impact of learning was to enhance enjoyment of life, raise self-confidence, and increase the ability to cope with everyday problems.

Motivations to learn for both female and male learners are the same, from the point of view that both of them seek learning in order to get a job, satisfy an interest or gain a

qualification (Garner *et al* 2001; Kimmel and McNeese 2006; Castle *et al* 2006). However, the choice of the courses and use of the knowledge gained might be different. For instance, males often choose practical courses (like plumbing or wood work) in order to gain knowledge to be used around the house, whereas females sometimes choose to learn in order to help their children with their homework or to be socially active (Raisborough 1999). It is a fact that women are more widely represented in adult education than men. According to McGivney's survey (1999) men are reluctant to learn outside the workplace, as many of them are the main breadwinners for their families, which make them more extrinsically motivated to learn for the sake of upgrading or as a job requirement. On the other hand, women are more intrinsically motivated to learn (Daehlen and Ure 2009). For example, in courses which lead to employment or higher education (such as book keeping, hair dressing, beauty or Access courses), females are often driven by an inner desire to become a role-model for their children. This is particularly important for lone mothers, where the wish to be an inspirational figure to their children drives their entry into education (Reay *et al* 2002).

Furthermore, social class can have an effect on learning. For instance, Konrad (2005) investigated the issue of motivation of adults who have less than level 2 qualifications. Adults in this group are disproportionately concentrated in the UK, amongst the unemployed, the disadvantaged and the economically inactive. In the context of the issue of motivation, the low-skilled adults do not have an inner drive for further and continuing education, but participate in courses mainly because they are forced to do so (e.g. by their employer or welfare-benefit regulations), while the skilled middle class seem to join education due to their interest in the subject (Daehlen and Ure 2009).

In principle, access to education should remain the best hope for most adult learners to secure economic stability and become more fully engaged citizens, whereas the aim of adult education should be to improve the social disadvantages that social class and economic background produce (Nesbit 2005). However, in reality there is a strong class bias in participation, with the middle class being significantly over-represented in advanced and informal courses, compared to the working class (Preston 2006). Thus, issues of gender, ethnicity and class might influence the ability to join learning



activities. For example, the lack of childcare for a female learner is a barrier to attending courses and the lack of money can be a barrier for working class adults. Moreover, Garner *et al* (2001) emphasise that barriers to education linked with gender, ethnic minorities and class could influence resistance to participation in education, despite the motivation being there. For instance, Kimmel and McNeese (2006) found that learners from ethnic minorities are significantly motivated to learn in order to gain knowledge and skills, but they are significantly less confident about their abilities than other learners. This low self-esteem becomes a barrier to participation.

In conclusion, the motivations to participate in adult education seem to be similar for all, despite the differences in race, age, gender and other factors. Adults learn for practical reasons such as to gain or improve employment, or obtain qualifications to improve job prospects. Moreover, adults seek education for personal reasons, for example to gain knowledge about certain subjects; or to use the gained skills to help in day-to-day life (e.g. helping children with homework or do work around the house). Also, adults learn in order to keep the mind active and keep up with the changes in the world; or to raise their self-confidence and to become a role-model for their children. However, motivation does not guarantee that adults join education; in fact a person's readiness to participate in an organised learning programme is influenced by a whole range of issues, such as inner factors like gender, age, race, family background, school experience, social class, cultural norms and occupation. Additionally there are external influences and pressures that could influence participation such as pressure from employer or family to learn, as well as the existence (or the lack) of local learning opportunities and, crucially, policy decisions that affect the nature and extent of learning and opportunities available to adults (NIACE 1999) which will be discussed next.

## **1.7 Policies' Impact on Learners**

The provision of adult education has been integrated with labour market and employment policies and mainly serves the need of employment and basic skills (literacy, numeracy and ICT). This is largely as a result of globalisation and the

perceived need to compete within the international market – which will be discussed in Chapter Two.

Learning and updating employment skills have become essential, therefore learning for any other reasons is not funded or supported by the Government. This has resulted in learners obtaining education in order to keep their jobs or to improve the chances of getting one. Thus, adult learning has changed from being a voluntary activity to one driven by economic imperatives; instead of purely learning for the sake of developing additional skills or knowledge, participants are now driven to courses by the promise of improved economic possibilities. Indeed, the general orientation of educational policy is towards economic global competitiveness and this orientation is part of the global shift of policy towards ‘knowledge-based’, ‘high-skills’ economies (Ball 2008). Consequently, the concept of lifelong learning has gained prominence, while education and training have become key vehicles for preparing people to be more adaptable to economic changes. This approach has resulted in restricting adult education provision to basic skills and training for jobs (Nesbit 2005). Moreover, the access to education, in case of disadvantaged groups, has become limited, especially in funded courses, while a wider range of funded and unfunded courses are available for those who can afford them in public or private education sectors.

Indeed, in the past learning was proposed to build up personal and social capital; today, it is increasingly understood in terms of the formation of human capital and as an investment in economic development (Biesta 2006; McNair 2009; Jackson 2005). The reason for this lies in the fact that governments and policy makers have to respond to many challenges caused by globalisation, such as the increasing level of migration and mobility, besides competition in the global market. The transformation in the concept of adult learning has resulted in a situation where lifelong learning has become an individual duty and responsibility. This conceptual change, as Biesta (2006) explains, has affected the resources made available by governments for lifelong learning. Adult learning is considered the first and most valuable aspect in relation to the economy and learning for personal fulfilment is only secondary. Moreover, individuals have become responsible for their learning, while the agenda for learning is set by their governments (Preston 2006; Biesta 2006). The Labour Government rhetoric emphasised that people can learn what they want, when and

where they want and how they want, but, at the same time, the funding for adult and community education were reduced (Jackson 2005). Wolf (2009) states that over the last few decades, adult education has been subjected to increasing ‘Soviet style’ levels of central planning and control. For instance, centrally-set qualifications targets have determined what is to be taught, rather than what the students wish to learn. The question that arises is: why should learners be motivated if the decisions about content, purpose and direction of their learning are beyond their own control?

Furthermore, within Labour Government’s policies, there was much emphasis on vocational education. Hence, there was faith in the logic of human capital theory where a highly qualified and flexible workforce was seen as security in a competitive global marketplace (Francis 2006). However, the fact that seems to be ignored is that, quite often, businesses require prospective employees to have practical experience prior to employment rather than pure qualifications (Johnson 2002). Indeed, it seems that education policies were formed and developed in relation to the international economic competition and not the real needs of the job-market requirements (Ball 2008). As a result of this focus on vocational learning, the resources had re-allocated from non-vocational/ leisure learning to basic skills and vocational courses. It is important to mention that progress has been made in improving basic skills amongst disadvantaged groups for example, as highlighted in the National Audit Office report 2004, *Skills for Life: Improving adult literacy and numeracy* (Preston 2006). However, the continuous reduction of funding for adult education provision seems to have led to a bi-partite system of adult education: basic skills and vocational for those who cannot afford it, such as those who are poorly educated and unemployed, while others can have a wider choice in private education and non-funded courses in adult education (Illris 2003). Indeed, the Labour Government policies aimed to make the provision of education more cost-efficient by converting the product into a commodity and focusing on marketable skills. This caused the cutbacks in the public sector, which resulted in closing of “inefficient” programmes that do not directly meet business needs (Tabb 2001). Yet, there was some positive impact of this approach represented by the promotion of distance learning, in which courses and degrees are packaged for delivery over the Internet. This has proved to be useful to many workers, mothers and others who can study at their own pace while doing other jobs.

Certainly, the adult education approach had some positive impact on adults, as mentioned above. However, such approach is unable to promote social cohesion and reduce inequality. In order to obtain the full picture of the adult education, my aim is to research if the provision of education was satisfying the job market requirements or the learners' needs. In other words, were the learning activities offered to adults actually helped adults to employment (as the Labour Government wished)? Or helped to satisfy learners' needs? Or maybe they were doing both.

## **1.8 Research Questions**

In this thesis, I will explore the way in which adult education has developed over the last decade, after tightly linking its programmes to the job market, and the effect of this on different types of learners. Also, I will investigate if adult education has achieved the Labour Government's goals and satisfied learners' expectations. The main research questions are:

What are the aims and expectations of adult education in the modern society in the UK? How far has adult education met the different needs of the adult learners and policy makers' objectives?

Although there is much research on Government policies in the literature, there is little which analyses policies by exploring learners' experiences or practitioners' points of view. In this study, I will involve both learners and practitioners in the evaluation of adult education programmes and in identifying the weaknesses and strengths of adult education policies during the period 1997-2010.

## **1.9 Summary**

As argued above, it is clear that there is a gap between the rhetoric of the Labour Government and the reality of adult education. Most philosophers, researchers and thinkers, stress that adult education should be a lifelong process and it should be based on the needs of learners. These needs, according to the literature, might be

linked to the job market such as learning in order to gain or improve their employment, or gaining qualifications to improve job prospects. Also, there are inner needs for learning such as to gain knowledge about certain subjects which interest the adult; or to use the gained skills in day-to-day life (e.g. helping children with homework or do work around the house); or learning to keep the mind active; or to raise self confidence and to become a role-model for their children. Nevertheless, in the provision of adult education, adults' needs to learn defined by the Government rather than by individuals or even by expertise in the field.

The choice of adult education programmes decided by the Government, which relied mainly on reports and statistics to determine the needs of the economy, while the responsibility for learning is the learner's. That meant when courses were offered, it is up to the learner to decide when to learn and what to learn. Admittedly, such system has attracted relatively more young-people. However, many others, such as older people, women and people in-between jobs, opted out of these courses because of financial constraints.

The Labour Government considered adult education as part of the political decision-making process and economic future planning alone (Hamilton and Hillier 2007). Hence, it did not see education as a practice that is important for social cohesion and personal development as well as the development of the economy (Fontaine 2000). If we accept the Government's argument, it is logical that when people are employed and earning they can afford to pay for their choice of courses. However, what about those who cannot work, such as the disabled and the elderly? This raises the question of what are considered as the more-important gains of education: whether it is economic development or whether education should be used to ensure social cohesion or the development of the individual and society, or whether it is all of the above.

Certainly, there is a contradiction between the Labour Government's rhetoric and its actions in adult education. While the Government rhetoric was humanistic in its emphasis on the importance of the development of individuals through education, in reality, the Government approach to adult education was behaviourist, by funding and stressing only courses that lead to employment.

This research will explore the idea of adult education, taking into consideration the views of the three players in the field: the learners, the Labour Government (through an analysis of its policies) and practitioners, in order to evaluate the concepts and aims of adult learning and explore ways to enhance it. To provide some context for the empirical research that was conducted, the next chapter explores the impact of globalisation and international organisations as new economic forces shaping British educational policies.

## **Chapter Two**

# **Globalisation, the Knowledge Economy and Adult Education**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The impact of globalisation, in the last couple of decades, has become a point of discussion in a range of political discourses, particularly in education where it has made new demands of national systems (Muday 2005). The purpose of this chapter is to explore the influence of globalisation on adult education globally and in the UK context, focusing specifically on its impact on Government policy.

Held and McGrew (2001) describe globalisation as a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organisation of social relations and transactions, which is expressed in transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction and power. It is characterised by four types of change:

1. It involves a stretching of social, political and economic activities across frontiers, regions and continents.
2. It is marked by the intensification of interconnectedness and flows of trade, investment, finance, migration, culture, etc.
3. It can be linked to the increasing rate of global interactions and processes, as the development of world-wide systems of transport and communication increases the velocity of the diffusion of ideas, goods, information, capital and people.
4. The growing extent and speed of global interactions can be associated with a deepening impact, such that the effects of distant events can be highly significant locally, and specific local developments can come to have considerable global consequences. In this sense, the boundaries between domestic matters and global affairs have become increasingly fluid.

It is argued that globalisation has intensified international economic competitiveness, which is dependent on a highly skilled labour-force. Thus, economic growth primarily

reflects the capacities of individual workers to acquire these necessary skills and competences. Furthermore, the work that was previously done locally can now be done much more cheaply using labour abroad, thanks to the impact of new technologies such as fast communications, which enable the easy movement of products. This has led to the emergence of a competitive global force able and willing to learn new skills and update previous ones to do their jobs efficiently and at the lowest price (Salvatore 2010). According to Brown and Lauder (2003) the dominant view of economics assumes that the developed economies are in the midst of a knowledge revolution, driven by the application of new technologies. Moreover, from this perspective, innovation holds the key to the competitive advantage of countries and the welfare of individuals. Therefore, in a global economy the prosperity of countries such as Britain depends on the skills, knowledge and intellectual capital of those capable of creating and developing innovations. In this scenario, education becomes central to economic policy.

## **2.2 Education, Globalisation and Economy Knowledge**

The increased pace of globalisation and the development of new technology has caused changes in the nature of work and the labour market. Hence, the liberalisation of trade and investment, together with the interconnectedness of markets, have altered business environments all over the world and forced firms to adjust to new market conditions. The present changes can be traced back to the decentralisation of production, the institutional changes of downsizing and outsourcing, new skill requirements due to fast changing technology, and the dynamics of employment within and across countries, in terms of shifting labour - intensive processes of production to low wage countries (DTI 2004, OECD 2004, Beneria 2001). The present labour market is characterised by higher mobility between employers, a short-term contract culture of employment, multiple career trajectories, and more job insecurity due to the increase of international competition (Desai 2000, Cooper 2005, Golsch 2006, OECD 2004). According to the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) data, between 1994 and 2001 in the UK, more than half the working population moved at least once from one occupational group to another and workers in the UK have by far the shortest average job tenure in the EU. At the same time, an increase in women's labour participation as a result of the increase of subcontracted



and home-based work brings into sharp relief many of the problems associated with women's employment - such as childcare (Beneria 2001, Desai 2000). In the UK, over the past four decades, the proportion of women in employment has grown markedly. The employment rate for women had reached 70 percent by 2008 (Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics).

Although globalisation is often defined in terms of economics, it has a significant impact on the role of education. This is due to the new work conditions, as it requires individuals to continue learning and regularly upgrade work skills. In other words, the present task of authorities providing education is to ensure that learners acquire the necessary skills. Individuals who desire to keep pace with rapid advances in technology and who maintain their employment, must regularly update their knowledge and skills (UN 2003, Simons *et al* 2007).

It is argued by many that the knowledge-based economy has replaced the industrial economy, where economic value is generated by trade in knowledge rather than manufactured products, through the growth of highly skilled and individualised service industries such as advice, consultancy, research and publishing (McNair 2001, Robertson 2008, Castells 2010, Kirby and Cox 2006). The knowledge-based economy needs a knowledge-based society. According to UNESCO (2007), such a society "is one in which institutions and organisations enable people and information to develop without limits and open opportunities for all kinds of knowledge to be mass-produced and mass-utilised throughout the whole society. At its best, the knowledge society involves all members of the community in knowledge creation and utilisation; it supports the goal of high quality and safety of life" (p 2). Therefore, an education system is required to bring the least educated into the knowledge economy and to move the educated constantly higher (McNair 2001). Thus, the knowledge economy classifies learners/individuals on the basis of their degree of knowledge/ skill, and ignores any other factors that might affect the acquiring of the knowledge, such as class, race and gender. Moreover, learners who are classified as having low knowledge-skills with particular learning needs are never included in the knowledge economy. This includes vulnerable people such as the older long-term unemployed, the disabled, those from ethnic minority backgrounds, those on low incomes,

immigrants, lone parents, parents returning to the labour market, or ex-offenders (Hepworth and Spencer 2003, Brine 2006).

The knowledge-based economy, as discussed above, requires a corresponding knowledge society comprising knowledge workers and a continuously learning citizenry (Casey 2006). The idea of creating a learning culture - where individuals are continuously learning - is not new, it has been noted in the Report of the International Commission on the Development of Education '*Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow*' (The Faure Report 1972). The report pointed to the need for a learning culture that is open to all and embraces a learning continuum that ranges from formal to non-formal and informal education. However, lifelong education, as put forward by the Faure Report, was associated with the more comprehensive and integrated goal of developing more humane individuals and communities in the face of rapid social change (Boshier 1998, UNESCO 2009, Mimoun-Sorel 2009). UNESCO avoided the purely economic arguments for lifelong learning. Nevertheless, its humanistic approach was later infused by the rhetoric of the knowledge economy and human capital development in the report by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century "*Learning: The Treasure Within*" (the Delors Report, 1996). In the report, the continuous humanistic concern was evident but there was also an attempt to mix this approach with the new requirements of a knowledge economy, in addressing learning within the context of training, to gain work skills (Spring 2009):

In order to acquire not only an occupational skill but also, more broadly, the competence to deal with many situations and work in teams. It also means learning to do in the context of young people's various social and work experiences which may be informal, as a result of the local or national context, or formal, involving courses, alternating study and work (p 37 – Delors Report).

By the 1990s, increased attention was given to the relationship between economic developments and continuously learning adults, by different international organisations. However, the same period witnessed a set of new humanistic goals for education, such as social justice and the creating of active citizens, to avoid the definition of learning on a merely economic basis. The CONFINTEA V (the Fifth

International Conference on Adult Education) in 1997 that issued the *Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning and Agenda for the Future*, identified adult learning and education as “both a consequence of active citizenship and a condition for full participation in society” (p 1). This was considered key to reaching the goal of creating a learning society that was committed to social justice and general well-being in the 21st century. Later, at the World Education Forum at Dakar (2000), 164 governments joined *Education for All (EFA)*, which is a global movement led by UNESCO, aiming to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015. The ultimate aim of EFA is to provide quality basic education for all, ensuring that the learning needs of young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes, with an emphasis on basic skills such as literacy and numeracy.

In recent years, other intergovernmental organisations, such as the World Bank, OECD and EU, have become highly influential in shaping educational policy (Rinne 2008). The World Bank’s views regarding the aims of lifelong learning are embedded in the *World Bank Education Sector Strategy*. The Strategy was written by the World Bank which works with governments through financing, analytic work, and policy advice to integrate education into national economic strategies and develop holistic and balanced education systems. The strategy went beyond EFA: “Countries need to go well beyond *Education for All* in equipping themselves to succeed, and indeed survive, in today’s fast globalizing world” (World Bank (2005), p 123). It emphasised the way in which education systems can support the creation of dynamic economies through diverse initiatives, comprising efforts to strengthen the quality and labour market relevance of post-compulsory education. Additionally, it stressed the importance of designing lifelong learning systems to benefit adult learners, ensure national competitiveness and transform the institutional landscape with more diversified provision and a changing role for the state. The vision of the World Bank is to build up a society that is based on mass production of consumer goods within a global economy. Each region or nation contributes to mass production through factory and agricultural goods. However, the problem from the World Bank’s point of view, is that many countries have not reached a high enough level of economic development to participate in a mass consumer society. Therefore, it is the role of education to help them make this leap (Spring 2004).

Similar to the World Bank, the OECD also sees education as a tool for economic growth. The OECD defined knowledge-based economies as: “economies which are directly based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information” (1996, p 3). According to Lundvall (1992), for the OECD, the most fundamental resource in the modern economy is knowledge, and accordingly, the most important process is learning. Indeed, the OECD has become an organisation of education and the influence of its administration and coordination is based more on steering by knowledge, regulating the attitudes, values and measures of the member countries and directing them by a kind of ‘peer-pressure’ method. The OECD has become a global ‘bench-marker of standards’ and in this way, it is also a power in educational decision-making and governance. This power had earlier been concentrated in nation-states, but now, to a certain extent, it has shifted to the OECD and to other supranational organisations, such as the EU.

The setting and definition of standards is of utmost importance in relation to positional competition as well as reputational competition between nation-states and their educational institutions (Rinne 2008, Lauder *et al* 2006). For instance, the yearly report of ‘*Education at a Glance*’ enables educational policy makers and practitioners alike to see their education systems in the light of other countries’ performances. Also, the *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)* and its indicators, ranking and league tables set the standard of the achievement of the operational level of literacy and numeracy for employment, as well as develop and maintain these skills (Lingard and Grek 2006).

Moreover, the OECD has been important in internationally articulating and spreading the concept of the knowledge economy and the role of education, innovation and research in relation to it. The two reports by OECD, *The Knowledge Based Economy* (OECD 1996a) and *Lifelong Learning for All* (1996) were considered necessary to develop the notion of learning across the life cycle amongst citizens. They also stressed the need for flexible and mobile lifelong learners who are able to deal effectively with cultural diversity, endemic change and innovation (Rizvi and Lingard 2006). The *Lifelong Learning for All* (1996) report introduced new perceptions of adult education and learning. It states that the contemporary idea of lifelong learning

goes further than earlier attempts to offer adults a second or a third chance to have access to education. The report claims that everyone should be capable, motivated and actively encouraged to learn throughout his or her life, and the responsibility for learning ultimately rests on the individual. The new approach emphasises that education and economic policy is based on the high skill - high income equation because it conveys a sense of justice. In other words, it promotes the idea that people earn what they are worth as reflected in their credentials, while at the same time holding out the prospect of widespread prosperity by lifting the skills of the population (Brown and Lauder 2003).

UNESCO's line of thinking about education differs from the OECD's and the World Bank's. UNESCO's four pillars of learning proposed by the *Delors Report* (1996) are: firstly, learning to know, which has to do with the individual acquiring knowledge in a never-ending process. Secondly, learning to do, to acquire not only an occupational skill but also, more broadly, the competence to deal with many situations and work in teams. Thirdly, it involves learning to live together by developing an understanding of other people and interdependence, which is a spirit of respect for the values of pluralism, mutual understanding and peace. Fourthly, learning to be, which is to develop one's personality and be able to act with even greater autonomy, judgment and personal responsibility. While the OECD and World Bank's views on education are completely instrumental, where education is seen as a process that an individual is involved in, to achieve specific and measurable objectives in gaining skills or qualifications that are purely suitable for work, UNESCO's view is that learning is about: the development of a complete person to reach his full potential (first and fourth pillar); using education to contribute to achieving social cohesion (third pillar); the development of practical and social skills good for both private and work life (second pillar); and to fostering a culture to encourage individuals to learn to know (first pillar).

The EU's lifelong learning policy has emerged as an overarching educational reform policy intended to address a wider range of issues besides economic growth, and adapts the views of UNESCO, OECD and World Bank put together. Although the main concern for the EU was education and training to improve employability and international competitiveness, by the end of the 1990s the reports produced included

further issues such as citizenship and inclusion. In the 1992 Maastricht Treaty the European Commission became a key promoter of European integration in the area of education and training. The Commission came to play a role in pursuing the European dimension of education and training more actively than ever before.

The European Commission (1993–1994) produced a White Paper, entitled '*Growth, Competitiveness, Employment*' which articulated lifelong education and training as the major priority for addressing the employment issue in Europe. The White Paper proposed lifelong learning as a key reform measure of education and vocational training systems. Later in 1995, another White Paper was published, namely, *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society*, which prioritised national economic growth and considered it the core goal of lifelong learning. The White Paper emphasised the importance of lifelong learning in terms of its potential contribution to employability and a competitive European economy.

In 1998, at the Vienna Summit, the EU determined that the aims of lifelong learning should be the four pillars employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities. Later, these pillars were changed in the policy text "*Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*" (2001). Today, the aims of EU lifelong learning policy have been expanded to encompass personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion, employability and adaptability. The European Commission found in education a key to both national economic competitiveness and social cohesion. The European Union has taken a clear lead in efforts to implement political aspirations towards a knowledge society. Both the declaration at the Lisbon Summit (March 2000) and the '*Education and Training 2010*' work programme, set aims to develop Europe into a learning society, in accordance with expansion of knowledge-based economic activity, so that Europe could become the most competitive knowledge-based economy internationally (Casey 2006, Green 2006).

Schuetze (2006) stated that the international concept and agenda of lifelong learning are the result of international debates and discourses that are initiated, shaped or influenced by national governments, frequently using the international agenda to reinforce and legitimise national reform agendas. However, many researchers, such as Held and McGrew 2001; Olssen *et al* 2004; Farazmand 2002 and Beck 2000, observe

that globalisation has undermined the nation state, as its far-reaching power has affected the national decision-making processes, by calling for a transfer of decisions to the international level. Nevertheless, there is a valid argument that in order to implement internationally-made decisions, power should be transferred to local levels of government, to ensure local participation in education. This implies that public policies are undertaken at different levels. Thereby, globalisation entails complex decision-making processes, which take place at different levels, namely sub-national, national and global, thus paving the way for a growing multilayered system of governance (Bertucci and Alberti 2001, Jarvis 2007). The state remains the key actor in the domestic arena, where nation states have authority to make choices and decisions about how to respond and allocate scarce resources to confront the challenge of globalisation (Held and McGrew 2001). For example, it is for nation states to agree national policies to ensure increases in the level of educational provision and equal access to education (Bertucci and Alberti 2001, Selwyn and Brown 2000) or it may encourage the cooperation between the Government, the job market, non-government organisations and businesses for further education provision.

One can summarise that lifelong learning is believed to be essential for the knowledge economy. The learning process has become entirely instrumental by promoting the development of knowledge and competencies that enable individuals to adapt to a knowledge-based society and help them to participate actively in economic life, which is being increasingly shaped by globalisation (Rizvi 2007). Indeed, contemporary world-wide educational systems have generally been based on human capital approaches towards economic success. Thus, education policy initiatives are aimed at improving the quality of human resources in an attempt to win a competitive advantage in the global competition (Selwyn and Brown 2000). However, there are some advances to utilise education in order to achieve social goals such as social cohesion and active citizenship (by the EU) or personal fulfilment (by UNESCO) alongside the human capital approach.

Despite these initiatives, the thrust of international policy behind economic globalisation is neo-liberal in nature. The neo-liberal approach which has been adopted by the World Bank, OECD, and most western governments favours the free-market as the most efficient method of global resource allocation. Consequently, it

favours large-scale, corporate commerce and the privatisation of resources, which will be discussed in the next part of this chapter.

### **2.3 Lifelong Learning and the Neo-Liberal Ideology**

Harvey (2005) defines neo-liberalism as a theory of political economic practices proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee the quality and integrity of property and investment. Harvey explains that the state must set up the military, defence, police, legal structures and institutions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee the proper functioning of the markets. Furthermore, if the markets do not exist for areas such as water, health care, and education, then the state has to create them. Beyond these tasks, the state should not venture into any other economic activities.

According to neo-liberals, globalisation embodies the potential for creating a radically new world order, which will encourage human freedom and prosperity unencumbered by the dictates of public bureaucracy and the power politics of states (Held and McGrew 2002). Neo-liberalism attaches more weight in education to the credentials (qualifications) and the skills that situate individuals with advantageous positions within an economy (the market) (Gouthro 2009). The concept of lifelong learning in the neo-liberalism approach can be seen as a disciplinary technique aimed at shifting and effecting control. Lifelong learning implies an active learner, when viewed in relation to neo-liberal agendas, which means that the individuals have to be responsible for their education, to recognise the skills required and the learning outcomes that ought to take place and to be able to finance their own learning (Olssen 2006). This focus on individual responsibility for their learning does not take into account that there are factors that can affect an adult's decision such as gender, class, race as well as health and financial circumstances. It presumes that all adults are able to work, or at least to pay for their own learning, and are able to take correct decisions regarding their education.



Bourdieu (2003) emphasises that neo-liberal policies have been accompanied by the destruction of the idea of public service. The basic assumption of neo-liberalism is that government services such as education are better provided by private companies and non-profit organisations. This assumption, Spring (2004) comments, is based on an unproven idea that the free market is more responsive to public interest than governments. It might be so, but it can also be argued that only governments can ensure the provision of equal access and equal opportunities in education (Griffin 2000). The further dilemma is that while globalisation and neo-liberalism stress the importance of education for states and their economic growth, they nevertheless encourage the field of education to be opened to the free market. My argument is, if education is crucial for a country's prosperity and its international competitiveness, then there is more reason for it to be provided and managed by the state to guarantee inclusion and equality of access which the private market can not provide.

From all the above, it is clear that the role of the state, for the neo-liberals, is seen as facilitator for the successful operation of the market. In this, the state role neither promotes social justice nor develops public monopolies and the subject of ethics becomes more a matter for the private individual and no longer a concern of the state (Olssen *et al* 2004). Moreover, this increased link between education and the global marketplace draws attention away from learning around social and cultural concerns, fundamental for democracy and active citizenship (Olssen 2006, Griffin 2000). Indeed, the stress on learning for the sake of professional development or gaining work-skills has made lifelong learning rather like training than education (Jarvis 2007, Field 2006).

As the main concern of this study is adult education and learning in the UK, next I will explore the impact of the globalisation and neo-liberalism on a national level in the UK's adult education policies.

## **2.4 Globalisation's Impact on Lifelong Learning in the UK**

The dominant view of economic and social change assumes that the developed economies are in the midst of a knowledge revolution, driven by the application of new technologies. It is argued that innovation holds the key to the competitive advantage of countries and the welfare of individuals. Consequently, in a global economy the prosperity of countries such as the UK depends on skills, knowledge and intellectual capital of individuals capable of creating and developing innovations. In this scenario, education becomes central to economic policy because it is only through education that the knowledge and creativity necessary for innovations are developed (Brown and Lauder 2003). Consequently, in the UK the landscape of education policy has and is being transformed. A transformation which began in the 1970s, accelerated through Thatcherism in the 1980s and the Conservative governments of the 1990s and which was pursued with a single-minded vigour under New Labour from 1997 - 2010. Neo-liberal ideas brought changes in the form and modalities of the state, such as changes in the delivery and governance of the public services, and a re-working of education policy (Ball 2010). This section will briefly outline some policy changes in the last century, in order to understand the particular historical and cultural context of educational change in the UK, and will analyse how the global influences have changed and been translated into the current political context.

### **Liberal Adult Education and the Local Authorities (1900- early 1970s):**

The twentieth century, especially the first half of it, witnessed the rise of the idea of lifelong learning and the liberal approach of adult education with a clear distinction between vocational and non-vocational programmes. The first flurry of educational activities was as a result of the 1902 Education Act. By this legislation, the Government created local education authorities (LEAs) responsible for adult education, which was seen very clearly as scientific, technical and vocational education. A year later in 1903 the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) was formed as a voluntary adult education movement which provided liberal adult education and the curriculum was geared towards providing non-vocational education for working people (Rose 1989, Merricks 2002). The idea of lifelong learning

emerged at the end of World War One, influenced by the active debate over the extension of the role of women and working class men. The British Ministry of Reconstruction, Adult Education Committee in Britain argued in its 1919 Report that adult education must not be regarded as a luxury, which concerns only a short span of adulthood but that it is a permanent national necessity, an inseparable aspect of citizenship, and therefore should be both universal and lifelong. The report represented the liberal and humane ideal of learning for learning's sake and adult education's aims to satisfy the needs of the individual and the attainment of new standard of citizenship and a better social order (Peers 2002, Field 2006). The report contributed to establishing the division between vocational and non-vocational adult education for much of the twentieth century "because the distinction is one which exists in the popular mind and has taken root in practice" (British Ministry of Reconstruction, Adult Education Committee, 1919 Report - p 149).

Nevertheless, the provision of both vocational and non-vocational learning opportunities continued, especially around difficult times such as the depressions during the 1920s and 1930s and the Second World War. Education became an important issue as it was seen as the answer to unemployment, as well as contributing to the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community, as stated in the *Education Act 1944* (European Commission 2003). In order to reduce public expenditure on adult education and continue providing liberal education, the Government involved a range of organisations, statutory and voluntary, such as the 'village college' initiatives launched by Henry Morris, the Chief Education Officer in Cambridgeshire. Morris had a new vision for community education to provide a range of vocational and non-vocational learning opportunities to the community with the help of National Council of Voluntary Organisations in local accommodations such as schoolrooms, library, church halls or at any other place (Clyne 2009). The village college was to be a practical way of exploiting economies of scale in order to provide a range of co-ordinated and accessible public service to a wide population. Later, the *Hadow Report* (1926) declared that there would be national recognition and approval of these colleges.

Despite the acknowledgment given by the Government in this period to lifelong learning and learning for all ages, special attention was given to young adults with

regard to their training and work skills. The *Education Act 1944*, in recognition of the necessity to improve and increase the provision of vocational, craft and industrial education and training, required the LEAs to prepare schemes of further education provision for their areas to include adult learning. Therefore, the LEAs were expected to interpret further education with respect to young school leavers as being work-related and vocational, and within the schemes there should be references to adult learning related to enriching leisure time activity in the context of defining and contributing to the needs of society. The government's clear intention was to establish the distinction between vocational and non-vocational, and give greater priority, in terms of policies, programmes and resources, to work-related courses and education for employment for young people. In other words, it was envisaged that this vocational further education would not only afford opportunities for the development of technical skills but also provide a variety of courses including handicraft and domestic arts (Fieldhouse *et al* 2003, Clyne 2009). The idea was that further education offered courses to help adults gain new skills for work purposes, as well as courses that provided resources of satisfaction and self-development together with some education in the broad meaning of citizenship. Moreover, the *Albemarle Report* of 1960 was another report focused on youth work, which described them as "a generation without National Service to keep them off the streets" (p 13). The report urged the provision of different part-time and full-time training programmes aimed for young adults in free-standing youth centres and community centres (Roberts 2009).

Lifelong learning became connected with vocational training and the labour market when the Government focused on funding what is "good value for money", in other words courses to lead learners to work to help economic growth. Throughout the 1950s to 1960s, the pressure of economic events caused the Ministry of Education to exercise a restraining influence on education development (Styler 1962). Britain began to divest itself of its anachronistic imperial responsibility, which it could no longer afford (India gained its independence followed by the British colonies in Africa) (Fieldhouse *et al* 2003). Together with the slowing of the growth rate of the economies of Western countries (Field 2004) new priorities surfaced. The Government could not afford the funding for leisure and non-vocational courses and had to prioritise vocational courses that help adults to gain work skills. Therefore, the

expansion of short courses directed almost entirely to the promotion of liberal adult education had to stop (Styler 1962, Merricks 2002). In 1954, the *Ashby Report* urged that funding should be based upon the quality of organisation, teaching and learning, and the extent to which the responsible bodies (i.e. the Workers' Education Association which provide local facilities to adult education) paid regard to the learning needs of their areas and the provision made by other providers of adult learning opportunities. Money would be spent only on the learning that the Government thought appropriate. This transformation of adult education increased the level of interest in lifelong learning and raised the question of what type of learning opportunities should lifelong learning provide. The *Russell Report* (1973) argued that adult education should be accepted as being an education-oriented social service, often operating alongside and in conjunction with other services designed to respond to a multiplicity of needs: personal, communal, academic, vocational, work or family (Clyne 2009).

By the mid 1970s, the growth of the British and European economies begun to slow down, partly due to the 1973 oil crisis and the collapse of the Bretton Woods exchange rate system. In 1979, Thatcher was elected in the UK on the promise to address the problems of rising unemployment and inflation. The main goal for the new government was to achieve low inflation and increase employment (Floyd *et al* 1999), therefore new challenges for adult education were put forward. These challenges will be discussed in the next section.

### **Education Policy under the Conservative Party (1979-1997)**

The Conservative government endeavoured to curtail the provision of liberal adult education. In the 1980s the governments of Margaret Thatcher (and Ronald Reagan in the USA) adopted the ideology of the neo-liberal right, which believed in an individual's 'self-ownership', with inviolable rights over the disposition of his or her own life and reduction of public services (as discussed before). The profound political implications of such a view were to be seen throughout the 1980s in a vigorous emphasis on 'de-regulation' and privatisation, letting the operation of free markets shape the nature of citizens' engagements including learning, and cutting back on welfare provision. The only role for lifelong learning would be ideally to reinforce

individualism on the one hand and state minimalism on the other (Fryer 2008). During Thatcher's time in office, the Government became increasingly selective about the kind of adult education that it wished to promote or encourage through controlling the funds directed to it. The emphasis on vocationalism in that period led adult education to become more like a training service (Fieldhouse *et al* 2003). Most of the papers and reports issued tackled the problem of unemployment and work related training, such as the White Paper *A New Training Initiative* (1981) which envisaged a national training policy for those who left education at 16 (Tomlinson 2001) and *Towards an Adult Training Strategy* (1983) which focused attention on education and training needs of adults with disabilities, and language and basic skills needs. In 1984, following recommendations in the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education (ACACE) report, "*From Policies to Practice*" the Government established REPLAN programme to promote educational opportunities for unemployed. The main aim of the REPLAN programme was to improve, increase and extend educational opportunities for unemployed adults (Coates 1988). According to Fieldhouse *et al* (2003), vocational and work-related subjects increased in popularity over the 1980s while arts and physical activities declined dramatically. Within this period, a change in the terminology happened when arts and physical courses were called leisure activities instead of educational ones.

The Thatcher Government was more determined to use adult education for ideological purposes – to contribute to the creation of individualism. The *Education Reform Act* 1988 came up with new measures for lifelong learning, to which 'confession' was essential. For instance, the learner who wished to enter adult education would meet up with the education guidance or counsellor to discuss through dialogue what the learner wished to learn, agreed to a learning action plan and the accreditation of prior learning, and therefore signed the learning contracts. Thus, people were being encouraged to drive themselves ever harder and to accept responsibility for themselves and their contribution to organisation and social formation (Edwards 1997, Fejes and Nicoll 2008). The Act was criticised for these measures, which held the learner not the system responsible for the failure (Ball 1990).

The pressure of globalisation certainly contributed to the transformation of education. Indirect global pressures have led to the adoption of the neo-liberal ideas of the power

of market and the dominance of commercial discourses within public welfare systems worldwide. Thus, the undoubted strain on national economies have led to a reduction of budgets, in many cases, it has increased the pressures to adopt neo-liberal cost cutting measures and abandoned the liberal approach to lifelong learning (Priestley 2002). Furthermore, lifelong learning, on an individual level, is being galvanised predominately to equip individuals globally to compete against each other in the market of qualifications, employment, and other opportunities (Edwards 1997). In this period, especially during the 1990s, globalisation became a grand narrative of incorporation into a global capitalist economy, a form of economic fundamentalism, an absolutist closed discourse, which privileges 'the market'. Education policy in particular, has been directed towards constructing citizens whose subjectivities (that is their sense of identity, their understandings and orientations to the world) are in accord with these imperatives and who will therefore contribute to enhancing the nation's economy in the international capitalist market place (Fryer 2008). The UK Government was firmly committed to the belief that only greater investment in human capital would enable the country to compete in the new global economy (Tomlinson 2001). Therefore, further reduction in non-vocational training took place, for example, the 1992 *Further and Higher Education Act*, which aimed to provide 'parity of esteem' between academic and vocational qualifications and excluded certain forms of non-vocational adult education from funding.

In a response to the reduction of non-vocational learning, the voluntary sector formed autonomous groups such as University of the Third Age (U3A) to offer different educational activities. The level of learning within U3A is varied and not all of it could be equated with the university education, but in an age when public funding for adult education for the elderly was increasingly under threat, U3A was an important development (Merricks 2002a, Jarvis 2007, Fieldhouse *et al* 2003).

### **Education policy under Labour Party (1997- 2010)**

The Labour Government claimed to adopt a 'Third way', which is supposed to be the middle route between socialism and Thatcher's neo-liberalism. The emergence of the Third Way points to the possibilities of different framing of educational policy goals, and one that focuses more centrally on building social as well as economic capital

(Taylor and Henry 2000). The main objectives of lifelong learning policy, theory and practice in Britain under the influence of the 'Third Way' politics were the development of vocational skills to enhance economic productivity, and the fostering of social inclusion and civic cohesion. Direct links were made between inclusion and economic prosperity in the vision of a society where high skills, high rewards and access to education and training are open to everyone. Although the new approach, to some degree, represented a change from the rampant neo-liberalism of the 1980s and 1990s in Britain, the promotion of economic capital always had pride of place and there was a real danger that the social capital objectives of contemporary vocational education and training might be neglected in the obsession with economic competitiveness (Hyland 2007).

Maximising economic growth, productivity, global competitiveness and social justice were the main themes for the reports produced during the New Labour government such as the Kennedy report (1997) "*Learning Works: Widening Participation in Further Education*", the Fryer report (1998) "*Learning for the twenty-first century*" and the Leitch Review of Skills (2006) "*Prosperity for all in the global economy - world class skills*". The Kennedy report suggested widening participation and ensuring equal opportunities in learning for disabled people. The Fryer Report emphasised the need to create a learning society in the UK as means of stimulating demand for learning, where learners can obtain a small grant from the State in order to meet some of the costs of a learning programme and almost any subject could be studied. The Report stated that in order for that to be achieved, lifelong learning should constitute an overall educational strategy for the Government and the Government needed to start cooperating with other bodies such as employers, local communities and trade unions. Partnerships with such bodies could help to promote and deliver the lifelong learning culture (Clough 2007, Field 2004). Finally, the Leitch Review of Skills (2006) set targets so that the UK can raise its place in the competitive global labour market and become a world leader in skills by 2020, as benchmarked against the upper quartile of the OECD. For example by 2020, 95% of working age adults should have functional skills of literacy and numeracy and 90% of workforce adults should be qualified to minimum Level two which is equivalent to GCSE in Math and English .



Although most of the reports above agreed on the importance of creating a learning society and all emphasised that learning for work is inseparable from other purposes of learning, still the Government would give attention to only work skills development. In 1998, the Green Paper “*Learning Age*” in response to Fryer Report, outlined a vision for a national strategy for lifelong learning that stressed the need to develop a skilled workforce and placed a particular emphasis on learning in the workplace. The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) (2007a) stated that after the “*Learning Age*”, as a result of redirecting the attention and resources to develop the skilled force and work training, other kinds of adult learning had diminished. Furthermore, the language of the White Paper, “*Learning to Succeed*” (1999) followed by the *Learning and Skills Act* of 2000 were different from each other. The basis of *Learning to Succeed* was for the creation of a post-compulsory education and training system centred on the needs of learners, and built around a national strategic focus, with national, regional and local mechanisms for planning, funding and delivery. In contrast, the White Paper argues that learning has a wider contribution to make to society beyond securing our economic future; nevertheless, the subsequent recommendations for policy (in the *Learning and Skills Act* of 2000) are based on the instrumental use of education to secure future economic growth. The goal of creating a genuine culture of lifelong learning with a broad, liberal definition of learning disappears from sight in the details of policy, when the central, over-riding concern becomes meeting the skill needs of business in order to improve the economy (Coffield 2000). Certainly, the Labour Government realised that education was not cheap, and its duty was to make decisions about competing demands for scarce resources. The Government’s choice of favouring learning for employment skills was clear in the reports above and other similar reports such as “*Working Together - a Strategy for the Voluntary and Community Sector*” (2004), “*Successful Participation for All: Widening Adult Participation*” (2003), “*21st Century Skills - Realising our Potential*” (2003) and many more.

Central to the transformation of adult education during Labour Government was the process of substitution – which replaced traditional public sector actors with others (businesses, charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises) and which replaced traditional public sector values and sensibilities (service) with those of the private sector (entrepreneurship) (Ball 2010). The Conservative governments of the

1980s and 1990s had a different approach to the voluntary sector. Theirs was instrumental, in that it allowed the sector to fulfil a service agent role - often as a provider of last resort, but it was not seen as a major partner. New Labour saw the voluntary sector as the perfect vehicle for resolving what it believed to be the weaknesses and failings of the public sector. The Labour government saw volunteering as contributing in several different ways – adding to the delivery of public services, bringing communities together, assisting in combating social exclusion and in boosting employability for those out of work (Davies 2009). Although the voluntary sector helped to address the problems of social exclusion, as Haugh and Kitson (2007) claim, it should be stressed that this sector was not able to replace the role of the state. The voluntary sector can act as an agent of local delivery and, perhaps more importantly, in understanding and articulating local needs. However, to be effective, the voluntary sector must work in alliance with the state and not as a low-cost or subservient partner.

### **Adult Education under the coalition government (2010 - Now)**

With the new coalition Government, the approach to adult education is seen as part of the ‘Big Society’ agenda. Its major features, as outlined in the Conservative Green Paper *Control Shift: Returning Power to Local Communities* (2010), include a reduction in the role of central government and the size of the state; the abolition of regional planning; a new role for local councils; an emphasis on institutional autonomy; the encouragement of more private and voluntary sector providers within a competitive climate; freedom from bureaucracy; empowerment of citizens and communities as consumers and active participants in public services and the promotion of ‘local markets’ in, for example, the areas of health and education. However, it is still too early to evaluate the approach (Hodgson and Spours 2010).

## **2.5 Lifelong Learning –Looking Abroad**

The UK is not unique in its approach to lifelong learning and the knowledge economy. In fact, researchers such as Green *et al* (2006), Walther (2006) and Riddles

*et al* (2007) have identified three distinct regional models (approaches) for lifelong learning and the knowledge economy, they are:

### 1) The neo-liberal model

This model applies to the Anglo-Saxon countries (UK, Canada, Australia, USA and Ireland) where lifelong learning is seen as a driver of the economy and the means of combating social exclusion with high participation in lifelong learning, low labour market regulation, and high poverty risk. For instance, the UK and Canada have similar approaches where both seek to ensure that adults are able to access learning and contribute to the economic and socio-cultural advancement of the state. Global market-driven and neo-liberalism ideologies have gained influence over Canadian and British administrators and policy-makers who increasingly emphasise vocational training over education for active citizenship and social justice (Slade 2008). However, it is worth noting that the UK records a higher number of learners participating in adult education compared to Canada, as seen in table (2-1) below:

**Table (2-1) Per cent of population aged 16–65 participation in adult education and training during the year 1994 -1995, by document literacy level**

	Total participation rate	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5
Denmark	55.7	25.0	44.1	60.2	70.1
Finland	56.8	19.3	44.0	66.2	78.1
Norway	47.9	18.0	35.8	50.7	62.7
Sweden	52.5	29.3	40.1	54.5	61.6
Australia	38.8	13.6	29.3	46.5	62.4
Canada	37.7	16.6	29.4	39.6	60.4
Ireland	24.3	10.1	19.6	34.2	47.3
New Zealand	47.5	28.7	40.8	55.2	68.3
United Kingdom	43.9	21.8	33.6	53.9	70.7
United States	39.7	17.3	32.3	49.0	59.1
Belgium	21.2	4.4	15.1	25.6	37.2
Netherlands	37.4	16.8	27.0	40.6	53.4
<b>Average</b>	<b>42.0</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>48.0</b>	<b>60.9</b>

*Source: International Adult Literacy Survey, 1994–1998.*

In both countries, education is seen as the engine of economic competitiveness in the global market and has been reduced to training people for work and preparing them

for their roles in production, wealth creation and profit (Martin 2000). The similar patterns of distribution of training in both Canada and the UK, revealed by the OECD (2003), have wide inequalities and a large private sector focused on vocational purposes. As such, this adjustment toward the knowledge-based economy may leave less-skilled workers on the sidelines (Rubenson 2006), together with those in or close to retirement age. Additionally, this focus on employable skills considers that everyone possesses the same ability to learn and produce and ignores any possible barriers in participation. The neo-liberal model seems to be more efficient with respect to the employed, due to the fact that in Canada and in the UK, the highest training rates are for those who are employed, followed by the unemployed and lastly by those who are out of the labour market (OECD 2003, Livingstone 1999).

Kearns (2004) highlights that the similarity in the approach to lifelong learning in the UK and Canada is where learning and skills strategies are to achieve synergies through using coordinated local action to drive participation and attainment targets. However, Canada has also paid significant attention to innovation, where lifelong learning provision focuses on two kinds of skills; essential skills such literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT and secondly, employability skills such as management and team work skills and innovation skills such as creativity, continuous improvement skills, and implementation skills.

## **2) The Social Market Model**

This model applies to countries such as Germany and France. The model emphasises lifelong learning as a creator of human capital within a tightly regulated labour market and providing little attention to the disadvantaged. With regards to the social market model, the public sector tends to play a significant role either through regulation or through government spending, in the organisation and financing of national systems. In addition, the state plays a strong role in the delivery of high quality of public services, which have been a key feature of economic and social development (Hermann and Hofbauer 2007).

When comparing the UK figures to those of countries such as Germany and France, table (2-2) from the EU Barometer (which is a series of surveys held on behalf of the

European Commission) in 2003 reveals a higher percentage of adults participating in education in the UK than in France and Germany.

**Table (2 - 2) Adult participation in Adult Education and Training (AET)**

**EU Barometer, 2003**

	<b>Total AET</b>	<b>Job-related AET</b>	<b>Non job-related AET</b>
<b>Participation Rate</b>			
Austria	39.3	26.0	29.9
Belgium	31.5	22.4	25.4
Denmark	58.5	45.8	50.8
Finland	55.9	36.2	48.2
France	22.8	11.8	20.4
Germany	35.0	18.9	31.8
Greece	16.7	9.8	15.5
Iceland	69.1	56.4	64.2
Ireland	33.6	24.1	27.4
Italy	25.3	17.0	21.5
Luxembourg	38.1	25.0	31.9
Netherlands	41.0	26.8	33.7
Norway	46.0	36.7	39.8
Portugal	12.7	5.7	11.2
Spain	26.5	16.9	22.1
Sweden	53.5	38.5	45.4
UK	41.4	26.1	35.5

Source: EU Barometer 2003

The above table clearly shows relatively high levels of participation in the UK. Additional evidence is provided by the graph (2-1), which shows that the participation of the UK for the years 2000 and 2005 is much higher than that of France and Germany, and is one of highest among the European nations. Clearly, the neo-liberal model has encouraged the provision of requisite learning needs, which has resulted in individuals' participating in education. Moreover, it has created a learning society, which believes in the importance of updating knowledge, but for work purposes alone.

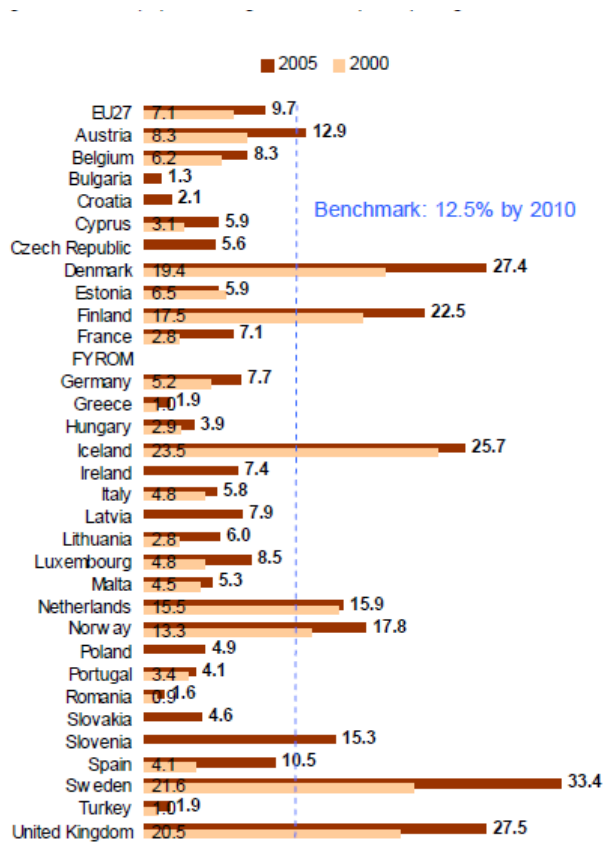
### **3) The Nordic Model**

This model is applies to countries such as Denmark and Sweden, with emphasis on human capital, social capital and personal development as well as a high investment in lifelong learning combined with regulated labour markets. According to Field (2008), this model combines economic competitiveness with social cohesion in a better manner than the other two models, by emphasising educational equality and resulting in a more equal distribution of life chances. The Nordic model is the

antithesis of the current policy pursued by the neo-liberal countries and by international organisations such as the OECD, which advocate the reduction of public financing for education and the enhancement of private investment in education and training (Schuetze and Casey 2006).

When comparing the UK performance against the Nordic model one can see that adult participation in the Nordic countries is higher than in the UK (table 2-2). Also, more recent statistics were published in the Policy Brief (2010) for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE Policy Brief on Ageing No. 5). These showed that the highest rate of participation was in Sweden where more than a third of 25-64 years-old adults are in adult education programs.

**Figure 2-1 Participation of adults in lifelong learning – Percentage of the adult population aged 25 -64 participating in education and training for the years 2000 and 2005:**



Data source: Eurostat (Structural Indicators webpage)

Field (2008) emphasises that while the overall participation in the UK is almost as high as in Sweden, the inequalities of participation in adult learning are considerably wider than in the Nordic nations. Indeed, Schuller and Watson (2009) confirm in their *“Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning”* that the “current (UK) system has inadequate capacity to redress inequality” (p52), especially the inequality as a result of disability, gender, race and sometimes as a result of interaction between the last two. For example, middle-class women tend to actively participate in basic skills courses as opposed to working class males. According to Schuller and Watson, these groups have not been clearly addressed with learning opportunities designed specifically for them. On the other hand, in Sweden, public funding is targeted and is highly focussed as it primarily addresses the disadvantaged groups such as the unemployed, the people with functional impediments and low levels of education, immigrants, and those who experience difficulties in receiving formal recognition of education (Rubenson and Desjardins 2009). At the same time, the Swedish social democratic welfare regime is characterised by universalism, as the policies not only target the most-needy, but also include the whole population by means of high economic transfers and social insurance. This welfare-state model presupposes full employment and a high degree of social solidarity. This is in contrast with the UK, where the liberal welfare-state regime is characterised by means-tested assistance, modest economic transfers and social insurance, individual responsibility and market solutions (Lundahl *et al* 2003). For instance, in Sweden, instead of expanding labour market training programmes with a strong vocational focus to deal with unemployment, the education and training offered to the unemployed aims at raising the general level of their education. Rubenson (2006) stated that the Swedish educational programmes offered to the unemployed are quite extensive and not of the minimalist nature found in many other countries such as the UK. Correspondingly, public policy in the Nordic countries has been particularly significant in producing high levels of overall participation, firstly by maintaining a strong public adult education system, and secondly by adopting special targeting measures to ensure that an open and broad system of provision is not simply colonised by the already well-educated (Field 2010, OECD 2000, Tuijnman 2003).

The Swedish adult education model provides a wide range of programmes funded and supported by the Government. These programmes are aimed at different goals, such

as job-related ones (to gain employment and new skills); non-job related ones (to gain knowledge) and leisure courses, opposing the idea that leisure courses should be offered by the private sector. The argument of the Swedish Government is that leisure and non-job related programmes have substantial social benefits. They bring together individuals who share ideas and knowledge, thereby encouraging a sense of community and strengthening the democratic process (OECD 2000). Clearly, the high participation in Sweden can be attributed to the wide range of programmes (job related, non-job related and leisure courses) offered which combine the approach of human and social capital towards education. This is in contrast to the neo-liberal model approach to education, which mainly focuses on human capital.

Certainly, the statistics for the Nordic countries with regard to adult participation in education suggest that it is possible to create societal conditions that stimulate participation in adult education and training at a high level. Moreover, they prove that public financing and public sector supply of adult education are generally important in improving the participation rates, especially for low-skilled and other 'at-risk' groups. However, as Tuijnman (2003) pointed out, the Nordic countries have high taxation rates and a large share of public sector employment, which need to be taken into consideration when comparing with other models such as neo-liberal economies with less taxation and low level of spending reflecting less generous welfare state regimes (Meager 2009).

### **Overall Comparison**

In conclusion, it is clear that in the Nordic model there is no significant divide between education and training in contrast to the neo-liberal model where the main focus is on learning for employment skills. Therefore, the process of adapting to a knowledge economy is more likely to happen, with substantial continuity, in the Nordic model than the neo-liberal model (Keans 2004). Furthermore, as Green (2006) explains with respect to Canada and the UK, the neo-liberal model tends to combine moderate labour productivity with high employment rates and high-income inequality, producing medium to high overall productivity on the economic dimension and moderate social spending and lower measures of social cohesion on the social dimension. On the other hand, the Nordic model in Sweden combines high labour productivity with high employment rates and relative wage equality, producing high



overall productivity on the economic dimension and high social spending and high social cohesion on the social dimension. Generally, lifelong learning systems in the Anglo-Saxon countries (the UK and Canada) tend to provide comparatively good opportunities for adult learning. The evidence, however, suggests that such opportunities are closely linked to basic level of education—thus, in effect, exacerbating the inequalities inherited from the school system. On the other hand, the Nordic countries' model produces high participation, high rates of employment, together with strong redistributive effects from welfare systems that reduces overall inequality and supports the social cohesion.

The Nordic model has proved that the provision of liberal education with government financial support will not only create a learning society but will also ensure equality and social cohesion. On the other hand, the neo-liberal model is good for providing training for employed or those recently have been employed. The table (2-3) below highlights the differences and similarities of the three countries, which has been found in this study:

**Table (2-3): Comparison between UK, Canada and Sweden lifelong learning model**

	<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>Canada</b>	<b>Sweden</b>
<b>Vision of Lifelong Learning</b>	Driver of the economy and means of combating social exclusion	Driver of the economy and means of combating social exclusion	Driver of human and social capital
<b>Public Finance</b>	Reduction of public financing for education	Reduction of public financing for education	Public finance for Education
<b>Type of Learning offered</b>	Vocational and basic skills. With some targeting to disadvantaged groups	Vocational / basic skills/ innovation skills. With some targeting to disadvantaged groups	Vocational/ non vocational/ basic skills and Leisure courses. Programmes highly target disadvantaged groups as well as whole population
<b>Relation between education and training</b>	Education provision for employment skills and that should be responsive to the diversity of the local needs	Education provision for basic skills, employment skills and innovation skills	No difference between education and training
<b>Lifelong learning model produce</b>	Moderate labour productivity with high employment rates and high income inequality	Moderate labour productivity with high employment rates and high income inequality	High labour productivity with high employment rates and relative wage equality,
<b>Social cohesion</b>	Low	Low	High
<b>Type of learners benefited</b>	First employed, second temporary unemployed and last people out of work	First employed, second temporary unemployed and last people out of work	All

## **2.6 Summary**

The OECD, World Bank and all constituent nations of the EU declare that they are attempting to become knowledge economies. The OECD and World Bank stress that education and training are essential to participation in the new knowledge economy. Therefore, education policies have become linked to knowledge economies, where education and training dominate policy agendas focused on upskilling new knowledge workers and productive knowledge is believed to be the basis of national competitive advantage within the international market place (Lingard and Ozga 2007).

In the UK, there is a broad agreement amongst recent governments (Thatcher Government (1979) to date) that the education and training of the adult population is important for maintaining economic prosperity in an increasingly globalised world. In comparing different approaches to lifelong learning, it was found that the neo-liberal approach has encouraged adults to learn, evident by the relatively high participation in education in the UK. The policy statements in the UK always adopted a holistic approach towards adult learning, stressing both economic and non-economic outcomes. However, in reality, policy implementation privileges the economic agenda, thus providing funding and support for vocationally oriented learning programmes that lead to employment skill, rather than for general adult learning (European Commission 2007). In contrast, in Sweden, lifelong learning is financially supported by the government, resulting in the development of economically valuable skills for adults, adults' progression of education, and greater equality in the distribution of education. Definitely, the last two have been missed in the UK, with the focus only on the development of economical skills.

Certainly, learning to gain knowledge is an important intellectual activity for adults and should be a major focus in adult education practice. However, nowadays, learning to learn is defined as the capacity adults possess to become self-consciously aware of their learning styles and to adjust their preferred ways of learning according to the situations in which they find themselves (Brookfield 2000). The contemporary purpose of lifelong learning moves away from democratic values and goes more towards economic values, thereby raising a question regarding the impact of this

approach on individuals i.e. whether this approach encourages adults to acquire education, as they now see a strong relationship between education and work, or, on the contrary, whether the 'non'-liberal approach has limited adults' choice to gain knowledge of subjects they are interested in. This will be investigated later in this thesis. In the next chapter, I will explore the different concepts of learning evident in the UK, and the Labour Government's (1997 – 2010) views towards each concept. Also, I will investigate the Government's approaches to different categories of adult learners such as women, pensioners, and the unemployed in order to understand more fully the Government's expectations about the purpose of adult education.

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Changing Concept of Adult Education: The Government's Goals for Adult Education Considered**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the Labour Government's aims and expectations of adult education as part of the research questions outlined in Chapter One. In this chapter, I will explore the idea of adult learning in general, by discussing the various different concepts of adult learning (Why adults learn?) and investigating the factors that have caused changes to the concept. Next, I will analyse the different concepts from the Labour Government's point of view during my working years of 2001 -2010. Lastly, I will examine the different groups of learners that the Government focused on and the actions taken in order to achieve its aims of adult education.

#### **3.2 The Idea of Adult Learning**

As discussed in Chapter Two, the Labour Government's intention was to build a knowledge-based economy and create a learning society, where adults update their knowledge and skills continuously to compete within the new globalised world. Adult learners have the power to decide what and when to learn and also to choose to continue learning, stop or drop out. Indeed, Knowles (1984) emphasised that adult learners are characterised by:

1. The need to know: adults need to know why they should learn.
2. The learners' self-concept: As people mature, they become less dependent and more self-directed; thus, they develop a need to be recognised and treated by others as a self-directed human being.
3. The role of the learners' experiences: Adults enter education with a lifetime of experience.

4. Readiness to learn: For an adult to learn, the learning experience must be aligned with their self-developmental plan.
5. Orientation to learning: Adults are motivated to learn new material if it is applicable to their real-life situations.
6. Motivation: Adults' motivation to learn comes from internal desires rather than external rewards.

Indeed, from personal experience, I would suggest that adults are self-directed in their choice of course and are more likely to enrol and stay on a course if they are motivated and can see a personal benefit coming from taking the course or when the course is related to personal experience. For example, learning might take place in order to learn new skills to get promotion at work or to enjoy a new hobby. On the other hand, if the course does not satisfy their needs, then the learners will lose their motivation and often drop out of the course. Nevertheless, adult education policies often ignore learners' motivation and needs, and focus instead education for employability and national economic growth. In this case, many other types of motivation to learn have been ignored. Education became increasingly defined and linked with politics and ignores the fact that learning for adults is a voluntary action instilled by self-discipline (Morgan-Klein and Osborne 2007).

Lifelong learning is a significant concept in the notion of education and the vision of a learning society (Hager 2004). In order to create a learning society and adults who continue to learn, educational provision should be taken into consideration: what encourages, motivates and keeps adults interested in learning, not only for a short period of their life but during their lifetime. Thus, the concept of learning as a lifelong process has been described by Evans (2006) as a rainbow concept, with many shades of meaning embedded in a spectrum of purposes. The idea of learning throughout life has a long history, yet lifelong learning has been re-invented and has assumed a new significance for educational policy-making at a global level. Historically, the concept of learning in the UK lends itself to several interpretations and meanings. It has been responding to social change and to learners' needs. Next, I will explore different versions of learning concepts (such as learning to gain knowledge, learning for leisure, and learning to gain skills for employment) in the UK through analysing each concept separately. Also, I will discuss learning within a community, as learning

happens sometimes while learners belong to certain groups at work or at school or while living in the same neighbourhood (which appears clearly in Adult and Community Education, my main interest in this study). Finally, I will explore the new concept of a ‘learning culture’ which has been seen by some as a necessity in order to respond to the effects of globalisation discussed in Chapter Two.

### **3.2.1 Learning for Learning’s Sake**

The concept of learning for learning’s sake can be defined as seeking knowledge for its own sake to satisfy the inquiring mind. The idea of liberal adult education started after the industrial revolution, which wrought many changes to British society, for example, the transformation from a predominantly rural to a largely urban society, the destruction of many pre-industrial crafts, and the gradual disappearance of semi-independent and self-employed artisan labourers. This new environment engendered new ideas, attitudes, and needs. Consequently, adult learning became necessary in order to cope with the new changes (Fieldhouse *et al* 2003). Jones and Symon (2001) and Fieldhouse *et al* (2003) point out that adult education in the UK started by promoting adult learning for the sake of obtaining new knowledge. For example, Sunday Schools became widespread in England and Wales to teach Bible reading and literacy for adults. Then, later on in the Victorian era, liberal adult education was developed further with the aim of espousing the benefit of learning to the individual, the community and society in general, enriching lives in a cultural sense. Indeed, adult education in the nineteenth century was aimed primarily at the working class for a variety of reasons such as to educate them to perform their roles in the society and their well-being; to produce a more efficient workforce; and to assist them with their struggles for social justice (Fieldhouse *et al* 2003). The need to continue to encourage learning throughout life is hard to deny in today’s world, with all the global changes and the fast pace of technological developments, as Barlow (2003) argues. He added that the value of the concept of liberal lifelong learning carries within it the motivation for everyone to keep learning throughout life.

The concept of ‘learning for learning’s sake’ emphasises the liberal approach to learning where the process is merely to gain knowledge. This approach has been supported by the voluntary sector. For example, the University of the Third Age has

welcomed elderly learners who would like to learn different subjects without the need to take examinations or pay high fees.

### **3.2.2 Learning for Leisure**

Although leisure courses do not usually provide direct economic benefits to individuals or add to their employments skills, they do help adults to relax and, more importantly, to become creative (Lawson 1979). Recently, many research studies have demonstrated the importance of leisure courses and stressed that such courses' outcomes have a number of important advantages. For example, Raisborough (1999, 2006) investigated a group of women who described themselves as tired, frustrated and bored housewives who participated in the Sea Cadet Corps (SCC) 'leisure training' accompanied by their children. The training involved children (aged 10-18) and adults (aged 19-60), who progressed through different levels of SCC qualifications in a wide range of activities. Those housewives who joined because of the interests of their children and for their own leisure learning, were to form a large recruitment pool for the SCC. With this, Raisborough proved that learning for leisure could eventually lead to employment or voluntary work. Indeed, throughout my work in adult education, I have seen learners who enrolled initially for leisure or to fill their time while being unemployed, on sick leave or retired, but who later found the new skills to be economically useful.

Due to the pressures of globalisation (discussed in Chapter Two), the majority of post-compulsory education offered and undertaken in the Western industrialised world is vocationally orientated and motivated (Jones and Symon 2001; O'Connell 1998) which has led to a reduction in the number of leisure orientated courses. Indeed, O'Connell (1998) indicates that the incidence of participation in job-related training is substantially higher than that in education and training undertaken for personal interest.

Certainly vocational and work-related learning can help learners to gain a job, however leisure and non-vocational courses have been proven to have a broader range of outcomes such as improving and sustaining health, bonding with family and integration with society and civic participation (Preston and Feinstein 2004; Schuller



*et al* 2004). For instance Preston and Feinstein (2004), claim that there are positive effects of adult learning, in terms of reducing both racism and cynicism. For women, work and leisure related adult education courses are effective in reducing racism whereas leisure courses help in reducing political cynicism. For men, leisure related adult education reduces authoritarianism, as “adult education has particular effects on attitudes whereas a more ‘open minded’ perspective may be taken by the learning adults” (p 5). Moreover, Payne (1991) implies that women might take a leisure course as a social activity or to bond with their children, for example joining a course as a means to meet new friends or learning new skills to help their own children with homework. By contrast, men are more likely to enrol in leisure courses to gain skills that might be used later for paid work or jobs around the house, for example the skills gained while learning woodwork could be used at work or decorating the family house.

In conclusion, I argue that learning skills that lead to employment is important to respond to globalisation and the requirement for international competitiveness. However, learning in order to achieve social integration and create active citizens is equally important, especially with the increase in insecurity as a result of global immigration and the rise of multicultural societies (Jansen *et al* 2006). Many research studies have highlighted the importance of leisure courses in this way. Nevertheless vocational courses and those related to employment were favoured by the Labour Government, while non-vocational courses were ignored.

### **3.2.3 Learning for Careers**

Since the early 1990s, virtually all advanced capitalist nations have adopted lifelong learning as a key policy. Much of the policy discourse has stressed the economic grounds for the adoption of policies that favour continuous lifelong learning by a wide spectrum of the population (Gallacher *et al* 2002).

In the last decade, many employees have changed their views regarding careers due to the effect of globalisation and the rapid development of new technologies. For example, changes occurred as a response to organisational changes, such as down-sizing, outsourcing, e-commerce, and mergers, along with other reasons, such as

demographic changes, rising educational levels and increasing numbers of individuals with dual careers. The prevalent attitude is that careers are ceasing to consist of long-term employment; instead, a series of jobs with different employers are more likely to be considered as having a career within a profession. As a result, learning came to focus on developing a portfolio of assets or transferable skills which ‘add value’ to an individual (Opengart and Short 2002; Jarvis 2007; Coffield 1999; Fuller 2003; Riddell *et al* 1997). Walkerdine (2003) stated that presently there is a major transformation in the nature of work, in the jobs available and their contractual basis. In such an economy, flexible and autonomous subjects are required, who can cope with constant changes in work, income, and lifestyle. In other words, employees should be able to negotiate, choose and succeed in an array of education and training and have multiple career trajectories. These have replaced the past jobs-for-life of the old economy and the individual’s authority to decide their own learning path.

A criticism has been raised regarding the attention paid to the economic effect of education, which implied that other effects (such as personal) are not as important (Coffield 1999). On the other hand, the stress on learning to gain employment skills only would raise a concern if people were to be treated first and foremost in relation to their potential contribution to the economy, and a market value is attached to each individual according to that contribution. Thus, people with learning difficulties may come to be seen as a poor investment, more expensive to train, less flexible and less employable. Here I argue it is important to emphasise learning as a response to globalisation and in order to compete within an international market. However education and learning, as I stressed in the last section, has also proved to help in promoting social cohesion and equality, which is about implanting tolerance and respect for diversity. This is also needed to respond to globalisation.

### **3.2.4 Learning within the Community**

The idea of lifelong learning was widely touted in the UK in the late 1960s and early 1970s and, during this period, it briefly won a degree of political favour, as seen by Field (2001). He explains that the concept of the provision of adult education in that decade was humanistic and radical. Although youth rebellion was the most widely reported feature of that period – along with drugs, music, and the hippy movement –

these were signs of a deeper questioning of established habits and thoughts, which perhaps influenced educational thinking. Like the radical thinking of the student movement, the work of post-independence intellectuals in the ‘Third World’ and terrestrial broadcasting allowed new ideas and styles to be shown and discussed in the controlled environment of a public radio or TV studio. Field continues that, taken together, these ideas provided a heady challenge to those who managed and taught in all sectors of education, and they were widely discussed in international gatherings. Field (2005) states that within these new circumstances, the talk about ‘education’ and ‘community’ and the impact of education on individuals within the community had increased widely and a new idea started to appear regarding the effect of people’s networks on their access to learning, and the relation between community, or just neighbourhood, and lifelong learning.

Wenger (2006) pointed out that we all belong to ‘communities of practice’, at home, at work, at school and in our hobbies – we, therefore, belong to several communities at any given time. He explained that for individuals, learning is an issue of engaging with and contributing to the practice of the said communities. Additionally, for communities, learning means refining practice and ensuring a new generation of members. Conner and Clawson (2004) agree that successful lifelong learning happens with and through other people and that what adults choose to learn depends on what they want to become, what they care about and which communities they would like to join. In this frame, learning is seen as a changing identity and not just an acquisition of knowledge.

In reality, such a concept focuses on groups of people who are taught in their own environments (work, local library, or community centre) where they feel comfortable, have a sense of belonging and where they influence each other. In such communities, the learners’ choice of what to learn is influenced by the group, and sometimes the individual’s wishes are ignored by the power of the group’s wishes. Allan and Lewis (2006) admitted that different settings, e.g. home or work place, influence the ways in which individuals construct acceptable or appropriate ways of being, although, in their case, the study found that learning within communities helps learners by raising their confidence and leading them to employability.

### **3.2.5 The Learning Culture**

White (1994) explains that human beings are intrinsically motivated to learn, as the urge to discover, to learn and to create anew is an innate part of every living being. He argues that in creating a learning culture, human creativity will be enhanced and human beings will be able to grow and thrive. While White thinks that the culture of learning exists within human being, Fullick (1998) states that learning is becoming a necessity within the current speed of change in our society. This change is being led by powerful, distant multi-national companies who, through technology, product innovation and the creation (and manipulation) of markets, are changing the shapes of people's lives. This, in itself, has led to a change in the nature of learning. Learning has now become more about understanding and adapting to the aforementioned changes (Butts 1997). As a result, a "learning culture" is the necessary foundation for growth and change – be it with respect to individuals or societies.

Fullick (1998) thinks in order to create a learning culture, we need:

- Individuals to take responsibility, at any stage of their life, for identifying their learning and development needs, and be engaged in activities to meet these needs.
- Activities around learning should be at the heart of all activities promoted to achieve social change and democratic renewal.
- A critical mass of employing organisations, whether in the private or public sector, to actively promote learning and development activities for their employees, in order that these organisations become more active economically.
- Use of the individual's experiences in learning; Fullick stressed that "there is a visible and measurable change in the way individuals and groups behave - whether at work, in their personal lives, in their leisure time, or in social and political settings - so that reflection on experience, and what is learnt from that experience, is embedded in social interactions of all kinds" (p 2).

Aldridge and Tuckett (2004) emphasised that in the UK, nine out of ten people believe that learning makes a positive difference to their work opportunities, to quality of life and to their children's prospects. However, Aldridge and Tuckett also said that if we are to create a learning society and a learning culture for all, then there is a need for sustained policies to stimulate demand. Creating a learning culture was at the top of the Labour Government's agenda, according to a report by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) (2005c) concerning the participation of adults in learning. Nevertheless, the participation rate in any form of learning has declined; for the years 1996 – 2004, one in five adults participated in learning, but since 2004, the level of participation has been continually falling. According to official figures released in 2009, the number of people undergoing adult education courses had fallen by a quarter since 2004 – as discussed in Chapter One.

NIACE's review on further education in Wales (NIACE 2007b) emphasised the concept of a "culture of learning", which encompasses the needs of those who were excluded from the labour market as well as those in work or engaged in learning or volunteering. Such a culture could be a powerful tool for the many significant challenges in the social, environmental and cultural spheres as well as in the area of the economy. Developing a culture of learning, through adult education, can offer citizens the knowledge and skills to help them understand the changing world around them, inform them about exercising their democratic choices and enable them to become wise consumers. This, in turn, will benefit the economy, society and the environment.

### **3.3 The Government and the Concept of Education**

It has long been recognised that education can be thought of as either a concept or a policy (Griffin 1999; Trowler 2003). It is inevitable that there is always a degree of distance between policy rhetoric and policy achievement. Indeed, between conception and delivery lies a series of mediating institutions and actors, which help widen the gap. Lifelong learning is no exception to this general rule (Field 2000).

Below, I will discuss the Labour Government's view on: learning culture, learning for employment (the Government's main focus), and learning for leisure (largely ignored within Government policy). I will also explore Government's views on learning within communities using the concept of 'glocalisation' as coined by Robertson (1994), which will be explained later in this chapter. Moreover, I will analyse the Government's approach to different categories of adult learners such as women, pensioners, the unemployed and unwaged, learners with special needs and asylum seekers and refugees. As this study is related to my experience in working in adult education from 2001 to the present where most policies have been produced under the Labour Government (1997 -2010), the focus is on the policies presented in that period.

### **3.3.1 The Government, Education and the Economy**

In the last three decades, many researchers have discussed the relationship between education and the economy. While politicians insist there is a relationship between economic growth and education, researchers seem to have their doubts (Wolf 2002).

The New Labour Government (elected in 1997) stressed the importance of lifelong learning for economic prosperity as well as social development. The Green Paper: *The Learning Age: A renaissance for a New Britain* was presented to Parliament on February 1998 by David Blunkett, then Secretary of State of Education and Employment. He declared:

“As well as securing our economic future, learning has a wider contribution. It helps make ours a civilised society, develops the spiritual side of our lives and promotes active citizenship. Learning enables people to play a full part in their community. It strengthens the family, the neighbourhood and consequently the nation.” (p.1)

Wolf (2002) emphasises that it is too naïve to believe that there is a direct relationship between the amount of education in society and the future growth rate of the economy. Wolf explains that across the world's developing economies, there exists a negative relationship between education levels and economic growth. Furthermore,

she explains that when looking closely at some of these economies, it becomes clear that education in itself does not guarantee economic success. For example, Egypt is a country whose government made a commitment to prioritise graduates when applying for jobs in the public sector. However, very soon, it was found to have an under-employed army of civil servants, and a huge queue of students seeking comparable vacancies for themselves. Wolf agrees that education is a big player in the economy and labour market of any country as employees use qualifications to help them secure employment, while employers assume that graduates and qualified people are brighter and therefore, keep the better-paid jobs for them. Indeed, in the review of the state of adult learning in colleges and further education in England (2005), NIACE surveyed 100 senior managers in FE, by asking: “What is further education for?” Only 9 per cent of the sample surveyed answered ‘to support the economy’ while 80 per cent agreed that further education supports the economic aspiration of individuals and does not directly help towards economic growth.

Field (2001) and Hager (2004) both agreed that the original concept of lifelong learning was humanistic and even radical, but since 1990 it has become increasingly econometric and conservative. Field (2004) saw this change as a response to globalising trends, which meant that industrial and financial capacities are highly mobile, removing many of the established advantages of Western economies, whose growth rates have been eclipsed since the 1950s by the remarkably dynamic “tiger economies” of the Pacific Rim. The creation and application of knowledge plays a considerably greater role in economic activity in the post-industrial economies, and is now widely seen in the West as the only possible sustainable source of competitive advantage.

In spite of all the emphasis on education as an instrument for economic prosperity, Coffield (2000) highlights the four historic weaknesses in the British economy: the lack of a culture of innovation and enterprise; the under-investment in Research & Development (R&D) and in capital equipment; the existence of vested interests, poor management and unnecessary market barriers resulting in sluggish competitiveness; and a comparatively weak skill base. The Lambert Review of Business - University Collaboration, published in 2003, agreed with Coffield regarding the weakness of the innovation and R&D in the UK. In 2004, a framework “*Science & Innovation*

*Investment Framework 2004–2014*” (Department of Education and Skills 2004) was set up by the Government to target this issue. The latest survey to test the level of UK innovation was funded by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and highlighted the improvement of innovation in the UK. It stated that 57 per cent of UK enterprises were ‘innovation active’ over the 2002-2004 periods, and 64 percent over the period 2004 -2006 (DTI 2006). ‘Innovation active’ is defined as a business that has engaged in either introduction of a new or significantly improved product (goods or service) or process for making or supplying them; or their innovation projects not yet complete or abandoned; or their expenditure in areas such as internal research and development, training, acquisition of external knowledge or machinery and equipment is linked to innovation activities. Here, I agree with NIACE when it argues that lifelong learning can be a part of the innovation strategy, and that it would foster a culture, which is essentially geared to seek new knowledge and understanding, that could possibly lead to innovation (NIACE 2008).

It is clear that most governments, including that of the UK, would like to measure their own success by their economic growth every year. Therefore, they all consider that education and training are fundamental to achieving that goal.

### **3.3.2 The Government and Learning for Leisure**

Stebbins (2007) defines leisure as the un-coerced activities engaged in during free time which people want to do, to either satisfy a need or fulfil a desire (or both). Stebbins thinks that learning for leisure happens when adults join education centres in order to ‘enjoy’ or ‘have fun’ in the learning experience. The main achievement of this learning is self-gratification, wherein participants find a combination of superficial enjoyment and deep self-fulfilment.

Raisborough (1999) pointed out that learning for leisure is rather under-emphasised in terms of Government policy and the resources allocated to it. Jones and Symon (2001) suggested that the Labour Government was perhaps missing an opportunity to invoke several social benefits rather than economically driven outcomes. Indeed, the authors suggested that learning for leisure should be promoted in the UK as a policy. Firstly,



it bridges that gap between the importance of work and the triviality of leisure, as leisure activities such as art or sports activities are “liberating, deeply satisfying, and even exciting, because it serves to complete us in our being by uniting the rational, physical, and co-native aspects of our nature” (Fox 1981: 11). Secondly, the nature of learning for leisure provides a structured approach to learning, and a category of experience, which allows development of social rather than economic capital.

In fact, lifelong learning could be used as a key means for addressing three important issues: ageing, community and economic changes. Especially in the case of an ageing society, learning for leisure could be cast as an investment that can help to reduce budgetary pressure on pensions and medical care and contribute to empowerment, in what has been termed “active ageing” (Rausch 2003). Moreover, gaining qualifications as a result of joining leisure courses might have some value in the labour market, as it indicates that individuals have further skills, which might prove to be useful (Payne 1991).

### **3.3.3 The Government and the Culture of Learning**

Western Europe, generally, is facing both threats and opportunities bound up in the process of globalisation. If these countries are to stand up to Japan and the USA, the EU’s member states have to increase the resources they devote to education and training. This would help to develop a sense of European citizenship and foster social inclusion (Field 2000). Moreover, Conner and Clawson (2004) explained that the idea of a learning culture is where citizens are engaged as consumers, as co-workers and in political life. This would make learning culture a strategic competence for meeting the economic, cultural, and cognitive implications of the increased speed of globalisation. Therefore, adult education can play an important role in extending opportunities for democratic participation, by supporting the development of skills and behaviour that enable people to participate effectively in political contexts (Holford 2006).

From this perspective, continuous education has now become more important for individuals and institutions to enable them to cope with the changing world, as well as for governments to compete in the international market and continue the economic growth for their countries. Duman (1999) says that the idea of the culture of learning

is quite a fashionable term amongst politicians where it is believed that a learning society is a futuristic and more democratic society that engages its citizens in the process of learning. For instance, John McFall, the then Minister of Education and Training in Northern Ireland stated in the *“A New Learning Culture For All”* report (McFall 1999) that the international competitiveness of the United Kingdom should be improved by increasing general skills levels and meeting the skill needs of the future. The report recommended the need to create a learning culture where people regard acquiring new skills or updating their existing ones as a part of everyday life. To achieve this, the basic skills of people should be raised to equal those in other countries, individuals should be given the opportunities for personal development and communities should be helped to respond to social and economic changes.

Coffield (2000) argued that certainly part of the vision of creating a lifelong learning culture is creating a liberal base of learning, but in reality, in the UK this goal disappears from sight in the details of policy, when the central overriding concern becomes meeting the skill needs of businesses, in order to improve the economy. This was so especially within the Labour Government’s (1997 -2010) approach of favouring vocational courses, which lead to nationally recognised qualifications, over non-vocational courses. Indeed, to achieve a learning culture then the role of the Government should be in creating conditions in which individuals are most likely to maximise their own learning, as well as when this culture becomes a shared goal between employers, individuals and organisations. In other words, a learning culture will be achieved when learning becomes an everyday experience in the social relations of family, community and work (Griffin 2000).

As explained previously in Chapter Two, it is part of the neo-liberal ideology that learning has become an individual responsibility and not part of the public service supported by the government. The similar line of thinking evident in two Governments (Conservative (1979 -1997) and Labour (1997 – 2010)) works to create a learning culture, however in reality, this culture is limited to the job market’s needs. Nevertheless, this approach has proved to be popular for a period of time, when the UK records of adults participating in education were amongst Europe’s highest as mentioned in Chapter Two. However, with the continuous yearly reduction of funding to adult education, which led to changing fees for most courses offered, the high

participation in adult education is bound to decline (Willetts 2009). From my experience, adults will pay for courses only when they think that they are good value for money and when they guarantee them a place in the job market; otherwise learning will not take place and a learning culture will not be fostered.

### **3.3.4 The Government and Glocalisation**

Although globalisation is often associated with the idea of the world becoming a village, it has also drawn attention towards focusing on the local layer, which has been identified as the stronghold of identity and safety, resisting uniformity and standardisation and protecting individuals and communities from exposure to global risk (Dondi 2009). The idea of 'glocalisation' represents the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near-global basis, to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets (Robertson 1994). Hence, the global and the local affect each other in a way that the forces of globalisation are creating effects in the local, with the local modifying some of these effects (Jarvis 2003a).

Glocalisation is apparent in education through the development of information and communication technologies, which has far-reaching effects on individuals, organisations and nation states (Moore 1998). A new information society has developed, which is characterised firstly by information being used as an economic resource, where organisations make greater use of information to increase their efficiency and to stimulate innovation. Secondly, it is identified by the greater use of information among the general public, as people use information more intensively in their activities as consumers. Thirdly, it is identified by the development of an information sector within the economy to satisfy the general demand for information facilities and services (Karvalics 2007). This information society has assisted in developing the ideas of the learning region and the learning city, in which local information networks have been established and formed as new types of community education (Jarvis 2007). The Labour Government saw the network of learning cities as an innovative development, which used learning to promote social cohesion and economic development, according to David Blunkett (1998), the then Secretary of State for Education and Employment. The mission of this movement was to create a learning culture within a group by addressing its members' needs; for example, liberal

adult education offered by University of the Third Age to learners of retirement age to join programmes of activities and learning, where learning can flourish without the pressure of studying work-based subjects (Jarvis 2001).

There are different ways to address the locality of lifelong learning, through different establishments and services, such as library services, which provide educational opportunities to their customers. Furthermore, education colleges and adult and community education provision by the local authority of the area, can address the learning needs of the local community. For example, adult and community education provides a range of programmes, vocational and non-vocational, with some of these courses being free and others with charges. Moreover, this type of educational provision places great emphasis on the partnership between Adult and Community Services and other organisations and groups, such as Parenting, Extended Schools Service and Family Support Service, which sit within Children's Services in the local authority (Schuller and Watson 2009a). These different groups address different communities' needs and promote adult learning, whether it is training for employment or employability, or for more recreational purposes. For instance, at my workplace, the partnership with Sure Start has focused on providing learning opportunities with childcare in areas of particular deprivation for young and single parents who have children between 0 - 5 years of age. Indeed, I have witnessed many successful stories of young mothers, who found their way to employment after joining a string of fully funded courses. Perhaps unsurprisingly, at the beginning, female learners were engaged with mainly childcare courses and aimed to gain employment in this field. However later, they started to explore other learning options (such as hairdressing skills, office working skills or training to work as a teacher assistant in schools).

This partnership between different local groups and the local adult education providers represent promoting lifelong learning locally. This type of relationship with local people, according to Schuller and Watson (2009a), aims to:

- Ensure a public commitment to learning, which goes hand in hand with a focus on making learning explicit;

- Encourage local people to recognise their learning and develop a sense of themselves as ‘learners’, linked to the importance of the place in shaping one’s sense of belonging;
- Focus on learning pathways with progression which is seen as a crucial element of the lifelong learning concept – with encouragement and mentor support for people to manage their own learning;
- Ensure that providers’ aims would include something about creating lifelong learners, whose interest in and motivation to learn would be sustained beyond a single institution, becoming intrinsic to each individual.

In providing the above, not only will local needs be met, but it will also ensure social inclusion, by educating citizens who are able to become economically active.

However, in reality, these groups are suffering from continuous funding-cuts which leave them smaller every year and unable to improve. Going back to my work example, Sure Start is not able to provide the same variety of courses with childcare as before, due to reductions in funding. Now, the range of courses offered has, consequently, been reduced with few shorter courses every now and then, whenever the budget allows, with limited benefit, as there is no clear progression pathway. Moore (2007) and Schuller and Watson (2009a) argue that for a lifelong learning vision, a different approach must be developed, one that does not rely wholly on market forces, but which recognises the need for a clear vision and for a radically different approach to the achievement of the goals. Indeed, in order to achieve lifelong learning, adult education provision should be sufficiently funded and supported by central government, which works alongside the local governments to address the different needs of local communities.

### **3.4 The Government’s Focus on Individual Groups**

For decades now, the British Government has become increasingly obsessed with education. Prime ministers from James Callaghan to David Cameron have made education the subject of some of their most high profile speeches. Today, according to Wolf (2002), politicians’ faith in education is fuelled by a set of clichés about the

nature of the twenty first century world: globalisation, competitiveness and ever-faster rates of technical change. In the next section, I will discuss the Labour Government's approach to different learner groups such as: the unemployed, the unwaged, the elderly, women, and those with disabilities. The first three groups have been identified as key beneficiaries of adult education (Jones and Symons 2001). Other groups include refugees and asylum seekers, who have fled from their countries for economic or political reasons, who may or may not have qualifications. In addition, another group has taken the Government's attention; namely, prisoners and offenders. In the following section, I will investigate the effect of the Labour Government policies' on each group.

### **3.4.1 The Unemployed and Unwaged**

The Leitch Review of Skills report (2006) pointed out that of the 1.7 million people who were unemployed in 2006, almost one half (750,000) had less than a Level 2 qualification (Level 2 equates to five good GCSEs or their vocational equivalents) - and around 300,000 had no qualifications at all. Some of the report's recommendations about how to serve the unemployed or unwaged learners were that:

- Employers and individuals should help foot the bill if the UK is to succeed in increasing adult skills at all levels by 2020.
- Individual learners should be given greater control through virtual funding, "Individual Learner Accounts" to be used to accredited providers and aimed at giving individuals greater purchasing power.
- In addition to the acquisition of skills, accreditation would increase employability prospects for career progression and earnings. Therefore, only vocational skill courses were to receive public money and these, only if they have been approved by the business-led Sector Skills Council.
- A new universal adult career service in England was to be integrated with Jobcentres Plus. (Jobcentre Plus is an executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions. It is responsible for assisting people of working age to find jobs through its network of Jobcentre Plus offices. It is also responsible for administering some benefits for people of working age and for the administration of National Insurance numbers).

The proposals offered a great opportunity for the registered unemployed by encouraging them to take vocational courses, which could be paid for by available funding and they could later use the careers service to find suitable jobs. The report supported the idea of learning culture and that there should be a campaign to raise career aspirations and awareness of the benefits of learning.

However, my concern is that the report was pressurising employers to take part in employees' training and development. This would be right for individuals whose career aspirations are aligned totally with the developmental route identified by their employers; in this case, the recommendations would be helpful, but for those who have bigger or broader ambitions, things may be harder (Thomson 2006). Additionally, I find myself disagreeing with the report in supporting funding for only vocational courses, leaving non-vocational courses to be funded by a mix of individual and state (local authority) support, which has resulted in dramatic cuts in recent years for the latter type of courses. The report assumes that individuals participate in education for instrumental reasons and for acquiring marketable skills. In reality, an individual's motivation for engaging in education may be complex and driven by the desire to enhance a sense of self-worth and to engage with the excitement of learning (Riddell *et al* 1997). In my experience, unemployed learners, more than anyone else, need courses that will raise their confidence and encourage them to take that initial step on the road towards employment. Moreover, in the case of a person who has suffered a negative experience in education or has a learning difficulty or disability, or is unemployed, non-vocational courses might be the first step to take before thinking of vocational courses or applying for a job (Sutcliffe and Macadam 1996).

The Leitch Report was not the only document to consider the problem of unemployment. The Labour Government issued different White and Green Papers that have given this problem great attention over the years. The main White Papers focusing on the unemployed are the following:

- Further Education Reform: *Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances* (Department of Education and Skills 2006): The report introduced the entitlement to a first Level 3 qualification free of charge to learners aged 19-

25; recognition of the continuing public support for learning for personal fulfilment, civic participation and community development value with involving the local authorities, colleges and voluntary organisations to contribute in ways that meet local needs, and plans to support women with low levels of skills

- *Skills: Getting on in Business, Getting on at Work* (Ref CM 6483) [2005]: Developed the strategy for ensuring that employers have the right skills available to them by prioritising employers' needs in the design and delivery of training, through the Train to Gain programme and additional employer-led programmes. Moreover, developed the provision of information, advice and guidance to learners, which can help individuals to pursue their learning options in order to gain the skills they require for employment or personal fulfilment.

The Green Papers which mainly highlighted unemployment can be summarised as follows:

- *Raising Expectations: Staying in Education and Training Post-16* (Ref: CM 7065) [2007]: The Green Paper proposed that from 2013, all young people should remain in education or training until their 18th birthday. It said that introducing compulsion could be the way to get beyond the stretching targets for increasing post-16 participation. The document set out for consultation the Government's proposals for implementing such a requirement.
- *Offender Learning: Reducing Re-Offending through Skills & Employment* (Ref: CM 6702) [2005]: This paper proposed: engaging employers through promoting the employment of offenders in areas of recruitment difficulties and skills shortages; building on the new offender learning and skills service including through the campus model; reinforcing the emphasis on skills and jobs in prisons and probation.

The above papers describe opportunities for people to enhance their life chances and get new jobs. Indeed, they demonstrate the Labour Government's awareness of the growing importance of adult learning as a driver of both economic prosperity and of social justice. The Government's ideas for encouraging employers to invest in training



would have provided extended opportunities for more adults in work to access skills-related learning (NIACE 2006). However, many of these proposals were for the benefit of young adults who are favoured in the job market, and ignored other adult groups. Indeed, in order to achieve the economic prosperity that the Government wished for, it should have considered increasing the skills of women from minority ethnic communities, older people delaying full retirement and provide training for people on social benefits (NIACE 2005b, Thomson 2005).

### **3.4.2 Older Learners**

The Labour Government has realised that over the next 50 years, the UK will experience an unprecedented change in the fabric of society. As life expectancy increases and the birth rate remains low, the proportion of the population aged over 65 will increase dramatically. The New Labour Government's strategy for the ageing society was printed in March 2005 by the Department for Work and Pensions titled: '*Opportunity Age: Meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21st century*'. The strategy aimed at ending the perception of older people as dependent; ensuring that a longer life is healthy and fulfilling; and that older people are full participants of the society.

The report recognised that much work has to be done in altering attitudes and the need to encourage older people to retain their independence and maintain control of their lives. One of the recommendations was that older people should have access to local opportunities, such as learning, leisure and volunteering. In ensuring this, the Government recognised the value of learning and the importance of the state education system in helping to deliver that aspiration. Access to good quality education can enhance the quality of life and equip older people to make sense of their life's experiences to date. Moreover, it helps them to plan for the future and assess what their skills requirements might be – whether for employability, engaging in community activities, relating to grandchildren and other generations, or simply meeting people and being stimulated (NIACE 2005a).

Harrop (2006) argued that many older people are 'under-used' today, either because they are out of work against their wishes, or because they are employed in work beneath their skills or ambitions. Training can help to extend working life by giving

older people the skills to move back into work, and by helping people retain their jobs or move on to new challenges. Today's older workers are less qualified than younger adults and this creates a disadvantage for them in the labour market, as Harrop explains:

- 39 per cent of people aged 55 to State Pension Age (SPA) are without a Level 2 qualification, compared to 23 per cent of 25 - 29 year olds.
- Only 61 per cent of people aged 50 to SPA without Level 2 qualifications are in work, compared to 77 per cent of those with Level 2.

The Labour Government focus on young adults without Level 2 qualifications, had caused a decrease in the numbers of older people in education. At the same time, the number of people aged 50 to SPA without Level 2 qualifications stayed steady. Harrop suggested that the solution was for the Government to adopt 'age proof' policies and targets to ensure that they deliver to everyone, for instance, by extending the entitlements to Level 3 and Foundation Learning to all rather than targeting only young adults. Indeed, The Leitch Review of Skills (2006) suggested that by 2020 there would be an increased demand in the labour market for skills and the number of younger adults will probably not be enough to respond to this demand. Therefore, this might necessitate a change in the attitudes of employers and individuals towards employing and training older adults.

It is important to note that older learners, mostly, are engaged in learning either to both keep their brains active and stimulate their intellect, or to help them in understanding and coping with constant change in society (Withnall and Thompson 2002). Thus, the emphasis on vocational training and employment skills might leave this group of learners with few learning options. Hence, many older adults may turn away from public services towards the private sector or voluntary organisations to meet their different needs (Field 2009). In 2009 the White Paper, *The Learning Revolution* (Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills 2009), proposed informal learning for older people and identified them as a priority group for improving access to information about informal learning opportunities. The paper described informal learning as primarily part-time, non-vocational learning, where the

purpose is not necessarily to gain a qualification. However, the paper stated that this type of learning can be a good way of developing work-related skills and emphasises the benefits of such learning for older people, by using the learnt skills in museums, libraries and archives.

In conclusion, the Labour Government rhetoric was always about the importance of developing a learning culture that encourages personal independence, creativity and innovation for all adults, irrespective of their age. However, the concept of lifelong learning has not been coherently developed when it comes to retired people: their requirements tend to be generally excluded from the debate.

### **3.4.3 Women Learners**

Although men's overall rates of participation in education and training have not increased hugely, their more limited – in comparison with women's – patterns of engagement in learning convey that impression, as more men than women tend to favour work related programmes. Women, on the other hand, are represented across a much wider spectrum of educational opportunity. They have substantially increased their participation rates in further and higher education and are significantly more likely than men to enrol in adult and community courses (McGivney 2004). However, the responsibility of caring for children and other dependent family members continues to be borne mainly by women, and consequently, they have frequent spells out of paid employment. Lifelong learning is often regarded as playing a key role in maintaining and enhancing the employability of women returning to work. It is argued that lifelong learning can prevent skills depreciation for women who have had long breaks from paid employment and for those who missed out on initial education or may require lifelong learning in order to obtain essential basic skills. Therefore, Government policy in Britain has focused on encouraging women, and especially single mothers, back into employment (Jenkins 2004).

In reality, women continue to have lower average earnings than men and are more likely to be among the lowest paid. Moreover, women from lower socio-economic backgrounds enter the labour market at a lower rate than women from higher socio-economic groups (Purcell 2002). In a society where the skills of working-class people

are constantly devalued and where they continually have to find a way to re-invent themselves (Jackson 2003), working-class women in particular, are likely to find that skills developed at home or at the workplace are never quite good enough for re-employment. The discourse of multi-skilling and flexibility can forever leave working-class women in deficit. For example, women students are more likely to experience significant problems with course organisation, particularly in relation to the lack of adequate provision for childcare and inflexible timetables. Various Government-sponsored training initiatives for young people and adults over the past 30 years have included exhortations to employers and training providers to embrace equal opportunities and flexibility. Nonetheless, there has been an absence of any corresponding attempt to tackle the underlying and long-standing structural inequalities in the UK's labour market, without which training policies on their own can do little to advance social justice (Beck *et al* 2006; Rake 2001).

Furthermore, NIACE in 2003 was concerned with the Labour Government's '*21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: Realising our Potential*' report (2003). NIACE argued that little thought had been given to family policy in response to increasing female employability and training provision for younger women and women returners (to work). This matter seems to have been ignored again in the 2006 White Paper on further education reform, when the Government announced the introduction of a new entitlement for 19-25 year-olds for free training to help them achieve their first full level 3 qualifications. It escaped the Government's thinking, however, that most women returners, who need additional training to help them return to work after a long break, are over 25 years of age. Therefore, it seems unlikely that they had enjoyed any of the benefits outlined in the Government's White Paper.

The question of whether there should be provision for special programmes for women and if so, what type of programmes, is a central concern for politicians and educators. Indeed, there are courses offered as part of mainstream adult and community education provision during the day - not restricted to women but obviously are aimed at women, such as dress-making, hairdressing and beauty, and childcare (Bird 1997). The task facing any government and policy makers is that of providing effective educational programmes, which will challenge traditional assumptions about

women's role in society. This can be achieved by taking due account of all the factors which are likely to contribute to the direction women take (such as childcare while studying and/or working) (Highet 1986).

#### **3.4.4 Students with Special Needs**

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) is a government body responsible for raising the standards of education and training for young people and adults in England, by inspecting the quality of learning provision. In their report of 2006, the ALI defined learners with disabilities as having a range of impairments, including mental ill-health, sensory impairment, physical difficulties, learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, medical conditions such as epilepsy, communication disorders, including those that fall in the spectrum of autism, profound and multiple learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties. For such people, life experiences can be limited in terms of opportunities for education, employment, leisure and other activities.

As discussed before in this study, lifelong learning, narrowly understood in economic terms as linked with participation in employment and the knowledge economy, might have little potential to include people with profound intellectual impairment. Indeed, the British government has paid attention to this group, as continuing education for adults with special needs was recommended in the *Warnock report* - Department of Education and Science in 1978 - which pointed out that resources spent on education would, in the long-term, reduce their dependence on other providers, such as health and social services (Sutcliffe 1991). More recently, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) - a publicly-funded organisation responsible for building a dynamic and successful FE system for England to give young people, adults and employers the high quality learning and skills which they need for economic and social success – in their 2006 report emphasised that:

“Improving the learning experience for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who learn alongside their peers without learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the LSC aspires to

parity of experience, and the sector must therefore deliver parity of experience wherever learners are located” (page 29).

However, according to ALI’s report “*Greater Expectations: Provision for Learners with Disabilities*” (2006), there is inadequate training and support for people with disabilities, which prevents them from achieving their potential in the workplace. The report said that, overall, the training provision for adult learners with disabilities is costly, fragmented, lacks expertise and does not provide value for money. Indeed, these learners need to learn: coping with work, preparing to work, and using free time (Harrison 1996) together with learning the work skills and that might require expertise which could be costly.

Moreover, it is a fact that people with disabilities are under-represented in the work force (Arksey 2003), and in the context of a worsening employment climate, disabled students are particularly vulnerable, with little immediate prospect of employment (Harrison 1996). The Labour Government recognised this problem and addressed the issue in a few of its reports, such as the programme ‘*Supported Employment*’ launched in 2007 to support disabled people at work and motivate employers to recruit adults with disabilities (LSC 2006). Another document that the Government issued in 2009 was a Strategy Paper “*Valuing Employment Now - Real Jobs for People with Learning Disabilities*”. The strategy set out an ambitious goal to increase the number of people with learning disabilities in employment by 2025; in having 45,000 more people with moderate and severe learning disabilities at work for at least 16 hours a week by offering real work experience and providing support from employers. My concern is that while the Government concentrated on employment through learning for people with disabilities, it has paid less attention to the fact that learning and education for such a group will bring other benefits, such as confidence and independence, as well as making them active citizens. Moreover, to narrow down the provision of learning only to employment purposes and to count achievement only in term of securing employment, may give the wrong impression: these learners might not have gained employment and yet they may have achieved skills required to become independent, think independently and understand the world around them.

Finally, as Nind (2007) argued, the aim of adult education has always been a deeply contested issue. To some, education is about socialisation and social control through the transmission of social and cultural values, while to others, it is about empowering learners to question, think and decide for themselves. However, for disabled learners, learning should be about empowerment, democracy, and citizenship; where they can prepare to participate more fully in their community.

### **3.4.5 Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

The UK offers shelter to people displaced by wars, famine and oppression. Most asylum seekers come penniless and are traumatised and unable to speak English. Although some arrive with qualifications or manual skills, they are not always recognised by the professional bodies and trade organisations here. The UK Labour Government's policy response to refugees and asylum seekers was outlined in the 2002 White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain* (Home Office). It set out proposals for a curriculum of English language, IT and citizenship classes. All refugees wishing to apply for British citizenship must now pass tests in Citizenship and English (except elderly people and those with learning difficulties) (Morrice 2007). The Labour Government had offered English courses up to Level 2 free of charge to unemployed refugees or those receiving income-based benefits, but excluded asylum seekers from this opportunity. Alan Tuckett (Director of NIACE), in his letter to Bill Rammell (Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further & Higher Education) on November 2006 recommended:

“Despite recent improvements in the speed of the process, too many people continue to languish for months waiting for judgment or appeals to work through. Denying them access to language learning is neither fair nor just, nor makes economic or educational sense” (p. 2).

Waddington (2005) suggested that as a minimum, the UK should consider the approaches adopted in Denmark, where asylum seekers with skills in areas of shortage receive intensive training to adapt their skills to the local labour market and gain the right to work.

The National Audit Office report on *Skills for Life* (2005) recommended that refugees over 20 years of age should increasingly be targeted by education services and encouraged to join courses. However, very few refugees work in the skilled occupations which they held prior to coming to the UK. Those lucky enough to find employment are often engaged in low-skilled jobs, where there can be a big difference between their own skill-level and the low level of skills required in their work. Across the UK, large numbers of refugee teachers, accountants, engineers and scientists are working in fast-food restaurants, or as cleaners or care assistants. Most UK-born people with high-level skills find themselves in low-skilled work for only a relatively short period of time. For refugees, however, such employment often lasts a lifetime (Gray *et al* 2007). Furthermore, a survey produced by the then Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone (2002), in association with the Refugee Women's Association, studied the employment of women refugees and asylum seekers who belonged to the teaching, nursing and medical professions. The survey found that over two-thirds (68 per cent) of them described themselves as 'employed' in their country of origin, while less than a fifth (18 per cent) described themselves similarly here. Nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) were dissatisfied with what they were doing now, with 90 per cent saying they would like to practise their chosen profession. The reasons given for not practising their chosen profession centred on the need to improve their English, to re-qualify and childcare responsibilities. Stanistreet (2005) thinks that asylum seekers and refugees are a special case. To help and support them in the process of reaching their potential and goals they need to overcome barriers, which could be to do with language or related to issues about gaining work experience, which prevents them from securing employment. They may also have to deal with the events that occurred to them in the past and the trauma of fleeing their own country.

In many cases of asylum seekers and refugees, individuals already possess considerable skills but require some re-orientation, rather than wholesale retraining. However, many of them are unemployed or under-employed, which is a waste of human resources and is socially divisive, since work helps people to integrate and, in the case of refugees, helps them to settle down and rebuild their lives. NIACE issued a press release in 2007 which recommended the design of systems to recognise refugees' prior learning, skills, experience and qualifications. They should also have



the opportunity to learn occupation-specific ESOL, and employers need access to information that will demonstrate the benefits of employing refugee workers.

If the UK's economic future relies on a skilled workforce, then the under-utilisation of skills needs to be addressed with the same urgency as the provision of training for new skills. Addressing under-utilisation will give people the opportunity to return to skilled work at a much lower cost than providing new skills training. The alternative will produce demoralised, low-paid and low skilled workers, without the challenge and variety to which they had been accustomed before leaving their countries.

### **3.6 Summary**

At the beginning of this chapter, three targets were set out: to explore the different concepts of adult learning in the UK; to analyse these concepts from the Labour Government's point of view; and lastly to examine the Government's approaches to different learner groups.

From the discussion above, we can conclude that, learning takes place for different reasons: learning for leisure; learning to develop the knowledge of a subject that interests the learner; learning to gain employment skills; or learning within a group at work or in a community to gain or/and improve certain skills. Recently the concept of a 'learning culture' has emerged in response to the rapid changes caused by globalisation, which resulted in the need for adults to update their knowledge continuously as a job requirement or merely to understand the world.

In this chapter, I have analysed the different learning concepts from the Government's point of view through exploring different policies produced by the Labour Government (1997 – 2010). As this study is related to my work place, I focused on the policies issued over the last decade since I started working within adult education. In this period, I found that firstly the Labour Government favoured vocational courses, leading to employment skills over leisure and non-vocational courses, with the emphasis on young adults (19-25 years old). Secondly, the culture of learning and globalisation had been considered by the Government, but again, only within the

framework of acquiring employment skills. Thirdly, the Government had focused on different groups, such as the unemployed, elderly, women, disabled and asylum seekers and refugees. Although different policies were issued, the main theme was the same, as mentioned above, of adopting learning to gain employment skills, while other benefits of learning were not considered.

In the next chapter, I will explore learners' needs, outcomes and expectations of education, as the main aim of this study is to investigate if the adult education has helped either the Government or learners to achieve their expected goals of adult education.

# Chapter Four

## Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

Human capital ideas underwrite the neo-liberal educational policies, which are focused on training for future employment opportunities and investing in human labour. The Labour Government believes that motivating lifelong learning among both non-workers and workers will help to reduce benefit-claims and secure career-improvement respectively. This is because workers are forced to keep up with the changing demands of the labour market and globalisation, while enhancing the job prospects for non-workers will increase their chances of getting a job (McLaren 2003). Although that was the Government's aim for adult education, the decision to take part in education is the learners' (Blaxter 1999). As discussed in this study, adults participate in learning activities when they feel that a certain learning activity is beneficial for work or for any other aspect of their life. This raises the question of the adults' opinions about the provision of education. In other words, the provision was (and still is) limited to vocational courses linked to the job market; so has this provision actually led to employment? Moreover, did it satisfy adults' different needs? To answer these questions, learners are an important source of data for exploring the impact of the Labour Government policies on their learning and achievement. At the same time, through learners' answers I will investigate the extent to which the Government achieved its aim.

In this chapter, I will outline the methods which were used to examine whether or not the needs of adult learners have been met by the provision of adult education. The chapter provides a justification for the data-collection methods and analyses chosen for this study to explore learners' behaviour under the Labour Government policies and their learning needs. Additionally, the chapter discusses the place and the sample chosen for carrying out this study and the ethical issues which were taken into account while collecting the data.

## **4.2 Exploring Adults' Learning Aims and Needs**

This study is exploratory and seeks to determine whether adult education under Labour Government's policies had met the different needs of adult learners and if the Government had succeeded to achieve its objectives discussed last chapter. The primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of the Labour Government's educational policies on learners and, as a result, find ways to improve adult education programmes.

### **4.2.1 Methodology**

The research questions that underpinned the study are: What are the aims and expectations of adult education in the modern society in the UK? How far has adult education met the different needs of the adult learners and policy makers' objectives? After exploring Labour Government aims and expectations in Chapter Three, the answer for what are learners' aims and needs might be found within Adult and Community Education Centres where a variety of learners (of different ethnicities, ages, background, learning needs and gender) attend courses on offer. Also in these centres, it is possible to examine whether the Government's objectives of adult education have been achieved or not. At the same time, they allow investigation of the different aims and needs of learners and the impact of relevant policies on these learners. The research may take place in any Adult and Community Education centre, where the centre can be considered as representative of adult education provision and its learners. For the centre to be "representative" (Stake 1995), it should, firstly, offer a wide range and variety of courses that can attract a wide audience with different motivations for learning. Secondly, the centre must attract adults of different backgrounds, ethnicity, ages, and gender to help explore the learning needs of different groups.

Although I worked in different London boroughs and centres of adult education for the last decade, the choice of the centre researched was limited to one of the centres I worked in. Using my own workplace as the basis of this study provides an in-depth perspective on the existing realities of adult learners (Sikes and Potts 2008) in a

setting I am familiar with which will impact positively on my work, as the research findings will be used to improve and develop the practice of adult education there.

The case of practitioner-research, as Jarvis (1999) describes, is when the researcher chooses a particular situation within his or her workplace to study. Therefore, it can be researched only as a case study. The case study can establish cause and effect, as it focuses on individuals and seeks to understand their perception of events. Furthermore, the case study allows researchers to explore the case, by taking into account information gained from many levels (De Vause 2001) such as learners, tutors, and learning advisors. The advantage of a case study approach is that it allows for an 'in-depth' treatment of the subject. A large amount of detail about the practices and processes being studied can be understood in relation to a particular social context (Innes 2004). Portelli (2008) emphasised that a 'good' case study incorporates multiple sources of data. The rationale behind this is that through a careful and purposeful combination of different methods, breadth and depth are added to the analysis and a more complete, holistic, and contextual portrayal is possible. Moreover, the trustworthiness of results is enhanced. Therefore, two methods of data collection, questionnaire and interviews, have been chosen for this study.

As previously stressed, the main intention of this study was to examine the extent of the impact of Labour Government policies on responses to adult learners' needs. I therefore placed the learners themselves at the centre of the research and focused on their perceptions. The key aim was to investigate their feelings and experiences and, in doing so, examine if and in what ways the present adult education addressed their needs. Apart from capturing learners' points of views, and thereby considering multiple and different perspectives, I decided to regard practitioners' views as well, such as tutors and learning advisors in the centre. In order to do this, I made use of questionnaires and interviews as my chief instruments of data collection.

#### **4.2.2 The Focus**

The focus of the empirical part of this study deals with the impact of the education policies on learners. Different methods of data collection were carried out such as questionnaires distributed to learners and interviews conducted with learners and

practitioners. The data generated was used to explore learners' opinions and to investigate whether there are any restrictions or limitations on adults acquiring learning within the current provision of education and, more importantly, to examine if learners' expectations and needs have been met through adult education. Unfortunately, there are no records of the numbers of adults who gained employment or improved their job after participating in adult education, which would help to examine the success of the available programmes in supplying the job market with new workers. It seems that learners rarely come back to inform the centre of their employment situation and that makes the practitioners' opinion valuable, as some keep contact with their learners after the course is completed.

The place chosen for this study is a community centre in an area known for its mixed ethnicity and it has been classified as 'deprived' (Thompson 2006). The centre can be considered as a typical adult education centre (as mentioned in Section 4.2.1) because: firstly, a variety of courses are offered each term such as literacy, computing, hairdressing, arts, fitness etc. Secondly, the place attracts learners of different ages, backgrounds and ethnicity, as there are different activities held or offered in the centre throughout the year such as religious festival celebrations and different support groups. There is also free Internet access, and a library with multilingual books. In addition, as a deprived area, there is a concentrated effort by the Labour Government and the Council's adult education department to provide it with different educational and social programmes, as part of plans to improve the area. I should also mention that having a cafe in the centre tends to help in attracting people from around the area and provided a suitable place to interview the learners.

The centre, for the past few years, has been offering an average of 15 -20 courses per term. Until 2008, most courses were offered free of charge or at a discounted rate, especially when programmes such as Sure Start (mentioned in Section 3.3.4) were funding courses with crèche facilities. However, it was decided that fees should be applied by the start of the academic year of 2009 – 2010, as was indicated in the leaflet issued by the authority responsible for that centre.

The centre attracts parents of children who attend the primary school nearby, adults from the nearby council estate and the army barracks on the same road. Courses on

offer covered a wide variety of subjects, such as computers for beginners, advanced computer, ESOL (Levels 1, 2 and 3), hair-dressing, beauty and child care. Additional courses were offered, such as art, yoga and fitness. Unfortunately, the latter courses had to be cancelled recently due to low enrolment rates – possibly as a result of the recently-introduced fees.

#### 4.2.2.1 The Questionnaire

The purpose of using the questionnaires was to explore the students' aims, beliefs and expectations of adult education. The questionnaire contained a mix of open and closed questions, which were designed in response to the findings from the literature discussed in Chapter One about learners' motivation to learn:

**Table (4-1): The questionnaire - version (1)**

<b><u>Questionnaire Questions:</u></b>			
1. <b>Age group</b>	18-25	26-45	46-65      66 +
2. <b>Why did you join this course?</b>			
Self-interest	Find a job	Job centre wanted me to	
Get more friends	Work requirement		
3. <b>Did you consult anyone before choosing this course?</b>			
No, I didn't	Yes, Learning advisor	Friends & family	
Job centre			
4. <b>Why do you think in taking the course you will reach your goals (i.e. qualification to get a job)?</b>			
-----			
5. <b>What would you like to learn if all courses were free and available?</b>			
<b>Why? Did you enquire if there is such a course?</b>			
-----			
6. <b>Are you planning to join more courses in the future?</b>			
Yes	No		
<b>Why?</b>	-----		
--			
7. <b>In your opinion, what is the best thing you find in joining adult education?</b>			
Joining a community	Getting a qualification only		
Gaining knowledge	Raise self-esteem		
<b>Other</b>	-----		
8. <b>Do you think courses prices are fair?</b>			
Good	Good value for money	Expensive	
-----			



In designing the questionnaire, one of the important issues considered was the literacy level of the respondents. Hence, the questionnaire was phrased in simple language comprehensible to any person who spoke basic English. Furthermore, it was limited to one page to make it short and clear. Also, most questions were “closed questions”, which included multiple choices, as questions of this type are easy to complete and straightforward to understand (Cohen *et al* 2003).

Clear information had been given at the beginning of the questionnaire about the researcher, the purpose of the research, and instructions to fill in the questionnaire (Simmons 2001) – (Appendix Questionnaire version 1).

The main objective of the learners’ questionnaire was to find out learners’ motivation for learning and to examine the perceived effectiveness of the current learning programmes in responding to individuals’ needs. The questionnaire contained eight questions as follows:

Question 1 – Learners’ age: first question was about learners’ age, where four categories were stated: 18- 25, 26 – 45, 46 – 65 and over 65 of age. As the research sought to understand learners’ aims, motivations and expectations in reflection to adult education, this question allowed analysis of learners’ answers according to their age-group. The learners’ age was considered as an important factor in this research for two reasons. Firstly, the literature review in Section 1.6 of this study showed that motivation to learn changed according to age (NIACE 2004; Dench and Regan 2000); therefore, tackling different age-groups would help cover different motivations and needs for education. Secondly, the Labour Government’s concentration on younger adults aged 16-25 made it important to know the learners’ age, as the question would allow exploration of whether adult education helped the younger learners in deciding their future and preparing them to join the labour market. Simultaneously, it allowed investigation of whether adult education had satisfied the needs of different adults and suited their aims and expectations.

The choice of age-groups was as follows:

- Group 18-25 years old: the age where the Government concentrated. It is worth mentioning that the Government concentrated on 16-25 years old,

however for this research the first age-group chosen was between 18 -25 years old. Learners within the age-group of 16-17 years were not included in the research, as they have wider choices when compared with other groups. Hence, learners aged 16-17 years old are entitled to free courses within adult and community education, as well having a wider choice from sixth form schools and colleges which offer them a wide range of courses that are not available to other learners in older age-groups.

- 26-45 years old: expected work age where people are energetic, mobile, with significant experience and still in-demand in the labour market.
- 46–64 years old: adults in this group are less preferred in the job market than the group above 26 – 45 years old (Meri 2008)
- Over 65 years old: retirement age.

Question 2 - Motivation to enrol: the question sought to know learners' motivations and aims to enrol. From the literature review, it was found that adults' motivations to learn were: to develop a career, to gain qualifications, to get or change a job, to gain knowledge and to raise self-esteem (see Chapter one - Section 1.6). My interest was to explore whether adult education programmes were addressing learners' needs, aims and motivations and also to find out what motivated learners and encouraged them to join certain classes.

Question 3 - Source of the advice given before joining the course: The rationale behind this question was to understand learners' behaviour before enrolling in a course as well as to investigate if there are clear and available sources that adults can rely on to direct them to employment or self-development. It sought to know whether learners' choices are based on professional advice, such as whether advisors were available in the adult education or job centre or whether it was just based on personal interest.

Question 4 – Learners' expectation of adult education: an open question sought to explore learners' expectation of adult education and their confidence about achieving these expectations.

Question 5 - The choice of the subject to learn: the question explored whether the learning programmes offered satisfied different learners' needs.

Question 6 – Future learning: the question explored the thoughts and plans of adults regarding future learning. From the learners' plans, it sought to understand whether learning is a lifelong process of gaining knowledge or whether it is merely subjected to acquire work skills.

Question 7 - Further gains from the learning experience: the question explored other benefits of learning besides gaining qualifications or employment skills.

Question 8 – Adult education fees: the question explored learners' opinion about the prices of the current courses. Three choices for answers were given: good prices, good value for money (to indicate that learners can see a benefit of paying for their learning), or expensive.

For this study, the main aim was to explore if different learners' needs have been met by the adult education provision during Labour Government era, therefore learners were not differentiated according to their gender or class. In other words, the main concentration was on the learners' experience in adult education without specifying gender or class.

To pilot the questionnaire, five students were chosen from the centre to complete the questionnaire. The reason for piloting was to establish whether there were any questions that were hard to understand.

#### 4.2.2.2 The Interview

The purpose of choosing interviews for this study was to explore in detail the participants' knowledge, beliefs, expectations, and attitudes (Kvale 1996; May 1997; Cohen *et al* 2003). I used semi-structured interviews with a thematic guide with probes and invitations to expand on issues discussed during the interview. May (1997) thinks that interviews as a data collection method allow participants to answer in

detail on their own terms, but still provides a good structure for comparability between interviewees' attitudes.

An interview guide was given to the interviewees, containing some suggested questions that might be asked during the interview. For the learner interviewees, the interview guide was as below:

**Table (4-2): Learners' Interview Guide:**

<p><b><u>Learner's interview questions:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Why did you choose to join this course?</li><li>2. Who told you about the course?</li><li>3. Are you sure that in doing the course you will reach what you want? (get a job or learn skills that could be improved later, etc..)</li><li>4. Have you seen the last leaflet/ brochure of the offered courses? Are you planning to enrol next term?</li><li>5. If you have the time and money to join the course what would you choose and why? Have you seen if this course is in the new brochure?</li><li>6. In your opinion what would you like to see in the brochure?</li><li>7. How satisfied are you with adult education?</li></ol>
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The interviews with learners discussed their choices (see questions 1,2 and 3 in Table 4-2) and what had been recently offered in adult education yearly programmes (question 4 in Table 4-2), explored the student's opinion about what had been offered and what the students would like to see in the brochure (question 5, 6 and 7 in Table 4-2).

According to the learners' motivations to learn, the conversation expanded as indicated in the Table (4-3) below:

**Table (4-3): Learner’s interview questions in regards to their motivation to learn:**

**If the motivation of joining is to get a job:**

1. Did you apply for jobs?
2. How successful was that?
3. Are you sure that your skills are required in the job market?
4. Do you think having qualifications made it easier to get the job?
5. Do you have other experience or qualifications? Have you tried to use that in getting a job?

**If the motivation is to gain knowledge in certain subjects:**

1. Where are you going to use this knowledge?
2. Why do you need it?
3. If it is so important to know, would you pay to learn these skills?

**If the motivation is to join the community and gain friends or raise self-esteem:**

1. Would you agree that joining in such activities helped you in seeing other people communicate, learning more from other people’s experiences and it is better than staying at home?

If the reason to join the course was to get a job, the interview investigated the learner’s journey in taking the course and their attempts to get jobs – see Table (4-3).

If the reason was to get the knowledge and gain skills, then the interview explored whether the student was using this knowledge at home or work and if this additional knowledge helped to change or improve their life, see Table (4-3).

If the motivation was to make friends or join the community and raise self-esteem, the interview investigated other benefits of learning such as social or personal benefits and their importance in an adult’s life.

For the practitioners' interview, a guide (table below) was given to tutors and learning advisors before the interview:

**Table (4-4): Practitioner's interview Guide:**

<b><u>Practitioners' Interview Questions</u></b>
1. How do you feel about AE courses linked to the job market?
2. Do you think that most of your students can easily find jobs after learning in AE courses?
3. Do you think the curriculum offered currently is sufficient to provide learners with skills required in the job market?
4. Did you have any training to understand job requirements or regular job market update to accommodate Government expectations from AE or any other support?
5. What do you think about those people who fall out of the age range that the government want? Like elderly people?
6. Do you think that currently AE courses are running smoothly in the centre or not? If not, what are the problems facing AE there?
7. How effective are the current AE programmes in your opinion in changing people's lives?
8. What would encourage people to learn and stay in their class?
9. Do the current programmes satisfy learners of different ages?

The questions for the practitioners sought to explore how far they believe that the offered programmes respond to learners' needs and Government aims. In the interviews, the following areas were explored:

- The practitioners' opinion from their professional perspective in regards to links between adult education and the job market (questions 1 and 2).
- Whether the practitioners believed that the courses offered were sufficient for the learners to join the labour market (question 3).
- The level of support, if any, given to the tutors to help them update their knowledge regarding the job market requirements (question 4).

- The practitioners' attitudes with regard to the ideal "lifelong" learning programme (questions 5, 6 and 7). Those questions were designed to give the practitioners a voice to express their opinion, in assessing and developing the programmes which they are engaged with.
- The students' motivation and commitment towards learning in the contemporary adult education provision (question 8).
- Practitioners' thoughts about the suitability of current adult education for learners of different ages (question 9).

The aims of these questions were to explore the opinions of adult education practitioners about the Government's plans and the suitability of the learning programme offered then to get the optimum value of education and to achieve the economic progress that the Government wished for.

### **4.2.3 The Sample**

At the time of data collection, the number of courses running in the centre was nine. Although payment was required to enrol on the courses, most of the learners living within a particular postcode were able to take the courses for free. Also, it is worth mentioning that there was a non-qualification Arts & Crafts course on offer with chargeable fees, but it was cancelled due to lack of interest. The table below outlines the courses that were running and the number of students for the term when the data was collected:

**Table (4-5): courses running during summer term 2008 – 2009:**

<b>Course Name</b>	<b>Students number</b>	<b>Course Length (weeks)</b>	<b>Hours per week</b>	<b>Courses Fees (Concession/ Full Fees)</b>
<b>Beauty Specialist Full Level 2 Diploma (ITEC)</b>	9	34	6.5	£211/ £861
<b>Beauty Therapist NVQ 2 (VTCT)</b>	9	34	13	£168/ £768
<b>ESOL E3 Pathway - Hair and Beauty</b>	7	34	2	£30/ £300
<b>Hair Dressing Next Step</b>	5	10	2	£46/ £70
<b>ESOL E1/2 (Speaking and Listening)</b>	9	34	4	£30/ £280
<b>ESOL E1/2(Reading and Writing)</b>	7	34	4	£30/ £280
<b>ESOL3 (Speaking and Listening)</b>	7	34	4	£30/ £280
<b>Computing for Beginners</b>	9	10	2	£39/ £95
<b>CLAIT - Access Database</b>	7	10	3	£24/ £80

The total number of learners attending the courses was 69. Therefore, my decision was to contact all the learners in the centre hoping that I could get a minimum of 30 participants to complete the questionnaires. Also, I planned to pilot the questionnaire in one of the courses that was running at the time. Thus, I was aware that I had to take into account that some participants would fail to return the questionnaires or even refuse to be part of it. Therefore, the questionnaires were distributed to all learners in the centre, except those who agreed to be interviewed or initially piloted it.

The time chosen for the data collection was the second half of the summer term for two reasons. Firstly, learners' motivation might change during the course (see Section 1.6), and by the end of the course learners are more aware of their learning needs. Secondly, the new brochure for the next academic year was available by the end of summer term, so learners at this point would have started to plan for their future courses, which would be a good opportunity to explore their thoughts and plans about their learning and to investigate if the programme for the following term offered them a route to improve their skills and knowledge.

Finally, five learners piloted the questionnaire and 32 learners completed the questionnaire. In addition, five learners agreed to be interviewed. In total, 42 (61%) of learners participated in this research and 27 (39%) learners opted out for reasons that are discussed later in this chapter.



In addition to completing the questionnaire, students were interviewed. For the interviews, purposive sampling was used. Sarantakos (1998) thinks that when purposive sampling is used, it is left to the researcher to decide on the number of respondents that is considered sufficient, since the actual number is not of primary importance to the study and the representativeness relates to the quality of data produced rather than quantity. Therefore, it was decided that choice of the learners to be interviewed would be taken according to their age and motivation to learn. The sample for the learners' interview contained different ages since the Government was focusing on young adults and courses are mainly directed to employment skills. Also, the learners chosen had different motivations to learn such as joining education in order to get a job, improve their job prospects, or to gain knowledge. In addition to that, one case was chosen as the learner had succeeded to gain employment after taking a number of courses in adult education. Details of the five students are as follows:

Learner A: Self-employed nurse, age category 46-65 currently working as a locum practice nurse with job placements provided by her agency. She has joined adult education to gain skills and qualifications and hopes to change her career to teach nursing or first aid.

Learner B: a qualified financial advisor from Leicester University, age category 26 – 45. She is currently unemployed and has joined adult education for further qualifications to assist in improving her job prospects.

Learner C: a young employed learner, age category 18 – 25. She has joined adult education for the qualification and to improve prospects of employment.

Learner D: an elderly learner age category over 65, who joined adult education for self-interest in learning new things and socialising with other learners.

Learner E: aged category 46 – 65, recently found a job as a result of taking courses in adult education that helped in improving her skills.

All learners chose the centre as a place to meet for the interviews, mainly because it was where they were taking their courses.

For the practitioners' interviews, five participants were chosen from among the tutors who were working in the centre and the learning advisors who were helping adults in their learning choices. The tutors were selected so as to cover all subjects which were on offer at the centre, namely: computer tutor (Tutor F), Hair and Beauty and ESOL tutor (Tutor H), and the arts & crafts tutor (Tutor G). Additionally, the two learning advisors who are working at the centre were interviewed:

1) Learning Advisor I is currently based three days a week at the centre, offering advice to learners, assisting them on course selection as well as helping out in the local Job Centre for one day to advise their customers on joining the available courses in adult education to help their job prospects.

2) Learning Advisor J is based in one of the main centres. Until last term, she was responsible for planning courses in the centre for the Routes to Work project, which is the project funded by BAA and Heathrow City Partnership targeted skills and vocational training activity for vulnerable client groups. The project focuses on refugees, single parents and unemployed young people. It provided training initiatives for the unemployed or for those in work but who needed to upgrade skills in order to progress or remain employable. Although the project funding has ended, the courses planned were still running until the end of the academic year.

Tutor F and G chose their houses for the interviews while tutor H and the Learning Advisor I were interviewed in the centre. Learning Advisor J's interview was at the main centre where she was working at the time of the interview.

#### **4.2.4 Type of Data**

The questionnaire provided a mix of quantitative and qualitative data. The interviews obviously supplied qualitative data. Working with quantitative data brings forward arguments based on positivist ideas, which stress the need for 'objectivity' - the separation of the object of the study from the observer and 'reliability' - the ability to

repeat the results (Yates 2004), whereas working with qualitative data, on the other hand, is often associated with relativism. Hence, qualitative data stresses the importance of the subjective experiences of the researcher and the participants, the central meaning of social life and the importance of social and cultural contexts in situating different meanings and interpretations. In other words, quantitative data points out the learners' motivation, goals and needs and builds up patterns of behaviours. Conversely, qualitative data allows the researcher to:

- Understand in-depth and in detail individuals' experiences, motivation and goals.
- Explore how learners give meaning to and express their understanding of themselves, their motives, and their experiences.
- Explore learners' experience post adult education and the effect of the new learnt skills, if any, on their work or personal life.

Qualitative methodology has been criticised for its unreliability and the difficulty of generalising the findings and sometimes, collecting meaningless information (Cohen *et al* 2003; Sarantakos 1998). On the other hand, quantitative methods are criticised for their inability to capture the real meaning of social behaviour, as they neglect the sense of life and project appearances as reality. Indeed, using both methods would help in overcoming most of the weakness in both data (Cohen *et al* 2003).

Both types of data complement each other and, together, offer a detailed portrayal of the problem researched (Sarantakos 1998). The use of the survey technique in questioning the 'consumers' of a given service can provide useful factual data. Moreover, in a case study where the researcher can utilise different kinds of evidence, by using a variety of methods (such as unstructured interviews, structured questionnaires and conversations, etc) and collecting different type of data, different facets of social reality are uncovered and a rounded picture is built up (Finch 1986).

#### **4.2.5 Research Management**

The questionnaires were distributed in person. An explanation about the purpose of the study and the questions had been given to the courses' tutors and the learners. All

the questionnaires were filled in and returned to the researcher immediately after completion or via the course tutor to the researcher, if more time was needed.

For the interviews, the practitioners were invited individually and were asked permission to be interviewed and recorded. The learners were selected so as to ensure variety in terms of: the courses they were studying, their ages and their motivations for studying. The choice of the learners was to cover the different categories of learners identified by the Labour Government, such as women, unemployed, employed, and retired. The reason for choosing different groups of learners was to shed light on the different motivations for learning and learners' experiences. The learners were invited to participate in the research via their tutors, and they were given the guide for the interview in advance. They were informed of the purpose of the research and their right to participate or not.

#### **4.2.6 The Analytical Approach**

The data analysis process started with the questionnaires. The data were arranged in tables, where the frequency of each answer in the completed questionnaires was counted and was displayed using graphs or charts. Also, the percentages were used for one variable or when there was a relationship found between two variables (i.e. age and motivation) or more, which helped in comparing between different groups (Robson 1997). The next step of data analysis was analysing the data generated from interviewing learners and practitioners, by means of identifying themes and patterns, categorising these themes into clusters and, lastly, comparing the categories with each other. The data analyses methods will be discussed in details in Chapter Five.

As the data collected in this study are mainly qualitative rather than quantitative, the analytical approach is inductive (May 1997). Gilbert (2001) emphasises that induction methods go from particular to general. The advantage of this procedure is that it allows the re-examination of the cases and continual comparison of the data across a range of situations until the theory emerges (Cohen *et al* 2003). The weakness in this approach, as Cohen *et al* (2003) emphasise, is that sometimes researchers fail to acknowledge the implicit theory of the research or even provide categories that do not serve the aim of the research. These are caveats that should be fed into the process of

reflexivity during the research. This can be done through simultaneous and continuous comparisons between different groups and behaviours; matching responses in the questionnaire and interviews; and calculating the frequency of occurrence of responses, as Cohen *et al* (2003) advised.

#### **4.2.7 Validity and Generalisations**

Case study designs are devised to achieve explanation by building a full picture of the sequence of events as interpreted by participants; by the end an adequate explanation is usually the one that makes sense. In other words, it involves telling a convincing and logically acceptable story of the way events unfold and the manner in which they are linked to each other (De Vause 2001). Indeed, a case study is where a case (or a few cases) is researched at length and certain behaviours or responses which arise repeatedly are investigated (Stake 1999). For a case study to achieve internal validity (where it has to reflect the reality of the situation at hand (Jarvis 1999)), Yin (1989) advises the use of multiple sources for data collection. Accordingly, data were collected by using questionnaires and interviews with learners as well as the practitioners. The two methods of data collection chosen helped to study the learners' behaviour; they also allowed a variety of information on the same subject to be obtained. Additionally, cross-checking the information against the other sources of data (questionnaires, learners' interviews, practitioners' interviews) helped to achieve a higher degree of validity and reliability (Spasford and Jupp 1998).

However, case studies have always been criticised as providing no basis for generalising to a wider population beyond the case (De Vause 2001; Jarvis 1999; Stake 1995). The final statement or result of a case study might be reasonable and present a proper outcome of the findings within the setting, but can not always be applied to other contexts. A case study, as Bassey (1999) explains, reports a situation that happened in one place and may happen elsewhere; it is an invitation for other researchers "to try and see if same happens" (p 52) in their settings and create an opportunity for the research to become cumulative.

#### **4.2.8 Research from Inside**

The research started when I was granted the approval for my research proposal from the Ethics Committee of Brunel University. For this study some ethical issues were identified, as the research took place at my workplace and learners as well as colleagues participated in it. According to Hannabus (2000) and Mercer (2007), there are advantages and disadvantages to researching in one's workplace, in relation to access, familiarity and rapport, which will be discussed separately.

*Access:* I have been working in the centre as a tutor for several years, although my workplace has changed recently and now is based in the main centre – I was moved during the spring term and the data was collected during the summer term. Thus, in my case, access was easy for those participants whom I knew through work or whom I taught. In the case of participants who I did not know closely, I was introduced to them by their tutors. Indeed, using my own workplace facilitated the access to learners as well practitioners working in the centre and helped me gain their trust. Nevertheless, I did not approach learners personally. Instead their current tutor asked them to take part in the research, so the learners did not feel obliged to take part and were given the option to participate or not. Also, I should mention that out of the five learners I interviewed, two were my students in a previous term. I contacted them after I made sure that the results from the exam they took in my class had come back and they were satisfied. Nevertheless, learners were reassured that neither their decision whether or not to participate in the research nor what was said during the interview would affect any of their previous or future assessment.

In case of the practitioners, I interviewed three tutors and two learning advisors. At that time, as we were all sessional tutors, we did not see each other much, as the centre was an outreach and all the staff were not in at the same time. However, we did meet during tutors' meetings and training days. When I informed my colleagues that I was researching adult education policies, I found that they were enthusiastic about the subject and happy to participate in the research, as we all suffered from the continuous Government funding cuts, which resulted in many courses being cancelled or closed because of lack of enrolment.

*Familiarity*: working in the centre has given me familiarity with the group being researched. The advantage of practitioner-researcher is to have a unique opportunity of researching the hidden issues within social institutions, which might not be known to an outsider (Anderson and Herr 1998). In this case, as Hannabus (2000) explains:

“the researcher knows his / her environment well, knows by instinct what can be done and how far old friendships and favours can be pressed, just when and where to meet up for interviews, what the power structures and the moral mazes and subtexts of the company are and so what taboos to avoid, what shibboleths to mumble and bureaucrats to placate. They are familiar with the organisational culture, the routine and the scripts of the workplaces” (Hannabus 2000, p 103).

Indeed, the practitioner-researcher, according to Dirkx (2006), can give voice to complexity and the multi-layered nature of understanding that adult educators normally hold about the various dimensions of their practice, such as the students, the curriculum and other issues (e.g. age, class and so on). For this research, the layers would be learners’ needs, motivations and the way learners utilise the knowledge gained in work or in life.

However, practitioner-researchers have been criticised as their status may generate false perceptions of a common outlook, which can affect interactions between the researcher and the researched, as well as the interpretation of data (Heath *et al* 2009; Griffith 1998). Indeed, the knowledge of someone who knows the environment and the participants very well would produce a different knowledge from an outsider researcher who does not have an intimate knowledge of the group being researched prior to their entry into the group. Being aware that my knowledge as a practitioner might be a disadvantage, my approach to this study was to collect data using in-depth interviews from different groups, consisting of learners and different practitioners. The practitioners were, firstly, tutors whom learners would normally ask first (in the class) when they wanted to progress to a new course or join employment. Secondly, a part of the job of learning advisers is to direct learners to their goal in learning or employment. My aim was to get a balance of views from different perspectives on the

learners' post adult education planning and what is actually happening. Hence, the interviewees came from three groups: learners (of different ages, needs and backgrounds) and practitioners (tutors plus advisers).

In addition, to avoid allowing my own perception or knowledge of the problem researched to affect data collection, the questionnaires were conducted prior to the interviews, and its data analysis offered an outline for learners' opinions about their current and future learning. The analysis of the questionnaire data helped to determine the set of questions which should be used during the interviews. Indeed, for the same reason the questionnaire's questions were designed according to the literature review of learners' motivations and the factors that may affect this motivation.

*Rapport:* The ethical dilemma in this study is that there are two kinds of participants taking part in the research, with each of them having different kinds of relationship with the researcher: the practitioners as colleagues (where rapport encourages them to contribute further in the research) and learners. It is important to mention that the adult education setting is different from traditional academic or compulsory education settings, where it is assumed that the teacher/tutor has the ability to control and to shape the environment more than any other single person. In adult education, the basis of andragogical practices is that the tutor's job facilitates learning. In other words, adult learners are self-directed learners, who demand to be included in all phases of their education and they seize the power to negotiate their learning or even stop attending the classroom (Johnson-Bailey and Cervero 1997; Cooks *et al* 2002). The relationship between learner and the tutor is more of a counselling relationship where the tutor is considered to be a partner, helper, and facilitator (Cooks *et al* 2002). Nevertheless, I had to bear in mind that educational research often deals with vulnerable student populations (Howe and Moses 1999) and learners may resist participation or decide to withdraw themselves during the interview. Additionally, as mentioned, I made sure that data collection did not start until the results from the examination of my previous learners, who are still taking courses in the centre, had come back and that they were satisfied. Finally, the approach to participants was as follows:



- For the questionnaire: the learners were approached through their tutors. I met tutors individually and informed them of the purpose of the research, requesting their help in distributing and collecting the questionnaires. I agreed with the tutors, that either the tutor or I would give a verbal introduction about the research to help encourage learners to participate and then explain the questions. We agreed that the tutors themselves should ask learners to take part in the research, to ensure that none of the learners felt obliged to participate. Additionally, the participants were able to read the information about the purpose of the research in a short text placed at the top of the questionnaire (Homan 1991). The text assured the participants of confidentiality, anonymity and the non-traceability of the replies.
- For learners' interviews: In a similar way to the questionnaire, the tutors helped by asking learners to participate in the research and be interviewed. The rationale for this was that none of the learners, especially those whom I had taught before, should feel obliged to participate in the research. Once the learners' had agreed, I contacted them by phone to discuss the date, time and place of the interview. Again, learners were informed that their names would be coded for anonymity and information given would be kept strictly confidential.
- For practitioners' interviews: the tutors and advisors were contacted by phone or email, given explanations about the purpose of the research and were invited to participate. The interviewees were assured in advance that all information was given in confidence and names would be coded, emphasising that the aim of the study was not to critique but to improve the services in the centre.

All interviewees were informed at the beginning that the interviews were to be taped and they were informed of their right to ask questions about the procedures and methods pertaining to this research and their right to withdraw at any time.

### **4.3 Data Collection Process:**

#### **4.3.1 The Piloting of the Questionnaires**

The questionnaire was piloted in the ICT course (CLAIT Access Database). The reasons behind choosing this particular course were: firstly, I happened to know the tutor reasonably well as a colleague and she was enthusiastic about the research and willing to help. Secondly, I have taught some of the learners when I was running the ICT course the term before. Therefore, it was reasonably easy to request their help in completing the questionnaires. Five students agreed to participate in the study.

On checking the returned completed questionnaires, I discovered:

Question number five: **What would you like to learn if all courses were free and available? Why? Did you enquire if there is such course?** I realised that the learners were answering three questions in one. In the five questionnaires completed, the last question (**Did you enquire if there is such course?**) was not answered. Therefore, I decided that it was appropriate that the question was split into two parts as follows:

**Table (4-6): Question 5 in the questionnaire:**

<p><b>5. What would you like to learn if all courses were free and available? Why? -</b> -----</p> <p><b>Is this course available next term/ year? -----</b> -----</p>
--

I offered to help in case the learners found any of the questions ambiguous. The feedback that I had from the students was that the wording was clear and the questionnaire was easy to complete. Participants took about 10- 15 minutes to fill in the questionnaire.

### **4.3.2 The Questionnaire Data Collection**

The new version of the questionnaire was initially distributed in Computing for Beginners, ESOL Entry Level 1 (Reading & Writing), ESOL Entry Level 1 (Speaking & Listening) and Beauty Therapist NVQ courses.

The returned questionnaires from Computing for Beginners and Beauty therapist NVQ were filled in the correct way and almost all the questions were answered completely.

The literacy level of the respondents was taken into consideration in designing the questionnaire, so the questionnaire was phrased in simple language and limited to one page only to make it short and clear (see page 88). Nonetheless, the feedback from both ESOL tutors was negative, in the sense that the students were unable to fully comprehend some words. They cited that “available” and “consult” were hard to understand for ESOL Level 1 and 2 students. Indeed most of the returned questionnaires were incomplete. As a result, I decided to disregard those uncompleted questionnaires, as the returned data was not useful and it was not possible to analyse them.

I continued to distribute the questionnaire to other courses such as ESOL Level 3 (Speaking and Listening) and ESOL 3 Path Way Course for Hair and Beauty. As Level 3 students would have already completed two years of courses at Level 1 and Level 2, their understanding of Basic English would not normally be a problem. Nevertheless, I rephrased the questionnaire, mindful of the ESOL Level 1 tutors’ advice, without changing the meaning of the questions (Appendix I – version 3). Additionally, I noted from the returned ESOL Level 1 that question number four was rather complex. Therefore, I made the following three amendments before presenting the questionnaire to ESOL Level 3 as follows (Appendix I version 3):

- Question number three became: **“Did you ask anyone before choosing this course?”** instead of **“Did you consult anyone before choosing this course?”**

- Question number five became: “**What would you like to learn if all courses were free? Why? ----- Is this course on offer next term/ year?**” instead of “**What would you like to learn if all courses were free and available? Why? ----- Is this course available next term/ year?**” to avoid the use of the word *available*.

In distributing the questionnaire for ESOL Level 3 classes, 11 fully completed questionnaires were returned. After distributing the questionnaires in all the courses running in the summer term in that centre, I collected, in total, 32 completed questionnaires.

#### **4.3.3 Starting the Interviews**

As Learners A, B and E were known to me as learners in my class the previous term, I delayed my contact until after their examination papers had come back from the external examiner and they had received their certificates. Their tutor informed them about the research and asked them if they were willing to participate. The learners were informed that I was no longer a tutor in the centre and asked for voluntary participation on the basis that the research aimed at helping to improve the courses offered in the centre.

As for Learners C and D, I asked tutors in the centre to help me find one young and one old learner. My contact with Learners C and D was through their tutors who introduced me and explained the purpose of my research to them. The learners kindly agreed to participate by giving their tutors the possible dates when I could come to the centre and meet them.

In case of practitioners, I emailed each one of them individually, explained the purpose of my research and requested their participation. All participants were happy to take part in the research.

## **4.6 Summary**

This chapter has justified the choices of the methodology and methods of data collection that were adopted to address the research questions of this study. The choices of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires in a case study have been made to explore adults' learning needs and to examine how far adult education, under Labour Government's policies, had met these needs. Furthermore, the chapter has described the research process and covered the details of the organisation of this research. The methods of data analysis and results are presented in the next chapter.

# Chapter Five

## Data Analysis

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter offers the analysis of the data collected for this study. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the data were collected using questionnaires and interviews. The data from the questionnaires are mainly quantitative in nature, while the data collected through interviews is qualitative. Each aspect of the data will be analysed using methods suitable for the nature of that data. Later, the data from both methods will be compared and results will be discussed.

### 5.2 Questionnaire Data Analysis

Fielding and Gilbert (2000) stated that the numbers collected from questionnaires tell very little by themselves and researchers are much more interested in their patterns and regularities and the features that are common to groups of people in different contexts and situations. Traditionally, statistics have been used to analyse quantitative data for their ability to describe and summarise the data. The following section discusses the data generated using the questionnaires for this study:

#### 5.2.1 Description of the Sample

The steps taken to analyse the questionnaire data, following the procedures suggested by Spasford and Jupp (1998), Sarantakos (1998) and Gilbert (2001), were as follows:

1. Writing the raw data in a matrix using Excel software. Each line (row) represents one participant's response (Appendix I).
2. Tabulating the scores for each questionnaire by percentages or values.
3. Analysing each variables' (question) scores and/or percentages using graphs and charts.

4. Group related questions in cross-tabulation (contingency tables) to be able to show the relation between the two variables (questions). Later, analysing each table by the scores and percentages.

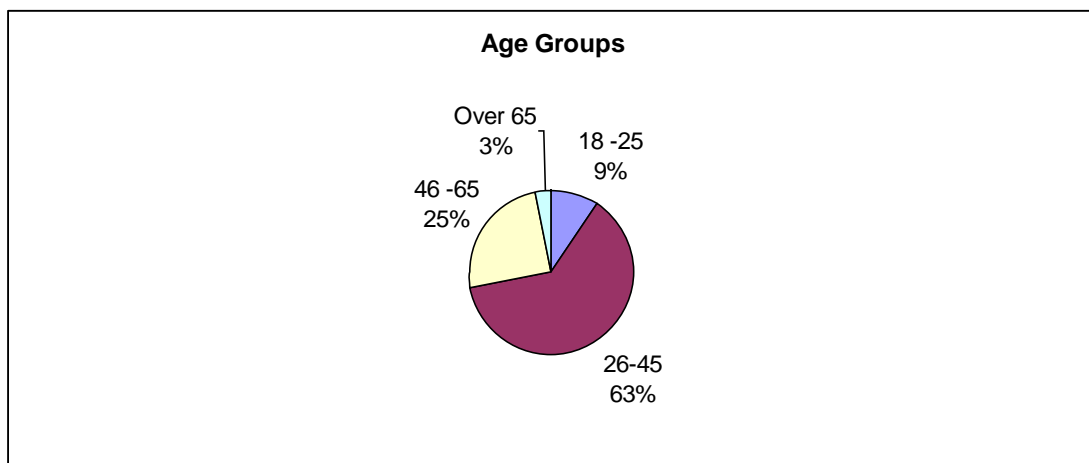
The statistical analysis allows me to draw a picture of the behaviour of adult learners towards their education. In other words, the analysis highlights a pattern of the learners' motivation and approach to education as well as their educational plans for their future.

The sample size is important in statistical methods, especially in the case of hypothesis testing. Byrne (2003) and Gilbert (2001) agreed that with a relatively small dataset, hypothesis testing could give insignificant results. Therefore, I discarded the use of hypothesis tests, as my focus for the questionnaires was to draw a picture of adult learners' behaviour in choosing their courses and planning their future learning and that is possible by using descriptive statistics.

#### 5.2.1.1 Demographical Distribution for One Variable

1) The Pie chart below represents the sample according to the age of the participants:

**Figure 5-1: The Questionnaires' participants according to their age:**



The age distribution of the 32 learners who completed the questionnaires was as follows:

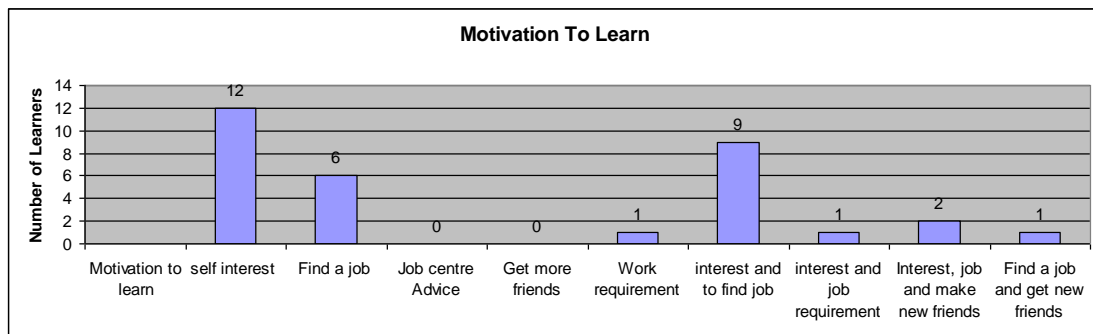
- 9% (3 learners) were age 18-25

- 63% (20 learners) age 26 – 45
- 25% (8 learners) age 46 – 65
- Finally, only one learner 3% age over 65 years old.

It is seen that most learners in this sample were aged 26 – 45, which is well within the normal working age.

2) Motivation is a complex subject. For some learners, motivation is a combination of several factors which together drive learners into particular courses. I noted that when it came to answering the question regarding the reasons behind the course choice, most of the students provided more than one answer, as shown by the bar chart below:

**Figure 5-2: The participants according to their motive to learn:**

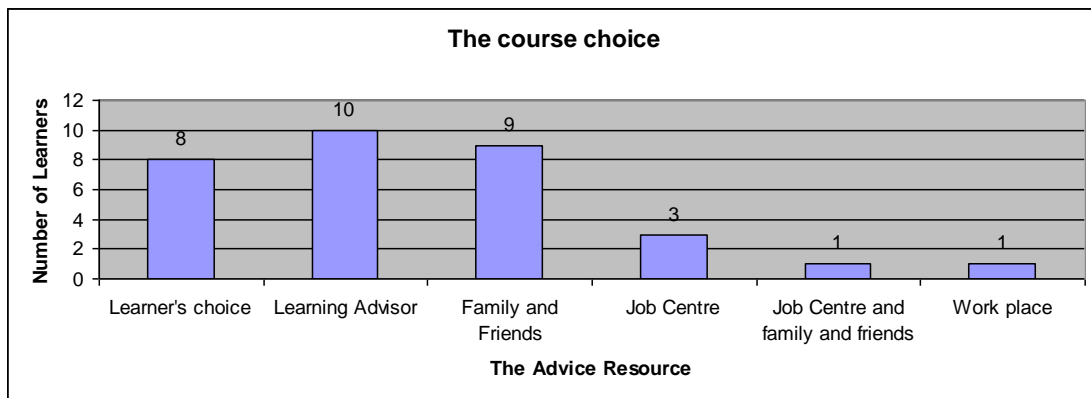


Obviously, self-interest is the highest motivation for learning, followed by self-interest and acquiring jobs. In third place, the motivation for learning is only to find a job. There is, however, no record of learning having taken place as a result of a job centre request from learners, or in order to make new friends.

3) The learners' choice of the course to learn was influenced by different sources, such as family and friends, job centre, work place or their self interest in the subject. In the sample is as seen in the bar chart below:



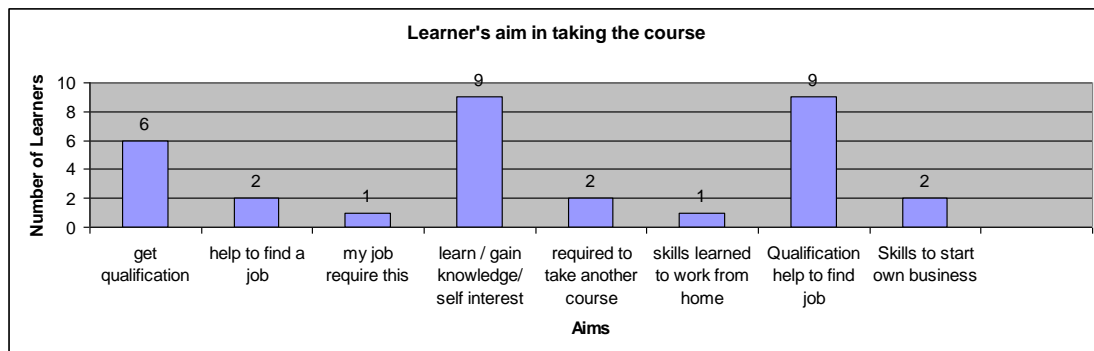
**Figure 5-3: The source of advice participants would approach before enrolling:**



From the bar chart it is clear that the learning advisor has the most effect on learners' choices followed by family and friends, followed by learners' interest in the subject.

4) When asking learners about their expectations and aims of taking the course (question 4), the answers were as seen in the bar chart below:

**Figure 5 - 4: Participants' expectation by enrolling:**



It is clear from the above that the three top aims in taking courses were:

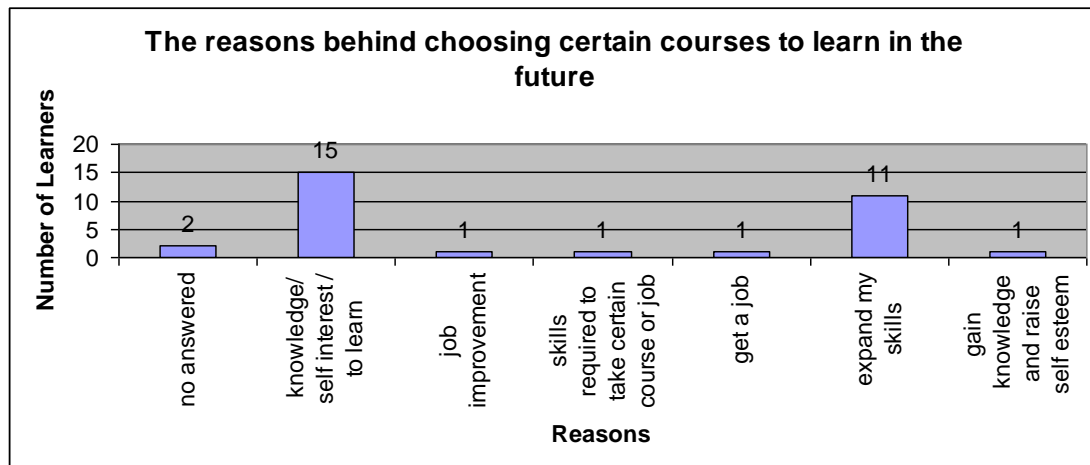
- Gaining knowledge
- Qualifications that help the learner to find a job (for those unemployed)
- Acquiring the qualification itself

5) Question five was about learners' choice of the subject to learn in the future. Most learners wanted to take the same course currently taken but at a higher level or to learn new things in the same field. For example, from the ten learners in ICT courses, seven learners sought to take an IT course the following term to learn about new

software or to increase their knowledge in using the computer. Only one learner said that the next preferred course is music; 2 learners did not answer, while one said that this course was required before taking a childcare course. All learners in ESOL Level 1 classes wanted to continue to Level 2 and it was the same case with beauty courses. Six learners out of seven in ESOL Pathway Course wanted to continue to the beauty course and only one student wanted to change completely to a childcare course. On the other hand, all learners in ESOL Level 3 wanted to learn either ICT, childcare or beauty in the future.

6) The bar chart below shows the motives for immediate future learning (i.e. choice of next course):

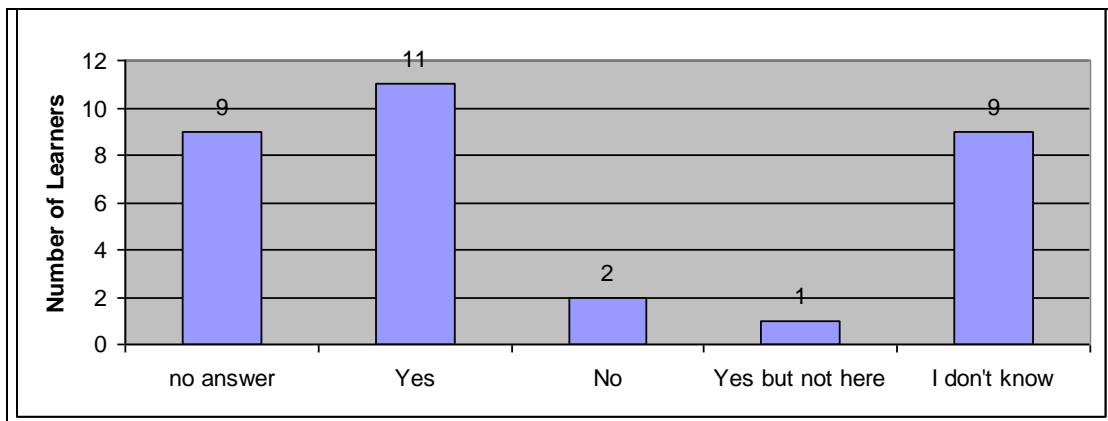
**Figure 5-5: The reasons for the participants' future choices to learn:**



It is obvious that the highest motives were to learn and gain knowledge or to expand the learners' skills in their chosen subject.

7) To see if the learners knew that their preferred course was available in the following term, the answers were as shown in the chart below:

**Figure 5 – 6: The availability of courses that match learners’ needs:**

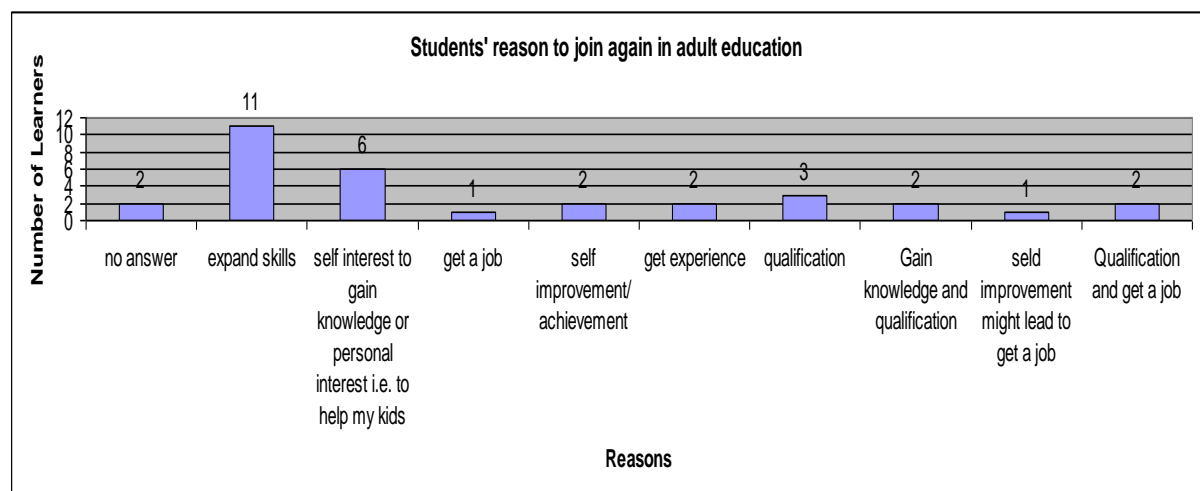


As can be seen from the chart, eleven learners knew that the courses were available; only two said that their preferred courses were not available and nine said that they had no knowledge regarding the availability.

8) When the learners were asked if they would like to continue with their learning, all answered that they would.

9) The learners’ reasons to join again are as shown in the chart below:

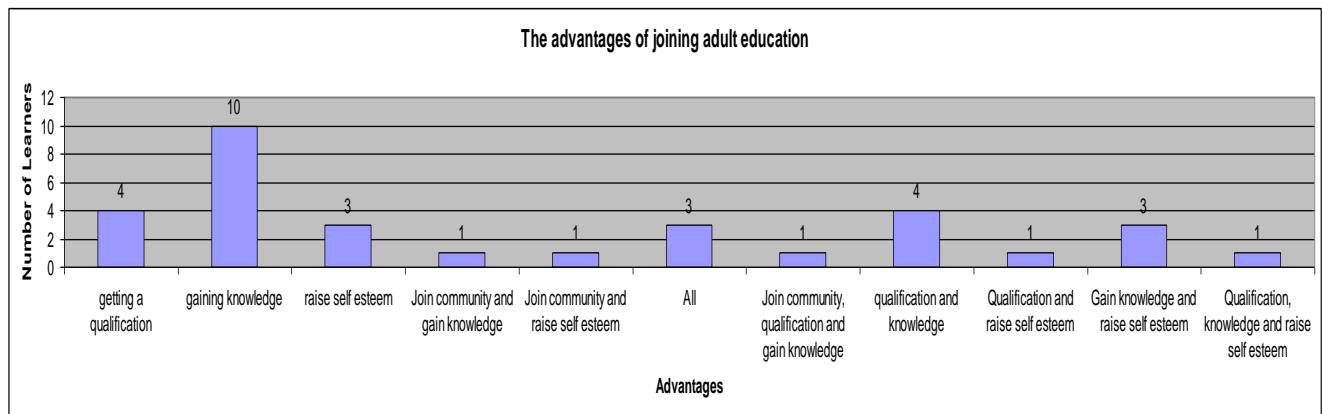
**Figure 5 – 7: Participants motivations to join adult education in the future:**



Most students, as seen above, would join again in order to enhance their skills. Six learners from the sample would enrol in order to gain knowledge in a specific subject, such as learning to use the computer, so that they could help their children.

10) From the learners' point of view, the advantages of joining adult education are shown in the chart below:

**Figure 5 – 8: Advantages of learning as seen by the participants:**

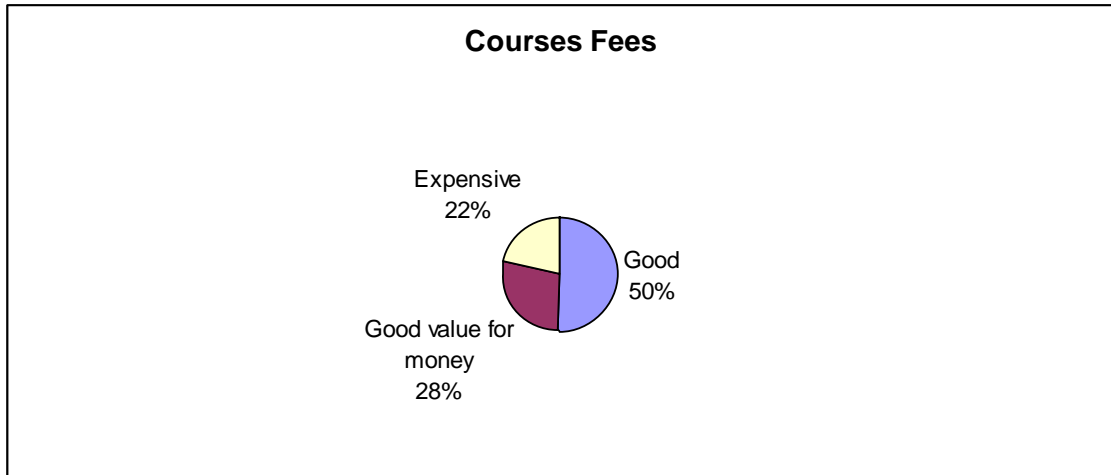


The top reasons were as follow:

- Ten learners said it was for gaining knowledge
- Three thought it was a combination of reasons, such as getting a qualification, gaining knowledge, raising self-esteem and joining the community.
- Three learners said it was about raising self-esteem.

11) Learners' opinion of the fees charged for courses were:

**Figure 5 – 9: Participants' views of courses charges:**



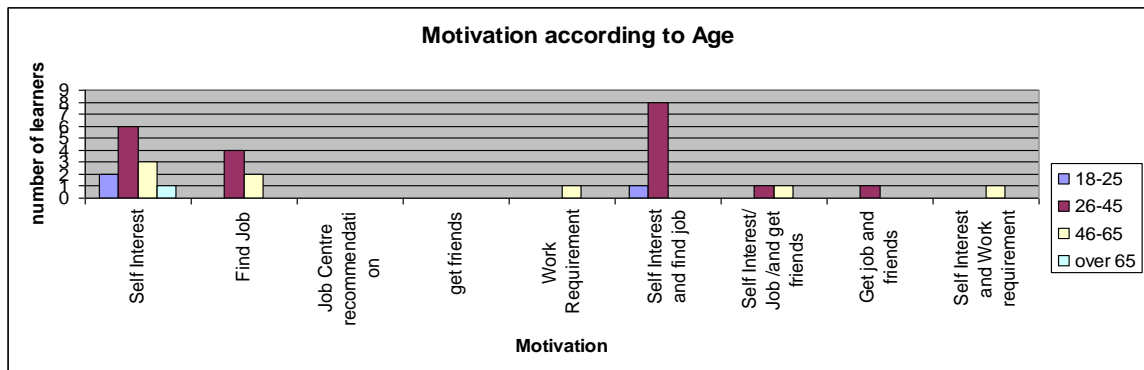
The replies came as follows:

- 50% thought that the fees were reasonable.
- 28% considered the fees were high but still considered it good value for money.
- 22% said that the fees were expensive.

5.2.1.2 Demographic Distribution for More than One Variable

12) The reasons for joining adult education by age are shown in the following graph:

**Figure 5 – 10: Motivation according to the learner's age:**

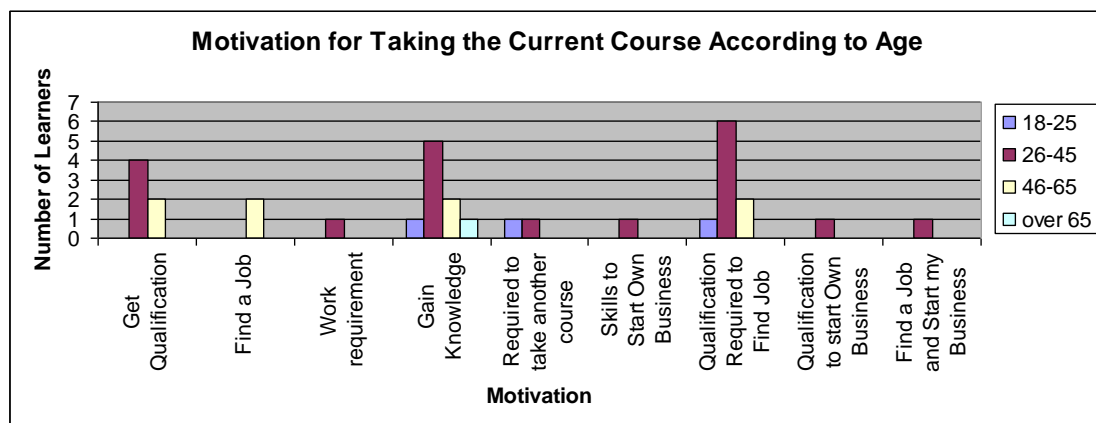


The given answers were:

- Age group 18-25 joined both because of self-interest in the subject studied and for finding a job.
- Age group 26-45 recorded the highest number for self-interest, finding a job or both together.
- In case of learners aged 46-65, it was self-interest and finding a job. However, there were some records for learning as a work requirement.
- There were no records in any age group for joining adult education for social reasons; however, for both age categories, 26-45 and 46 – 65, getting a friend was recorded together with other reasons like getting a job and self-interest.

13) The relationship between the motivation in choosing the course and the learner’s age is shown in the table below:

**Figure 5 – 11: Participants expectation of adult education according to their age:**



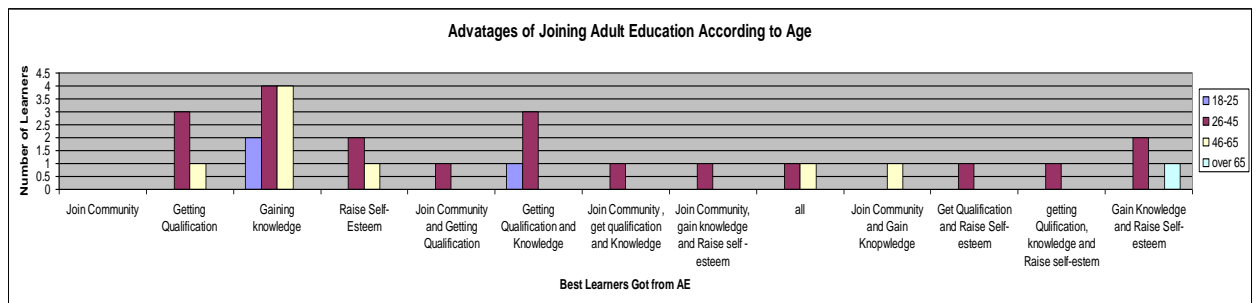
The answers were as follows:

- For the age group 18-25, the reasons were equal: gaining knowledge or as a path to another course (i.e. taking a computer course that would help in a future study, such as nursing or childcare) or a combination of getting the qualification to enhance their job prospects.
- For the age group 26–45, the reasons were: getting qualification, getting qualification to find a job or gaining knowledge. It is worth mentioning that a number of learners answered that they joined the course to get the skills required to start their own or home business.

- For the age group 46-65, the reasons were equal: gaining knowledge, finding a job or a combination of both.
- Lastly, the only learner aged over 65 years had joined to gain knowledge.

14) Benefits learners could obtain by joining adult education, besides learning new skills, were as shown below:

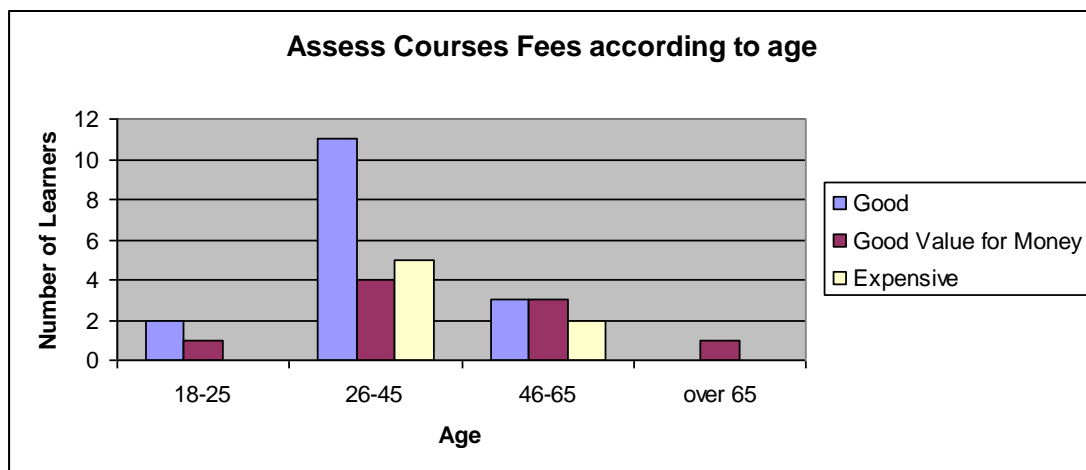
**Figure 5 – 12: Advantages of joining adult education according to the age:**



Most of the answers were a combination of ‘joining a community’, ‘getting qualification’, ‘gaining knowledge’ and ‘raising self-esteem’. However, the highest score for the three age groups was for ‘gaining knowledge’. The only learner over 65 years replied that gaining knowledge together with raising self-esteem was the best advantage that he gained from adult education.

15) To assess courses fees according to the learners’ ages, the data shows:

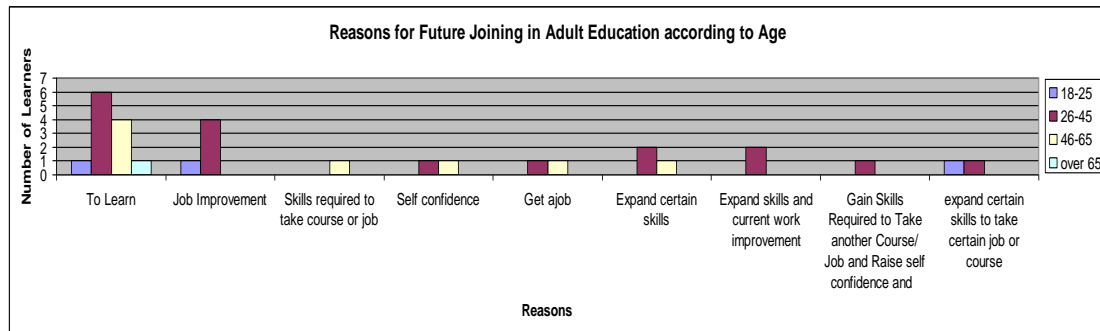
**Figure 5 – 13: Participants’ views of course fees according to their age:**



The majority thought that the fees were reasonable. However, a few from age groups 26-45 and 46 -65 thought it was expensive.

16) Furthermore, to analyse why learners wanted to join adult education in the future, the answers according to age were:

**Figure 5 – 14: Participants’ motivation for future learning according to age:**

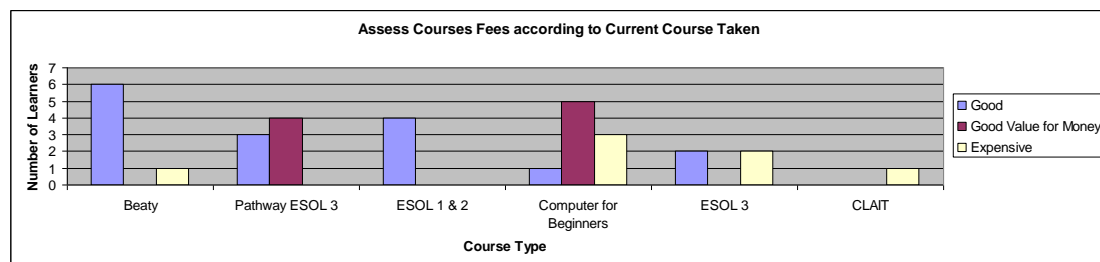


The answers were:

- For 18-25 year old learners, it was to learn skills and job improvement.
- For 26–45 years old, there were different reasons and combinations for learning, as seen in the graph.
- For the group aged 46-65, answers pointed out all possible reasons to learn i.e. gaining knowledge, enhancing job, raising self-confidence and getting a job.
- For the only learner aged over 65, learning was the only aim of joining adult education.

17) To assess course fees according to course type taken by the participants. The answers showed:

**Figure 5 – 15: Course fees according to course type:**

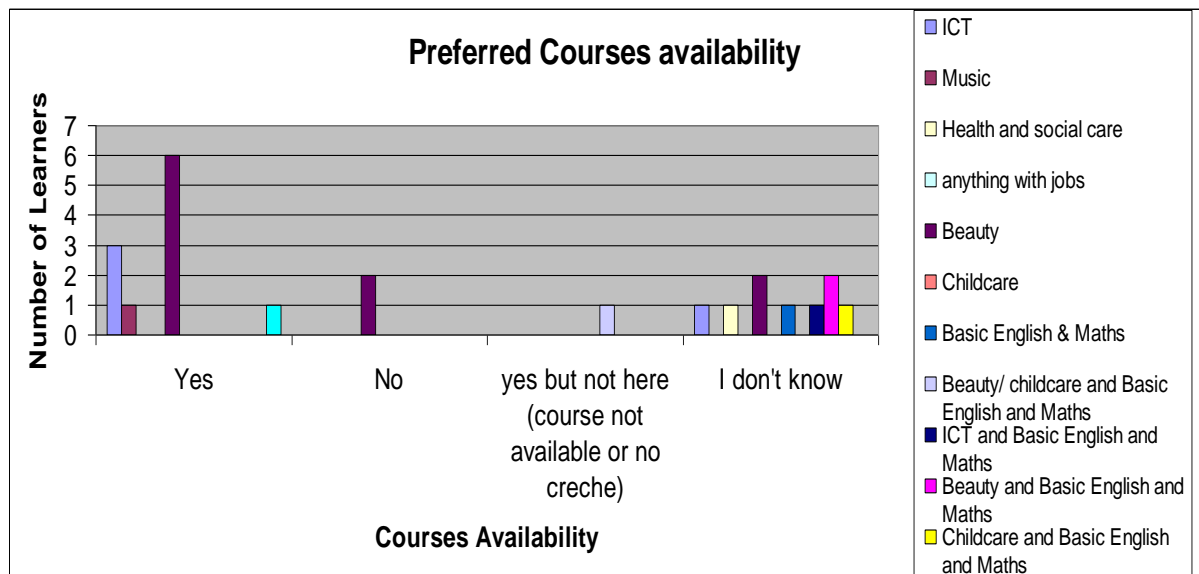




Computer course (beginners and CLAIT) learners thought that the fees were expensive. However, for most ESOL Level 1 and 2 and beauty courses, the learners thought the fees were reasonable.

18) To establish how much learners knew about the availability of their preferred courses, the returned results are as per the table below:

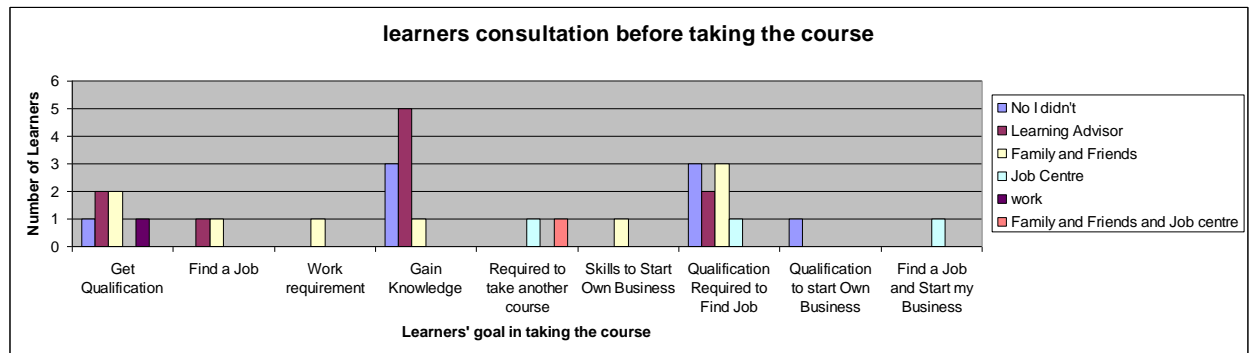
**Figure 5 – 16: Preferred courses availability:**



Most learners who wanted to learn about beauty knew that the courses were available. One learner mentioned that basic literacy and numeracy with beauty or childcare courses were not available in the centre but they were available in a different borough. The graph above shows that a good number of learners from different courses did not know if their preferred courses were available or not.

19) The results relating to the learners' aims of the course and the source of advice that the learners sought before joining are shown below:

**Figure 5 – 17: The relation between motivation to learn and source of advice sought by learners:**



It is obvious that most learners turned to learning advisors when seeking advice about getting qualifications, finding a job and especially gaining knowledge. Family and friends are another source of information for the learners. However, it is noticeable that there is not much reference to students from businesses or local job centres.

### **5.2.2 Findings from the Questionnaire Data**

From the above data and charts, I can conclude that from the sample used for this study of 32 learners, mostly were working age learners, i.e. learners aged 26-45 were 63% of the sample, and those aged 46-65 were 25%, while learners aged 18-25 together with learners over 65 were no more than 12% from the whole sample.

The motivation to embark on a course of study is a complex subject, as an adult's decision to learn is more likely to happen as a result of a combination of several factors (McGivney 1995). I noted that when it came to answering the question regarding the reasons behind the course choice, most of the students provided more than one answer. For the age group 18-25 and 26-45, the motivation to learn was for self-interest, to find a job with new skills or both. For the age group 46-65, it was for the same given reasons in addition to work improvement. Finally, for both groups 26-45 and 46-65, making friends was an extra benefit of joining the course.

Nevertheless, the results were similar to those obtained by Collins *et al* (2000), Dench and Regan (2000) and Schuller *et al* (2004): that although the learners' motives for joining adult education is to gain knowledge or qualifications, other benefits might be gained such as raising self confidence or becoming part of a community.

Indeed, the data showed that learners planned to join further courses, mainly to gain more skills or to continue the learning path in order to achieve further qualifications. Also, learners' choice of the course to study was largely informed by their interest in the subject rather than the degree of demand for the skills required by the market. The collected data supports Schuller *et al* (2004) and McGivney's (1995) suggestion that enhanced social life of the learners by taking courses in adult education was not the main reason to study, but it could provide extra benefits. Yet, the advantages of joining adult education for all the groups were mainly gaining knowledge and/or qualification; raising self-esteem and confidence was the third important advantage.

Furthermore, most respondents agreed that learning advisors who are available in the centre are the first resource of information learners would consider when deciding whether or not to join a course. However, most learners, as it seems from the questionnaire answers, have set themselves a path for learning, i.e. the path might start in taking English classes and later learning job skills such as ICT or childcare courses.

Most learners expressed their wishes to continue learning. Indeed a third of the learners, in the sample, knew that their preferred courses were available the following term. Bearing in mind, that the questionnaires were distributed at the end of the summer term.

Lastly, regarding the fees, more than half of the learners thought that the fees were good or good value for money. Indeed, the majority of respondents thought that the fees were reasonable.

### **5.3 Learners' Interviews Analysis**

The above analysis of the questionnaire shows that working-age adult learners plan their education to reach a certain goal. The plan starts with self-interest in a subject, or to gain employment skills or both. Learners enrol in adult education courses to fulfil their plans.

The interviews started from where the questionnaires finished. The interviews explored, in an in-depth manner, the learners' plans and thoughts about education, as well as how far these goals were achieved.

Analysing the data generated from the interviews went through different stages:

1. Close and frequent reading of the data, which involved looking carefully at the data with a view to identify aspects that could be significant. Notes of categories or topics to which the data related and are relevant to the research focus, have been usually made in the margins of recorded data (Sapsford and Jupp 1998).
2. Identifying initial themes by focusing on the analysis of the language, as the analyses of qualitative data mainly begin with the identification of key themes and patterns (Coffey and Atkinson 1996).
3. Re-reading the data and recording the main themes. While coding, the data differs from quantitative analysis, as it is not merely counting, but is rather attaching codes as a way of identifying and reordering the data. This allows the data to be considered in a different way and instead of beginning with a theory and proving it, the researcher begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge (Strauss and Corbin 1990).
4. Categorising similar themes together in clusters. This is for generating categories which collect several segments of data by comparing and contrasting all the items of the data in the same category to clarify the meaning of the emerging categories, as well as to identify sub-categories and relations among categories (Sapsford and Jupp 1998).
5. Searching for similar or different themes in each interview and comparing them with themes from other interviews (Kvale 1996).

After repeated readings of the learners' interview transcriptions, I initially identified 62 potential themes. Further readings of the transcripts produced another five. A list of these 67 themes was produced using Microsoft Excel Software (Appendix II). This helped merge themes and discover the initial structure of the themes (the clusters).

The themes that emerged were:

- ‘Help my children in their homework’
- ‘You learn to have quality time with your children’
- ‘If I learn and get a job I can pay for my son’s extra lessons outside school’

The above potential themes emerged together under ‘Help my children’. Also:

- ‘I need to think of my transportation is not only paying the course’
- ‘Pay for childcare’

The latter themes merged together as ‘extra expenses learners needed to pay’.

Lastly, themes like:

- ‘Learn useful knowledge like Internet or the language’
- ‘Learn what is useful at home for example gardening’

Both potential themes merged into ‘Learn knowledge or skills useful for life’. Subsequently, all themes were grouped into 15 clusters (Appendix II).

### **5.3.1 Cluster Analysis**

The learners interviewed were as follows:

**Table (5-1): List of learner interviewees who participated in the study:**

Learner	Age Group	Occupation	Motivation
A	46-65	Self-employed nurse	Gain qualification in order to become a nurse or first aid teacher
B	26-45	Qualified and unemployed	Join employment
C	18-25	Employed	Gain qualification (learning additional skills to improve current job)
D	over 65	Retired	Keep mind active and learn new skills
E	46-65	Employed	Improve current skills (the learner recently got a job after doing many adult education courses)

All learners were asked the same questions; however, the discussions were modified according to their motivation for learning. My idea was to explore their journey in adult education and see whether they perceived it to be successful or not. Their answers have been grouped in clusters as follow:

### **Cluster 1: The Benefit from Joining Adult Education**

The literature review in Section 1.6 suggested that the benefit of learning for adults could be any one of: getting or changing jobs, improving job prospects, increasing social contact, therapeutic benefits, physical and mental stimuli for older adults, increased confidence and self-esteem. Learners' interviews agreed that the benefit of education could be any of the above and added that learning made adults better parents in helping their children in their homework or in joining Family Learning courses in adult education, which helped them learn how to spend quality time with their children. Additionally, learners mentioned that learning has a positive effect on their day-to-day life; for instance, Learner A mentioned that learning to use the Internet can make life easy by knowing the train or bus timetables.

Surprisingly, two learners (D and E) agreed that sometimes learning new skills could later prove to be useful and also financially beneficial:

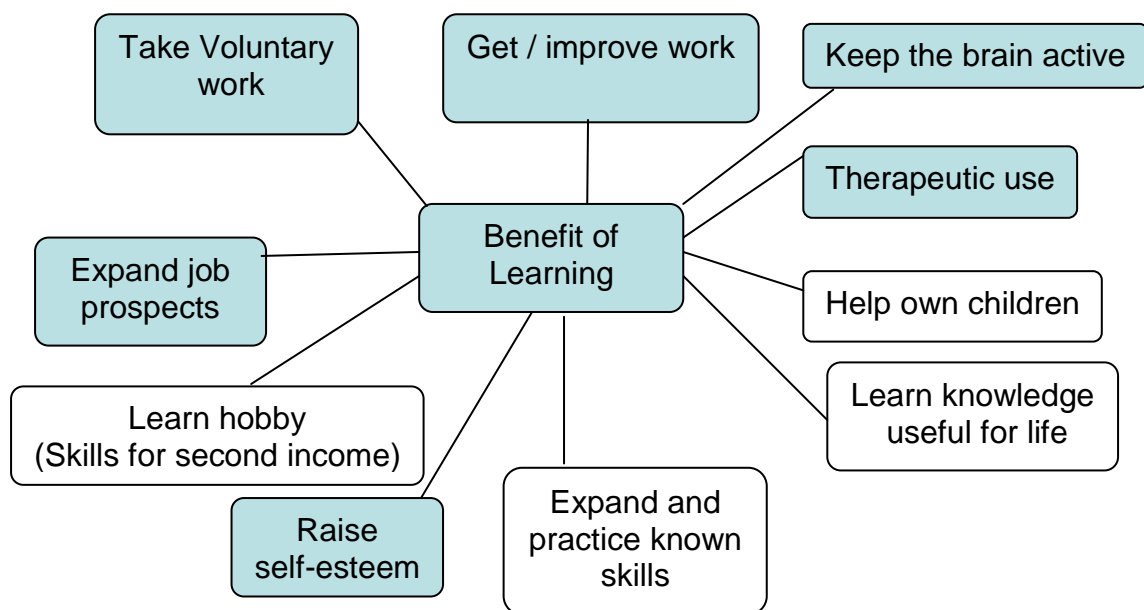
“Someone saw the tablecloth I have done and bought it from me. I have done tablecloth, back chairs, pillow covers, bags and mats. When people see it they buy it from me.” Learner D on taking an embroidery course.

All learners agreed that learning new skills opened up different job opportunities for them, in the way that gaining several qualifications enriched their CVs and this could impress employers. Moreover, four of the interviewed learners confirmed that they were taking voluntary jobs and were applying the learnt skills.

Learning has always been seen as a mental stimulus for older adults (McGivney 1995) and this was confirmed by Learner D whose age category is over 65. Nevertheless, Learners B and E mentioned that in the case of the unemployed, learning helped them to “pass the time in something useful” (Learner E). Both agreed that learning helps to

update their knowledge, expand it and gain experience for using the skills. Figure 5-18 shows the cluster along with its relevant themes. Boxes with a darker background represent the areas where the data agree with factors determined by the literature review (Section 1.6), while those with white backgrounds are new benefits emerging from the interview data:

**Figure 5-18: Adults benefits of learning:**



**Cluster 2: Motivation to learn**

Adults’ reasons for learning according to the literature review as seen in Section 1.6 were: to develop a career, gain a qualification, get or change a job, self-interest, and raised self-esteem (Bariso 2008, McGivney 1995). The interview data showed that the above reasons are valid except raising self-esteem, as there was no mention of that as a motivation in the interviews.

Learners A, B and C talked about two plans for their learning. For example, Learner C had recently come to the UK and had a short-term plan, which was merely to gain certain qualifications required in her current job (although C already has the qualification from back home). Further, she had a long-term plan of learning the

English language and office skills that would help her to work in an office in the future.

Furthermore, updating existing knowledge as a motivation to learn was agreed upon by the three qualified learners (B, C and D).

Learning for social reasons was not given high priority, as it was mentioned only once by Learner A:

“It is so nice to be able to help somebody... people and now when someone ask me how I can do this it is nice to know and help someone out.” Learner A

Moreover, the data showed that in the case of the unemployed learners or the pensioner, learning motivation is ‘better than doing nothing’, as it is a way to keep active and stay in touch with the outside world.

### **Cluster 3: Learning concept**

As seen in Chapters Two and Three the Labour Government emphasised learning that leads to jobs. From the learners’ point of view, learning should be free. Learners gave different opinions on what they thought about learning. For example, Learners A and D thought learning was a “life process”, while Learner D thought of learning as “give you the sense of achievement” and Learner A said “it is exciting to learn”. On the other hand, Learners B, C and E thought of it as a “factor” helping them to get a job.

### **Cluster 4: Learning path**

Learners already possessing a high level of qualification or in certain professions, like Learner A, who is a self-employed nurse and Learner B who is qualified in business administration (MBA), are looking for professional courses, such as a teaching course. Nevertheless, due to the high cost of professional courses, both learners together with Learner E said that they would join any free course to expand their skills and add them to their CVs.



Most learners (A, B, C and E) wanted to learn something related to their knowledge. For example, courses taken to expand the skills relevant to their current work and/or previous qualifications or choosing a higher level of what they were presently learning.

Learners B, C and E said that they were planning to take different basic computer courses so that they could get a job in an office. Learner C who is currently working as a hairdresser said “I want to work in an office or an airport”.

Only D wanted to enrol on a leisure course:

“Nowadays people don’t like arts, you only think about money... you like to learn computer so you can work in an office. You don’t do arts you just learn to get a job. There is more in life than just money. I would like to learn how to cycle or cook; new skills help me enjoy life and help others”

Learner D.

#### **Cluster 5: Learners’ next immediate step in learning**

When learners were asked about their plans for the following term, Learners A, B, D and E said that if the courses were not free then they were not going to join. Only Learner C expressed her desire to join again for GSCE level courses.

#### **Cluster 6: Learners’ sources of information about the courses**

Learners A, B and E agreed on consulting the learning advisor in the centre before joining. While Learner C mentioned the yearly brochure as a source for information, Learner D used the centre leaflet to know about the courses.

#### **Cluster 7: Learners’ views on the learning advisor service**

Learner A, who consulted the learning advisor before joining her course, said:

“I went to see her and I have qualification and a job and I know exactly what I want, so she was answering me adequately, but for someone else like a refugee for example... I don't think so.”

Learner A

Learner B was not sure that the learning advisor could help:

“I have seen one (learning advisor). Once I thought of teaching so I went to see the learning advisor in H. M. centre. I thought I might be able to teach in a secondary school. I followed it up to open day in training for teaching I am still thinking about it.... I didn't think the service would help in something like that (going back to Financial Business where I used to work before) to be honest.” Learner B.

Additionally, Learner C only went to the main centre to ask about any help on offer to pass the Living in the UK exam, while Learner E found that more professional help was available through the Career Development Group to reach her goal.

### **Cluster 8: Reasonable cost of courses fees**

Learners B and E said that courses must be free, while Learner D said that the fees should be a nominal sum of say £10.00. Moreover, Learner A answered that “it depends on the course,” so I again asked how much she would be ready to pay for the teaching course that she longed to take. Her answer was:

“I need to work out the hourly payment (as a teacher), availability of the work, how secure is the job. Then it is worth to pay a few hundred. But if it is a lot of money although I love to teach I will not be able to do it.”

Learner A

Obviously, A means that when she can guarantee the job after taking the course, paying a “few hundred” for a course is an investment. Learner C seems to be more comfortable about paying the fees, as the course she was taking is part of her present job. Nevertheless, she said:

“Prices are OK. I am working now I can pay. Before when I first come here to UK, I had no money to pay for courses. Now I am paying because I am working. The problem this year that my husband made redundant and I am back again not be able to pay.” Learner C

### **Cluster 9: Other training opportunities**

With regards to whether adults have other training route options, Learner B said that there are options, but they are too expensive. Learner A, who is employed and also doing voluntary work at her local church, has access to annual training through both. Moreover, as a governor in her child’s school, she has been offered many training opportunities from the council.

Furthermore, Learner D said that there are a few free courses offered in the centre for pensioners, which are not part of adult education. Learner E said that she knew of many groups and organisations linked to the job centre, such as Career Development Group, which offered courses with association of employment. Lastly, Learner C did not mention any training given while she was working in a beauty salon.

### **Cluster 10: How much can adult education help learners to find or change job?**

In examining if taking courses in adult education had helped learners to find their way in the job market, Learner B who was continuously searching for jobs, said from her experience that “employers look for experience not education”. Both Learners B and E agreed that adult education helps learners start the journey in the job market by giving adults proper training for general basic skills required. However, the job market has its own filtering system, which makes it hard for adults to join, such as years of experience, and the discrimination towards older workers or women. Learners agreed that the given reason as well as the current recession make finding a job a difficult task.

Help offered by adult education towards a job was described by both B and E as limited to writing a CV, basic search for jobs using the Internet and trivial training on

interview skills. Only C said that adult education proved to be of good help in her career, as she managed to get most of the qualifications required to develop her job.

### **Cluster 11: Learners reaching their goals**

I asked learners if they had or would reach their goals in taking adult education courses. Learners B and E said that the qualifications offered by adult education, such as computer courses (CLAIT), are not required by the job market, so, in their case, they were still struggling to find or change jobs and had not achieved their goals. In Learner B's opinion, the courses offered by adult education were too basic, especially for university graduates.

Additionally, Learner A said that if courses for the next term were not free, she would not achieve her goal of getting a teaching qualification and changing her job. Lastly, only Learner C confirmed again that she would reach her goal when she gained all the qualifications required for her work.

### **Cluster 12: Learners' hopes for adult education**

Learner A suggested that there should be more funded courses, while Learners D and E wanted more courses related to daily life. Interestingly, Learner B suggested:

“Adult education should be more targeted. Why not contact organisations and see if they needed volunteers that would help women or people out of a job market and go back or target employers, whereby adult education could train people for them, thereby helping the company save money on training and people to find a job. Young people and those who are going back to work after a period will always face the answer “you don't have experience” but how can I have experience if no one is giving me job?” Learner B

Yet again, Learner C seemed to be happy with what was offered.

### **Cluster 13: Other issues that need to be taken into consideration by the adult education service**

Learners agreed that each of them had different needs according to their age, financial and personal circumstances. These needs should be taken into consideration while planning for future courses. For example, Learner D needs leisure courses to keep her active and “not to be sick”, while Learner E mentioned that her 21 year old daughter does not need an IT course which she learnt at school, but she needed to know how to budget her expenses.

Furthermore, Learner C said that courses, in general, are expensive not only with respect to the fees paid towards the course, but due to additional expenses, such as transportation. Learner E agreed that there were childcare costs to be taken into consideration while taking the course or working.

Learner E mentioned that adult education presumed that learners already had access to the Internet and a mobile telephone, the lack of which made it difficult while searching for jobs. To solve this problem, she joined the Career Development Group, which offered access to the Internet and telephone services as well as newspapers specialising in job advertisements.

Learners B and E stressed that adult education should offer “women back to work” courses, as women are more likely to cut their careers to raise their family and this cut cost them a big struggle when going back to work.

### **Cluster 14: Adult education support**

Learners mentioned that they had received good support from adult education tutors and staff while learning.

## **Cluster 15: Learners' views about course fees**

All learners agreed that courses should be free. Learners A and E added that it was not fair that funds were available only for the unemployed. Learner E said:

“(Courses need) to be free, doesn't matter who is it for. If you are not working it should be free. If you are working it should still be free... why?... If you are working then they shouldn't penalise you for it. If you are rich and you can afford a lot of money then of course you can pay for your education. But for people who are on the border line or even middle class, education should be free.”

Learner E

Learner C confirmed the above by saying that costs were reasonable only when learners were working and earning.

### **5.3.2 Findings from Learners' Interviews**

In the interviews, I explored the learners' journeys in adult education and discussed their needs, aims and understanding of learning. My conclusions are as follows:

The data from learners' interviews reflected the arguments put forward by Bariso (2008) (as well as with the questionnaire data in this research) about learning motivation. Basically, adults' motivation to learn is to find/develop/change job as well as to gain qualifications and increase their knowledge in certain subjects. However, occasionally learners of working age (18-65) have both short-term and long-term plans for learning. The short-term plan involves a learning motivation for gaining immediate results, for example to develop the current job, while the long-term plan means gaining different skills to expand their job prospects in order to apply for a different or a higher-scaled job. For older learners (pensioners) the collected data supported Dench and Regan's assertion (2000) that the main motivation for older learners is self-interest in the subject and remaining active.

Although learners stated that gaining skills for employment, passing qualifications and/or increasing knowledge are the main reasons to join education, they acknowledged that the benefits from learning were wider: learning has indirectly helped them to become better parents and/or to cope with the hard times when unemployed.

In general, learners like to learn something associated with the courses taken previously or their current qualifications in such a way that it helps them enhance their skills. Yet, they confirmed Payne's (1991) and Raisborough's (1999) findings that although learning might start as a leisure activity, in many cases it proved to be financially beneficial when skills learnt in such courses were later used in an additional job.

The learners' main sources of information about the offered adult education programmes are the learning advisors, the brochures and the leaflets produced by the centre. However, they stressed that learning advisors are helpful for those learners who have little knowledge of adult education, such as those who are new to the country or are new to adult education, but not quite as helpful for the more educated, such as university graduates or professionals.

Furthermore, learners agreed that learning is a lifelong process and should be free; applying fees on education would turn them away from learning. Learners explained that when enrolling on a course there are direct costs which is the course fees and indirect costs, such as transportation and childcare, which need to be taken into account. When these courses do not guarantee gaining employment by the end of it then learners cannot see an investment in the money spent on their education. Without a doubt, adult education is providing learners with basic skills; however, learners are struggling to get a job, as, quite often, employers require experience rather than qualifications (Wolf 2009). Indeed, this is particularly true for women who are more likely to have gaps in their career lifecycle to have children and raise a family (Green *et al* 2004). The data collected showed that for the graduate mums who participated in this survey, it was very difficult to return even to a lower-level job. This is due to different factors, such as the relative high cost of professional courses, being out of the job market for a long and lack of recent experience.

Moreover, although Labour Government policies stress skills for employment and encourage the unemployed to gain qualifications in order to join the labour market, from the interviews it seems that working adults have access to free training programmes at work, which allow them to enhance their current jobs. For the unemployed, however, free adult education is the only way to learn and improve, despite the fact that the courses available tend to be basic and short. For example, courses that tend to provide help with CV writing, interview skills and job search seem to be more like one-day workshops. The only successful story was Learner E who found a job, but this was after joining the Career Development Group (a charity organisation which helps the unemployed to find and sustain employment) and not as a result solely of adult education. The group gave her intensive training for interviews, writing applications and CV and it also provided her daily with a phone line, Internet and newspaper advertised job vacancies.

#### **5.4 Practitioners' Interviews Analysis**

The practitioners' interviews took place with:

**Table (5-2): List of practitioners' interviewees:**

Code	Job
F	ICT tutor
H	Arts tutor
J	Path to Work courses tutor (ESOL and Hair and Beauty)
I	Learning Advisor who was responsible for planning certain courses in the centre funded by Heathrow City Partnership help unemployed to work in the airport
G	Learning Advisor based at the centre for one day and another day at the job centre

Mostly, practitioners were given the same questions as the learners; however, these questions were modified according to the experience and speciality of the practitioner.

Repeatedly reading the interviews produced 51 themes, which were divided into 13 clusters. Further reading produced another cluster with six themes regarding the practitioners' suggestions to improve the centre.



## **Cluster 1: purpose of adult education**

For both Tutor J and Learning Advisors I and G, the purpose of adult education was to provide learners with the qualifications that would help them improve their current job or get new jobs, in the case of the unemployed. Arts Tutor H with the ICT tutor agreed that knowledge would give a sense of achievement and empower people by increasing learners' self-confidence. The ICT tutor said:

“Education is about giving people... people want to feel they are worthwhile. They need to feel they have a worth in their own way and somebody will be proud of them. Some people choose to do academic study, their parents are proud if the child becomes a brain surgeon... or whatever... others feel proud because they do unpaid work because they are perhaps helping people less fortunate than themselves. So, I think the broad aspect needs to be how an individual feels worthwhile or what will make that individual proud of themselves and give them support to achieve that. So support might be the access to education.” Tutor F (ICT tutor)

Additionally, Tutors F and H and Learning Advisor G stressed that education and learning different skills would open opportunities. Stories have been told about learners who started basic courses which encouraged them later to take further courses. From then onwards, their life changed because of the greater confidence they had gained.

The arts tutor raised the point that education helped pull people together to share their problems, relax and make friends:

“Learners said that it is so relaxing (to do the course) and we know our children are well looked after in the crèche. Half of the women don't have any childcare and they have this opportunity of their children being looked after so they sit, work and share their problems. I remember one woman was doing beauty care course then she said to the other why don't you come and do

some message in my course and from there she started a friendship.” Tutor H (Arts tutor)

## **Cluster 2: Adult education addressing individual needs**

The tutors suggested that the adult education courses do not satisfy all individual needs. The ICT Tutor F mentioned that with a mixed class of older and younger adults, the younger adults tended to enjoy more research-based education; for example, designing projects by using the Internet, while older learners still preferred the chalk and the board. In this case, she suggested to the service the creation of an “ICT for the Retired” course. In this course, the elderly can enjoy the traditional teaching methods as well as learn useful practical tasks, such as booking theatre tickets online or searching the internet for the train timetable.

Tutors F and J pointed out that from their experience they found that older learners tended to join courses in order to keep their minds active as well as for being members of a community with the opportunity of making new friends. Gaining qualifications is not particularly useful for older learners and having an exam at the end of the course might at times be stressful.

However, both Learning Advisors agreed that although the available funding is for courses with routes to work, there were older learners applying:

“Actually it (Route to Work - ICT course) was completely open. The only restriction was that they must live in a certain area and we had an allowance of 20% outside of that area. But otherwise, it was completely open to anybody. We did have someone who was 87 years old and we actually thought how can we enrol him? He is not looking for work but there was nothing in the rule we said we can’t. He wanted to improve his skills.” Learning Advisor I

Both Learning Advisors I and G mentioned the 87 year old learner who joined the ICT class in the centre.

Furthermore, the Arts Tutor H emphasised that after doing a course for the young mums, she felt “if the mums are relaxed then they treat their children in a better way. They won’t be so exhausted.” She said:

“I still think there should be few free courses. I think for the young mums they need something especially in hard to reach areas like where this centre is. I feel strongly about that.”

### **Cluster 3: Do adult education courses help learners to join the job market?**

All practitioners agreed that by taking adult education courses, job opportunities are improved in both direct and indirect ways; directly, by giving the students the right qualification to obtain a job, as mentioned by Tutor J and Learning Advisors I and G; indirectly, by raising self confidence and awareness, as stated by the ICT tutor. She related a story about her learner who completed “*European Computer Driving Licence*” courses and recently got a job as an administrator in her local school:

“The new employer wasn’t looking specifically for the qualification but what the qualification did is gave the student the confidence to apply for the job.” Tutor F (ICT)

The Arts Tutor H and both Learning Advisors I and G emphasised that arts courses empowered learners and aided them in relaxing, which had a positive effect on learners. Other success stories have been told.

### **Cluster 4: Is adult education sensitive to the needs of the job market?**

While discussing how adult education can respond to the job market, tutor F said that employers normally look for experience rather than education. Additionally, she mentioned that the job market has its own problems, such as age and sex discrimination, which need to be solved.

Learning Advisor I suggested that adult education needs to concentrate on training for job interviews, as ‘doing well’ in the interview is the way to get a job.

The Path to Work Tutor J had different views as she thought that the job market is more flexible. Her learners managed to get jobs although their English language was not up to Level 3. She said:

“You know it depends on what they are going to do. If for example they are going to work in a supermarket their English must be good, but for example there is a Polish hairdressing in the borough. All the girls who work there speak only Polish and all their customers are Polish so there is no need to learn or get a qualification.” Tutor J (Path to Work – ESOL and Hair and Beauty)

Tutor J believes that a qualification is what the job market is looking for together with the experience in the field.

### **Cluster 5: Practitioners’ knowledge of the job market**

The learning advisors and tutors agreed that they have not been given official training to understand the job market requirements; therefore they use the Internet regularly to look for information and update their knowledge.

### **Cluster 6: Practitioners’ knowledge of the Government funding of adult education courses**

Tutor H (Arts) and J (ESOL and Hair and Beauty) said that they did not know a great deal about the funding for adult education. Tutor F (ICT) said in the annual tutors’ meetings she has been “briefed” about the funding:

“When I moved from industry to adult education what I found I was one tutor of many, some tutors will only be teaching for two hours

... or a few evenings a week, while some tutors are teaching full time. The career in adult education is very evident, it is very difficult to the management to convene a session where all tutors will get together and so...in all the years I have been employed in the borough I never felt I was correctly briefed on how adult education was moving in terms of relationship with the government and funding.” Tutor F (ICT)

Similarly, both learning advisors said that they did not know much about funding.

### **Cluster 7: The effect of the recent policies on adult learners**

Tutor F noticed that there were fewer older learners in her classes. She explained that older learners were pressured by the examination and qualification:

“I saw people in my class who have to do qualifications and felt so under pressure about the qualification that they had to buy a laptop... I had an 89 year old pensioner who felt so under pressure she bought herself a laptop. Within weeks of getting the laptop, because she didn’t understand the technology, she got viruses and eventually everything stopped working.”

She also raised a point regarding learners who are sent from the job centre to take a course in adult education saying “whose choice is it, the job centre or the student’s?”

Both learning advisors disagreed with F’s points that there were still older learners applying to the courses. Additionally, they both stressed that when sending learners to enrol on a course through learning advisors or a job centre, normally, the choice of the course is the learners’ and there is no pressure applied.

The three practitioners F, I and G above agreed that the Government with its expectations of everyone having a minimum of an equivalent to 5 GCSE

qualifications or above is ignoring the fact that individuals have different abilities and are not the same.

Tutor J and the Learning Advisor G thought that cutting the funding resulted in the increase in course fees, while Tutor H and Learning Advisor I thought that cutting the funding resulted in the disappearance of most of the leisure courses.

Tutors H and J with the Learning Advisor I confirmed that with new funding there was no perceptible increase in the number of younger adults applying for adult education.

Interestingly, Learning Advisor I said that the new funding helped many adults to return to work. Nevertheless, she was surprised to see that “one of the things we saw during the period of this course (Routes to Work) was new rules came in, which was if you have a child over the age of 12 you have to leave income support and go to job seeker benefit then start looking for work. We saw people who have children with a 12 year gap before having another child to stay on the income support. We saw at least two who did that”.

Learning Advisor G suggested that when setting funding budgets or new policies, professional advisors should be involved, as they were closer to their customers than anyone else.

### **Cluster 8: Adult education and graduate learners**

Tutor F raised a point regarding university graduate learners; through her experience she found that graduates would benefit from courses aimed at helping them prepare a professional looking CV, while searching the Internet for jobs is rather basic for graduates. She added that the learning advisor service was limited when it came to graduate learners seeking specific professions.

## **Cluster 9: Practitioners' hopes for adult education**

Tutors F, H and the learning advisors agreed that adult education should offer a variety of courses (with and without qualification) to respond to adults' needs. They suggested that targeting groups (elderly, young, mums, etc) will benefit learners as the courses will be customised to their needs. Moreover, Tutors F and H recommended that adult education should help learners in choosing the courses suitable for them according to his/her needs and not just to fill classes.

If the idea is that learners should get a job at the end of the course, Tutor J recommended that adult education should offer, as far as possible, an environment which is similar to the work environment.

Learning Advisor I suggested that more training for interview skills was needed as well as giving learners working knowledge, such as how to behave at work or how to get a promotion.

Lastly, Tutor H and Learning Advisor G highlighted that crèches and reasonable course fees guaranteed full courses.

## **Cluster 10: Course Resources**

Learners should be informed of any course resources that they might need while doing the course (such as a laptop for learners in qualification courses or art materials for arts learners). This has been mentioned by the ICT and arts tutors (F and H).

Learning Advisor I said that the availability of places in the crèche for the learners' children while the parent was undergoing the course should be discussed when enrolling.

Logically, Tutor J pointed out that if courses are linked to the job market then learners need to know their rights at work, their possible range of hourly payment and any other issues related to work.

### **Cluster 11: Retention in adult education**

One of the subjects that came up while discussing the future and the funding of adult education was the retention problem in adult education. All practitioners agreed that dropping out is a problem and always would be.

Tutors F and J thought that drop out was not a problem and in their opinion it was just a reflection of the way adults are engaged with their work and family life. At times, learning for adults can be cut short because of a change in their personal circumstances. To avoid learners dropping out Tutor H suggested:

“I met P. (Widening Participation Manager). He said he put on a course of fitness training, not a massive fitness training (course), but an easy one. It was like you pay a pound first session and if you come to all the sessions then at the end you get the money back. All learners completed the course.” Tutor H (Arts)

### **Cluster 12: What increases learners’ commitment to the courses?**

Tutor J pointed out that childcare is one of the most important factors that could have an effect on learners’ commitment. Moreover, she said that in her class learners who came from abroad while they had qualifications and work experience in their home country needed to retake the basic courses so that they could qualify to work or take advanced courses. She noticed that those learners were not committed, as what they were learning was too basic for their current skills.

### **Cluster 13: Practitioner’s involvement with learners**

Tutor F mentioned that her learners might call her at home to ask for her advice when applying for a job, while Learning Advisor G said that before the actual start of courses, she would take the initiative to call her learners and remind them about the commencement date. Although it was additional work for her, it earned her learners’ appreciation and helped ensure a full class.



## **Cluster 14: Suggestion to improve the centre**

The practitioners made the following suggestions:

- Crèche and reasonable fees suggested by Tutor H.
- Tutor J emphasised the need for more marketing activities, such as advertising for the courses.
- Tutor F's suggestion was to offer a range of courses that would satisfy a wider audience.
- Tutor H and both Learning Advisors (G and I) stressed that funded programmes like Sure Start and Home Start proved to be successful and should not have been stopped.

Learning Advisor G said:

“Projects will run for 2 years and with luck another year added, and just when people get used to that, it has been taken from them. The blanket was pulled away from under people's feet so why can't the Government think of something which is going to be stable? For example, Sure Start started (year) 2000 and people get used to it and know what is happening with it. Equally with Home Start people know these projects and recognise them so they never fear of what is going to happen. In Lone Parent our team was three people. I have seen 30 people gone from Lone Parent to the job centre to look for a job, and between me and my colleague in the team they probably have sent another 30 or more.”

Learning Advisor G

Finally, Learning Advisor G suggested “Building Confidence” courses that improve learners' chances in the job market.

### **5.4.1 Findings from Practitioners' Interviews**

From the five interviews with the practitioners, I found that the practitioners believed adult education is a springboard from which a learner would hopefully join the job

market. Indeed, they stated that adult education helps learners in a direct way as it provides them with the technical knowledge to 'do' a job, yet learning indirectly bolsters their confidence to help them 'sell' themselves and empower them. Practitioners believe that the purpose of adult education mainly is to support adults and fulfil their dreams in learning and gaining knowledge. They insisted that if learners fail to gain employment this does not mean that the education provided is not competent or adults are not learning.

Nevertheless, practitioners pointed out that in order for adult education to become a provider of employees to the job market and to encourage more adults to learn new skills, learners need more rigorous courses, especially in interview skills training to assist them with job applications. Tutors should be trained to understand job market requirements and updated regularly. Additionally, the scope of adult education provision should be widened, so that a variety of subject courses and training are offered to cater for a wider audience. On the other hand, additional facilities must be provided, such as the provision of childcare service, which would certainly help to attract more learners.

Moreover, targeting groups was highly recommended by the practitioners. For example, courses needed to be fine-tuned so that they meet the aspirations and objectives of differing groups, such as older and younger learners. However, although recent funding has targeted young adults, practitioners have noted that the number of learners in this age group has not actually increased. It is important to mention here that the Department for Children, Schools and Families statistics released in June 2009 indicates that one in six adults aged 18 to 24 in England are not in education, employment or training. Practitioners were in favour of using programmes such as Sure Start, Home Start, Lone Parent, etc, which proved to be successful in the past in addressing the local needs, helping different adults to progress to employment as well as create a community sense amongst the locals.

Finally, a concern has been raised during the practitioners' interviews with regard to the rising cost of course fees, together with the emphasis on adult learning being a conduit to the job market, which in their opinion have resulted in the decrease in the number of leisure and unaccredited courses and number of learners enrolling.

## **5.5 Comparison between Learners' and Practitioners' Views**

In comparing the answers of the learners and the practitioners, below are the findings from learners' questionnaires and interviews:

1) It is clear from the questionnaires that learners plan their learning in a series of courses (Section 5.2.2). These courses are usually taken consecutively in the same subject but at increasing levels of difficulty. The learners' interviews showed that learners could have more than one plan. For example, employed learners might have two plans (see Cluster 2 - page 128), such as:

- Short-term plan: with the aim of improving their current job.
- Long-term plan: with the aim of changing their job for a better one.

For the unemployed learners, both the questionnaires and the interviews showed that they would take as many courses as they could in order to enrich their CV and increase their options in the job market.

On the other hand, pensioners in the questionnaires and the interviews showed that they would sit through almost any course that interests them to fill their time and keep them active and updated (see Figure 5-10 and Cluster 4 - page 129).

2) Motivation to learn, as shown by both the questionnaires (see Figure 5-2) and the interviews (see Cluster 2 - page 128) could be for self-interest in the subject studied where learners would develop their interest and skills that might later on turn into gainful employment. Another powerful motive is learning to gain qualifications, as these might open the doors to the job market. Lastly, learning for social reasons appeared to be a secondary value for learning.

3) The immediate benefit of adult education is improvement of skills and knowledge (Figure 5-2). However, there are other learning outcomes such as making new friends, relaxation, raising confidence, and helping own children (see Figure 5-8 and 5-18).

4) Learning, as far as learners are concerned, is a lifelong process. In the questionnaires (Section 5.2.2) and the interviews (Cluster 3 - page 129), there was a consensus that the learners were going to continue with their learning.

5) Naturally, employed learners were more comfortable while paying the course fees than the unemployed, particularly when they felt that the course is a good investment and will help them improve their income.

6) Most learners consulted learning advisors prior to enrolling (see Figure 5-3). However, during interviews many learners thought that the learning advisors' knowledge in some aspects was rather limited (Cluster 6 and 7 - page 130).

7) Interviews showed that employed adults may have access to training at work, while the unemployed are completely reliant on what is on offer through adult education (Cluster 9 - page 132).

8) For learners, the 'real' cost is not only the course fee but also other indirect costs, such as transportation, crèche and, quite possibly, additional resources, such as telephone or Internet lines (Cluster 13 - page 133).

When comparing the data collected from the learners with the data collected from the practitioners, the findings are as follow:

9) Practitioners (Cluster 1 - page 126) and learners (Cluster 1 – page 137) both agreed that the benefits of learning might exceed gaining a qualification or joining employment, to increase self-confidence, keep the mind active, and meet new friends.

10) Targeting group suggested by learners (Cluster 12 - page 133) and practitioners (Cluster 2 - page 138) to satisfy learners' needs and to maximise the benefits of the course. For example, offer courses for pensioners to help them cope with the new technology or for young adults to understand work ethics, tax systems, etc.

11) Learners (Cluster 10 - page 132) agreed with practitioners (Cluster 4 – page 140) that employers look for experience as well as qualifications.

12) Learners need to be trained in interview skills in greater depth than what is currently offered ((Cluster 9 - page 143) and (Cluster 10 - page 132)).

13) Practitioners (Cluster 1 - page 137) as well as learners (Cluster 1 - page 126) pointed out that learners might start with arts or leisure courses and that these skills could be put to use in a secondary job later. Additionally, both agreed that these courses were of therapeutic value, which helped learners relax and gain confidence.

14) Practitioners (Cluster 10 – page 144) agreed with the learners (Cluster 13 – page 133) that the ‘real’ cost for the course was not just the fees but also the additional costs, as mentioned earlier.

The above points were illuminated by the data collected for this study. In the next part, I will discuss these points under the concept of globalisation and Labour Government approach for adult education.

## **5.6 Discussion**

Education has changed under the effects of globalisation and the rapid development of technology and communication. The learning system and concept has changed not just in the UK, but across the world, which has resulted in a shift in the society from industrialisation towards information and knowledge-based society. In the new circumstances, education has become lifelong learning and training including developing transferable skills and knowledge that can be applied to competitive markets where knowledge and information is being traded as a commodity (Chinnammai 2005). Thus, lifelong learning emphasised the idea of learners who are prepared to upgrade their knowledge and skills to survive and flourish in the knowledge-based economy, where skills together with knowing how to access

information and examine it critically, rather than knowing specific things, become an asset (Brine 2006). Therefore, the Labour Government's approach to adult education was to withdraw the Government's support and fund for non-vocational provision, while the funding continued for vocational courses related to employment skills (Hughes *et al* 2006). As the aim of this study is to examine the impact of the Labour Government's approach in a typical centre of adult education, for this centre the findings were: useful

1) Learners' awareness of the need to continuously update to their knowledge: The data shows that adult learners within working age (18-65 years old) are mostly learning to gain skills for current or future employment and are aware of the importance of gaining the skills or the qualifications to enhance their job prospectus. Hence, for adults, motivation to learn is purely instrumental for vocational courses, while intrinsic for non-vocational (NIACE 1999). However, in the case of vocational courses, if they are the only courses funded and offered with affordable prices, adults will join only vocational provision and ignore other interests that non-vocational courses may fulfil. This approach to adult education may have some use for adults of working age, but older learners in retirement age or those who are not planning to join employment would either join vocational courses and gain useless qualifications or opt out of learning. On the other hand, those learners who are not confident to join vocational courses and fear failing their exams may decide not to learn as well.

2) The Labour Government respond to globalisation: The data shows that learners who are employed have a wider choice of courses than the unemployed. Hence, the employed have access to in-work training, can afford to pay for non-funded courses, and are able to join those on offer which are funded. The Labour Government supported learning in order to gain employment skills, yet it looks as if employed adults have more options while unemployed ones have to choose from only the funded courses on offer. This raises a concern about the effectiveness of the Government's approach towards helping unemployed adults to join the job market.

3) Globalisation and education: Local community organisations can play an important role, together with the government, in financing education and ensuring local participation - at a time when the state is gradually withdrawing from educational

provision (Mok and Lee (2003); Schuller and Watson (2009)). According to learner (E) and three practitioners (H, I and G) organisations such as Sure Start worked effectively in the centre and have proved to be successful in addressing local needs for learning and helping learners find means of employment. Yet these organisations are also suffering from cuts in their funding, which caused a reduction in their offers and ability to help adults in the area. On the other hand, interestingly the data shows that there is no evidence of cooperation between the local job centre, local businesses and the providers of adult education to support local people and lead them to employment. For example, there is no record for adults who have been sent from the local job centre or even local businesses to join the courses on offer.

4) Knowledge economy and the creation of learning society: A knowledge-based economy needs a real lifelong learning society, going beyond the traditional focus on formal education, but with a parity of esteem for formal education, non-formal education and informal learning (EU 2010). Indeed, the learners in the sample expressed their wishes to carry on learning to gain knowledge for employment as well as for personal development. In particular, learners of working age were aware of the importance of learning to update their skills in order to stay active in the job market. However, the provision of adult education during the Labour Government focused only on vocational courses leading to the acquisition of employment skills. Thus, in the absence of Government support for adult education and with the introduction of charges for some courses, learners stated that they would join only free courses on offer and ignore their other learning needs. This raises a concern about the possibility of creating a learning society. Indeed, as Tuckett (2010) has emphasised, the reduction of public expenditure on lifelong learning would be a wholly counterproductive measure. It would have the effect of reducing the UK's economic competitiveness as well as increasing costs in areas such as health, criminal justice and community cohesion.

From all the above, it is clear that learners believe in learning throughout their lifespan. However, when there are charges for learning then adults in the researched centre decided to opt out of learning. The Labour Government's approach to adult education favoured the withdrawal of all public support. Yet, the Government intervened in promoting work-related skills and training, while leaving adults with no

other option but to take upon themselves the financial responsibility to continue learning and updating their skills in order to keep being employed.

## **5.7 Summary**

The journey of data collection started with distributing the questionnaires. 32 learners completed the questionnaires, which outlined learners' behaviour towards learning and education. Later, five interviews with learners were conducted to explore in-depth learners' journeys through adult education. These methods of data collection were adopted to answer the research questions regarding the needs of adult learners and to explore how far adult education, during Labour Government, met these needs.

The chapter has outlined the findings from the data collected using the questionnaire and interviews. The findings were discussed in the light of the globalisation effect on policies and adult learners. The next chapter presents the study's conclusions in the light of the findings discussed in this chapter.



# Chapter Six

## Conclusion

### 6.1 Research Findings

The research questions, which underpinned this study (and which were outlined in Chapter One) were: What are the aims and expectations of adult education in the modern society in the UK? How far has adult education met the different needs of the adult learners and policy makers' objectives? The aim of this research has been to examine the extent to which adult education met the objectives of the Labour Government and learners' needs and the expectations that both Government and learners have about the role of adult education. To that end, Labour Government's policies were evaluated and the review was extended to include relevant research that investigated the Government's expectations of adult education. Furthermore, in order to analyse learners' aims, expectations and experiences, questionnaires were distributed to learners and interviews were conducted with learners and practitioners in the field. Overall, the main findings of the study were:

1. The Labour Government's approach: the Government's policies primarily focused on young adults, their employability, and the promotion of vocational courses. The Labour Government rhetoric was humanistic in its focus on individual growth and development. However, in practice, adult education policies were directed more towards the job market and employing learning as a tool for economic growth.
2. The learners' needs: literature review and the data collected both highlighted the same theme: for learners education is not only about getting a job, but also about improving personal life, raising self-confidence and keeping the mind active. The case study showed that adults normally plan their learning and always have an aim when undertaking a course. However, in the absence of their preferred courses, they tend to take whatever free course is on offer.

Research for this study has shown that learners' concepts of learning and their expectations of education are different from those of the Labour Government and adult education has not lived up to the expectations of either of them. The adult education provision, as explored in the centre where I work, has not fulfilled the goal of lifelong learning for adults, whom education is supposed to help in improving themselves either financially (by helping them get a job) or by broadening their horizons and skills. Indeed, it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between lifelong learning as a human process of learning throughout an individual's life and lifelong learning as a governmental strategy to ensure economic prosperity (Jarvis *et al* 2003).

Understandably, there was a need for the Labour Government to create a learning culture where adults update their knowledge continuously in order to be able to face ever-changing technology and the challenges of globalisation. The report of the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (2008) explains that the structure of the economic and technological changes in response to globalisation, places UK firms and workers in competition with those from across the globe and reinforces the need for UK firms to continue to innovate and offer higher quality goods and services.

While I agree with this, I would argue that the adult education courses with their limited programmes did not prepare individuals for such challenges (as seen from the data collected that many adults are struggling to gain employment despite the number of courses taken) and also ignored other benefits of education, which society, as well as individuals, require. The motive of *learning in order to get a job* is one purpose of learning, but definitely not the only one, and the benefits of learning exceed merely getting a qualification or a job. As Hatch *et al* (2007) explain, ideally, policies and programmes should be directed towards increasing adult education in mid and later life, especially among those educationally and economically disadvantaged. Hatch *et al* emphasise that adult education has benefits that go beyond increasing employment skills, such as social integration, well-being, and potential health benefits for later life as it helps to delay cognitive decline.

The following sections outline in detail the findings of the study with respect to the provision of adult education during the Labour Government.

## **6.2 Adult Education Provision: Policies in Practice**

In this study, I have explored the concept of adults learning and the Labour Government's education policies during 1997 - 2010. I have drawn a number of conclusions about the Labour Government's aims and ideas about the mainstream of provision of adult education, which I have summarised in the following points:

1. Labour Government focused primarily on younger people, who are considered economically active. The discourse of lifelong learning was linked, through the labour market and development of skills and training, to economic participation and the knowledge economy (Hughes *et al* 2006). This has resulted in reducing the number of older learners (Harrop 2006), and at the same time, it has not necessarily proved hugely successful with younger learners. The proportion of young adults in the 18 – 24 age group who are NEET (not in employment, education or training), according to Labour Force Survey in 2009, has increased, particularly for men, by three percentage points since 2004.

2. Labour Government policies, reports, and recommendations all focused on aspects of education that lead to employment. For example, according to the *Leitch Review* (2006) more than one-third of adults do not hold the equivalent of a basic school leaving qualification. Almost half of adults (17 million) have difficulty with numbers and one-seventh (5 million) are not 'functionally literate'. The Leitch report pointed out that by 2020, the UK will have to 'run to a stand still' (p 3), which means on the current trajectory, the UK's comparative position with other countries will not have improved significantly. The report says that adults without literacy and numeracy skills, those who are "unable to read a job advert and fill in an application form are less likely to find work, stay in work or progress than those who can. The employment rate for those with basic skills needs is less than one half of the UK average" (p 125). The report does not recognise that basic skills are important for

enabling learners to become active citizens, participate actively in society, and focus on employment.

3. Vocational training is one area where the Labour Government had frequently felt compelled to act. Field (2000) emphasised that lifelong learning is an inherently difficult area for the Government. In general, policy makers restrict themselves to the area of vocational training because, firstly, it is safe in political terms where the aims are clear and a policy's success can be measured by the numbers of adults gaining the qualifications, particularly with respect to training for unemployed people. Secondly, much of the responsibility for implementation and delivery of these courses rests with relatively low status and local actors, such as colleges and employment offices and not the Government.

4. Although there was an emphasis on linking education to the job market, this approach may exclude some groups, such as women returning to work. Many of these women might be qualified (previously) but find themselves at a disadvantage in the job market because of the gaps that may have occurred while raising their children. These women need to update their skills in order to return to work, whereas the funded courses on offer are either directed to young adults or are too basic. Jackson (2003) highlights that Labour Government policy needed to develop in order to counteract the structural barriers and inequalities that women face. Similarly, Mackney (2006) points out that the Labour Government's approach to adult education ignored the needs of not just women (who form 61 % of the learners in adult education), but also of ethnic minorities (who form 16 % of adult learners). For these learners, adult education courses are often the only way back into the labour market. Obviously, the Government was only prioritising support for young adults and assuming that the needs of others are less important (Harrop 2006).

5. The concept of learning has transferred the responsibility to individuals, who do not have the power to remove the structural barriers that prevent them from learning. For instance, Alldred and David (2007), in their study of young mothers and their educational values, found that young mothers were mostly positive about education and were considering learning and building up skills in order to get a job. Within this sample, there were unsuccessful attempts to return to education, highlighting the

difficulties of combining motherhood with studies. For such parents, unless there is a second income or unpaid childcare is available, it may not 'pay' to work or even study.

6. Adult education provision was providing a good service - evidenced by the healthy enrolment and completion rate within the offered programmes. However, these learners may not find their way to employment for reasons associated with job market requirements or offers, for example within the current recession there are not many job vacancies. That is true, especially for adults who are taking basic skills courses (such as literacy, numeracy, basic ICT and English as a second language), as the new gained skills may not increase their chances in the job market (Appleby and Bathmaker 2006)

7. The curriculum has been skewed to focus on literacy, numeracy, and vocational courses, while non-vocational courses, such as music, art and drama have been lost. There is a concern that funding mechanisms, rather than the needs of learners, have started to drive the curriculum (Sutcliffe and Macadam 1996).

8. Labour Government rhetoric stressed the importance of education in order to ensure employment as well as create active citizens and social cohesion. For instance, David Blunkett, in his 1998 Green Paper, *The Learning Age*, emphasises that education secures the economic future, creates a civilized society and promotes active citizenship. Moreover, the Foster Review (2005) included the answer for the question: 'What is the purpose of further education colleges?' which was: academic progress; building vocational skills; and promoting social inclusion. Although rhetoric always highlights other benefits of education, nevertheless the Government supports only provision that leads to employment while the provision to create and sustain a learning culture is unfortunately neglected.

In conclusion, adult education during the Labour Government had been considered only as a source of providing the job market with labour. This is because learning throughout life is increasingly being recognised as a foundation for a cohesive community as well as a prosperous economy, as Sir David Watson, Chair of NIACE *Commission of Inquiry into Lifelong Learning* states (NIACE 2007c). However, in

terms of policy and practice, the attempts to ‘join up’ both (cohesive community and a prosperous economy) have failed. Furthermore, in testing the provision in a “typical” centre, the data collected showed that the provision for vocational courses does not lead to employment most of the time, as the job market requires more than just qualifications, with experience being preferred. This has resulted in learners either stopping their learning or joining the free courses that are on offer in order to keep their mind active and involve themselves in some activity while they are out of work, despite the fact that such courses provide no real benefit for them. On the other hand, the data proved that, in some cases, leisure courses might help in gaining skills for a second income or can be used in voluntary jobs. This was completely ignored by the policy makers who, it appears, consider non-vocational courses less important than vocational ones. Indeed, the contribution of education to economic life is important, but it is only one aspect of education, not the entirety (Wolf 2002), and should not be the sole objective of public policy. The promotion of happiness through learning, by raising self-esteem, increasing socializing and broadening a person’s horizon is equally important for individuals and for society (Mackney 2006).

### **6.3 The Shortcomings of the Adult Education**

Lifelong learning literally means people learning across their lifespan. It has been understood that it also provides opportunities for adults with limited formal education (Larsson 1997). However, lifelong learning is currently becoming the focus of national and international policies as a required response to the increasing pace of change, the economic and social pressures of globalisation, and uncertainty about the future (Fejes and Nicoll 2008). Currently, education policymaking is not an exclusive affair of the nation-state, and major educational aims are defined by transnational institutions, such as the World Bank/IMF (International Monetary Fund), the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) and the WTO (World Trade Organisation) (Moutsios 2009).

Indeed, the UK’s education and training policy typically focuses on a narrow view of learning, which is centred on qualifications and job-related skills. Moreover, it seems to ignore learners’ motivations for learning and leads to the predicament whereby

adult learners have to engage in learning without being able to control their own agendas. Learning has become an individual task rather than a collective project and it has transformed from a right to a duty; this raises questions about the democratic potential of lifelong learning (Biesta 2006).

The Labour Government's obsession, within the lifelong learning discourse, was with educational outcomes and the learning of skills, particularly those of an occupational nature. The value of education and learning was reduced to the assessment of their contribution to an individual's economic well-being (i.e. learners' chances to earn a living as a result of learning). Raising self-esteem and self-worth or increasing knowledge and broadening one's horizons through learning were not counted as important outcomes of education. Bagnall (2000) thinks that in current times, the role of state educational provision is diminished to the learning of basic skills, which leads to the reduction of the learning options available for the poor and the disabled. This raises an important question about the ethics of lifelong learning and its policies (Morgan-Klein and Osborne 2007).

It is clear that the Labour Government's aim for adults was to become economically mobile (Fejes and Nicoll 2008). Individuals are responsible for their learning. Through their skills, determination and self-regulation they can improve their effectiveness (Crowther 2004). At the same time, the disciplinary power works on the individual from the outside to keep them motivated to learn, such that the individuals are expected to be willing to improve their status by continually improving their skills and credentials through education (Luzecy 2009), i.e. individuals are rewarded by the promise of continued employment and potential promotion.

Drawing on the outcomes of this research, I would contend that it is a mistake to understand education as solely about addressing skills formation for the job market, especially under the current circumstances of the recession and the global economic crisis. Learning to gain employment is not the only motivation which drives learning; individuals might be looking for future employment that they will find interesting and stimulating rather than simply financially rewarding (Morgan-Klein and Osborne 2007). The Labour Government's plans for lifelong learning seemed to be based on the premise that all individuals' abilities and circumstances are the same and are

unlikely to change (due to illness, for example). The Government expected people to be in training for new skills and eager to gain qualifications. Here, I should raise a concern that the limitation of provision may turn adults away from education, if they perceive that programmes on offer do not have a positive impact on their career development or personal fulfilment (Jackson 1997).

## **6.4 Way Forward**

Based on the outcomes of this research, it is clear that the adult education provision during Labour Government did not fulfil many of its purposes, such as education for knowledge or for economic prosperity. Moreover, lifelong learning became more akin to lifelong training (and re-training) rather than education and learning being a vital part of people's growth and development as human beings and as citizens in a participative democracy, as well as being productive agents in economic advancement. Indeed, according to Mason (2010), adult learning has been declining as a result of: the funding systems which encourage colleges and training providers to focus primarily on courses for 16-19 year olds that lead to accredited qualifications and ignore other age categories; reductions on the Government support and funding for the provision of vocational and leisure-related courses outside vocational framework; and the increase in courses fees at further education levels. This is happening at the critical time of recession when the need for adult education is increasing, the numbers of job offers are falling and globalisation requires continuous updating of skills.

Certainly, for adult education to fulfil its role as a lifelong process (as learners see it) and respond to the needs of individuals, these “needs” should be accommodated. Jarvis (2009) advises that once we see lifelong learning as a process of consumption, we have to recognise the power of the consumers, as they will only purchase what they want or what they need. However, the provision of adult education during Labour Government was not distributed fairly, as it appears as though lifelong learning was only meant for the well-off learners who have more options (funded and unfunded courses) to choose from, while those who are not so well-off have fewer options (being limited to funded courses). In addition, it is a known fact that adults are



happy to spend money on acquiring skills, as long as they believe that they will get a return on their investment (Wolf 2009). Therefore, addressing different needs through adult education is a guaranteed method of convincing adults to invest in their learning, as the Labour Government's wish, and for shifting the responsibility from the state to individuals, thereby creating a learning culture within a learning society. Moreover, providing a wide range of courses in accordance with learners' needs would help to increase retention and adults' commitment to courses, as learners can feel the impact of these courses on their life. In other words, adults are more committed when they are interested in the subject that they are studying or have a sense of making progress during the learning (Lin *et al* 2003).

While researching the Labour Government's and individuals' expectations of adult education, the results have shown that liberal adult education with a wide range of courses on offer is the answer to both adults' needs and the Government's objectives. Although I cannot generalise from the data collected for this study, when combined with the findings of other studies (e.g. McGivney 1995; Field 2000; Collins *et al* 2000) it does strongly suggest that education helps adults to raise their self-esteem, improve their networks and learn new skills, and these are the characteristics required to get gainful employment, as the Government wishes. At the same time, liberal education provision would help to create a learning society to face globalisation as well as gain other benefits of education such as reducing inequality, increasing social cohesion and producing active citizens involved in their communities (Edwards and Nicoll 2001).

Although the research focused on adult education during the Labour period (1997 – 2010), it was acknowledged in the study that Labour followed the same steps as those taken by previous Conservative Governments (since Thatcher's). Lately, the Coalition Government (since May 2010) has recognised that:

“Adult education – make no mistake – brings hope and the promise of a better society founded on social mobility, social justice and social cohesion. It both enriches the lives of individuals and the communities of which they are a part.”

John Hays, the Minister of State for Further Education, Skills

and Lifelong Learning speech in May 2010 at the Adult Learners' Week Policy Conference (n.p.).

However, at my workplace, the emphasis continued to be placed on individual credentials and New Labour's demand that further education and universities needed to raise their game in relation to meeting employers' needs (James *et al* 2011) despite the Coalition Government's calls for the 'Big Society', as mentioned in Section 2.4. Thus, adult education within the Big Society focuses on learner-centred provision, that is, in empowering the consumer (learner) who is engaged with the product (learning) within community-led activity (NIACE 2011). In other words, the Government must empower the local government and encourage voluntary and community organisations to offer support for their own communities by providing learning programmes that cover their local needs, as well as involving local or big businesses to provide training. A step that I consider important, *if it is carried out and does not remain solely Government rhetoric*, is "localising the provision" to meet the needs and motivations of local individuals and also to avoid wasting resources and efforts by offering courses that might not lead to the expected outcomes. Moreover, in empowering learners through their own local communities and voluntary organisations, lifelong learning may be established and may become a culture, as learners see a response to their own needs in this provision. Additionally, with these organisations being local, they have the ability to reach disadvantaged groups within the community and distribute learning equally, whether vocational or non-vocational, as "Linking adult learning to programmes of voluntary activity means that more services and activities can be offered and more diverse communities engaged" (NIACE 2011, p 8).

Certainly, the benefit of such learning provision goes beyond adults gaining employment or learning new skills alone; indeed, it brings the community together and helps in the creation of active citizens who care about their community. However, until this becomes a reality and not just Government rhetoric, the dilemma that the local adult education authority, where I work, faces is how to offer affordable courses while the Government's adult education fund is reduced continuously. This dilemma has so far been resolved by applying huge cuts to courses or offering them at unaffordable prices. I argue that the main losers in this are society in general and local

community in particular, as “a society of healthy, active citizens and happy family members is more likely if many of them are engaged in learning” (Schuller *et al* (2004a), p 193).

## **6.5 Further Research**

The research explores learners’ needs and the Labour Government’s objectives within adult education and examines if the provision had fulfilled the needs of both parties. As discussed, the Labour Government focused on education provision that would lead to employment; therefore there is space for research to measure the efficiency of adult learners’ skills gained in further education when joining the job market. This will allow a better understanding of the needs of the job market and the required adult education curriculum that will satisfy it. Hence, it will shed further light on learners’ journeys from applying for a job right through to their employment. Indeed, studies are required in order to understand and analyse continuous changes within the job market, particularly as the *Leitch Final* report (2006) emphasised that in the rapidly changing global economy, UK businesses will have to compete with the new emerging economies (such as India and China). Also, the consequence of low skills is that the UK risks a lost generation, cut off permanently from the labour market opportunity and faces increasing inequality.

Furthermore, in order to improve adult education as a service *for all*, the needs and requirements of learners should be researched independently according to various criteria, such as age, gender and current qualification, etc. For example, in order to spend the funding wisely on young learners (16 – 19 years old), their learning needs and behaviour should be researched separately, as their motivation for learning or learning routes for progression are different from older learners (Lumby and Foskett 2005). I think there is room for improvement in studying this age group in order to help them find their preferred choices and help policy makers plan suitable courses.

## **6.6 Validity, Generalisation and the Limitation of the Research**

The primary advantage of a case study is that it provides detailed information of what happened of an event, group of people or programme and the reasons why; it also allows the researcher to present data collected from multiple methods (i.e., surveys, interviews) and thus provide a more complete story (Neale *et al* 2006). However, it is known that a case study is the study of a singularity, which is chosen because of its interest to the researcher; therefore, the issue of external validity is not meaningful (Bassegy 1999). However, internal validity can be examined in the evaluation of case studies or as an alternative to reliability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) put forward the concept of trustworthiness to test the internal validity of case studies. The trustworthiness of evidence for this study (as measured by Lincoln and Guba 1985; Bessay 1999; Kvale 1996; Cohen *et al* 2003; Spassford and Jupp 1996) emerges as follows:

- 1) Persistent observation: 32 questionnaires and 10 interviews yielded the same results regarding adults' motivations, plans for learning and evaluation of the availability and flexibility of the programmes offered in adult education.
- 2) Sufficient evidence: the data have been collected from two sources (learners and practitioners) and two methods of data collection have been used. The analytical statement has been made by using only the similar results from the given sources and the methods mentioned.
- 3) The conclusions have been systematically and carefully checked against the analytical statement through continuous revision of the "findings" with the data generated.
- 4) Generally, the findings for this study agree with the latest inquiry hosted by NIACE, "The Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning" (Schuller and Watson 2009), that was launched in September 2007 and reported on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2009, especially regarding the decline of the numbers of elderly learners.

While the internal validity can be proved, generalising is a different matter. Niaz (2007) emphasises that a major argument of researchers for not generalising from qualitative studies is that the research is not based on sufficiently representative samples and adequate statistical controls. Moreover, the interview subjects were not

randomly selected. Findings of a self-selected sample cannot be generalised to the population at large (Kvale 1996). However, the study does provide an insight into learners' expectations, aims and experiences of learning in an average centre where the efficiency of the provision of adult education has been tested. Indeed, a small but focused sample permits a detailed exploration with the main aim of the study not to prove some general proposition but rather to seek a better understanding of the event (Flyvbjerg 2006). The study of this average centre was in the context that the information being collected related to the education and learning of adults in a specific community centre in a deprived area where the Labour Government had focused its support (as mentioned in Section 4.2.2). The research explored learners' current experiences, future learning plans and different roles within this setting. Thus, although it was not an aim of the study to generalise to a wider population, the 'typical' nature of the centre in which research was conducted suggests that the findings from this case study may well apply elsewhere.

## **6.7 The Contribution of This Research to Knowledge**

Although there are plenty of studies on the impact of policies on adult education as mentioned in Chapter One, this research explores in a detailed manner, learners' needs and experiences in adult education and compares them with the Labour Government's objectives in this sector. I believe that the research provides an insight into learners' plans for future learning and development in the centre researched. This has been achieved by exploring the experiences of adult learners of different age groups.

Moreover, the research highlights the importance of encouraging voluntary and community organisations to support their own communities through providing learning programmes that cover their local needs. Indeed, cooperation between the Government, non-governmental organisations (charities and local communities), businesses and the local adult education authorities would go a long way in addressing locals' needs as well as the Government's objectives.

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## **Appendix I**

## Questionnaire (version I)

This research is part of my course at Brunel University to evaluate adult education under the current policies, and investigating its effect on different types of learners. Your help is very much appreciated and I would be grateful if you complete the questionnaire and return it to your tutor. Please note that, your contribution is entirely optional and all information given is confidential.

1. **Age group** 18-25  26-45  46-65  66 +

2. **Why did you join this course:**

Self interest  Find a job  Job centre want me

Get more friends  Work requirement

3. **Did you consult anyone before choosing this course:**

No, I didn't  Yes, Learning advisor  Friends & family

Job centre

4. **Why do you think in taking the course you will reach your goals (i.e. qualification to get a job)?**

-----

5. **What would you like to learn if all courses were free and available? Why?**

**Is this course available next term/ year?**-----

-----

6. **Are you planning to join more courses in the future?**

Yes  No

**Why**-----

7. **In your opinion, what is the best thing you find in joining adult education:**

Joining a community  Getting a qualification only

Gaining knowledge  Raise self-esteem

**Other**-----

8. **Do you think courses prices are fair?**

Good  Good value for money  expensive

**Thank you for completing the questionnaire**

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**(Questionnaire – Version II)**

This research is part of my course at Brunel University to evaluate adult education under the current policies, and investigating its effect on different types of learners. Your help is very much appreciated and I would be grateful if you complete the questionnaire and return it to your tutor. Please note that, your contribution is entirely optional and all information given is confidential.

**1. Age group** 18-25  26-45  46-65  66 +

**2. Why did you join this course:**

Self interest  Find a job  Job centre want me

Get more friends  Work requirement

**3. Did you consult anyone before choosing this course:**

No, I didn't  Yes, Learning advisor  Friends & family

Job centre

**4. Why do you think in taking the course you will reach your goals (i.e. qualification to get a job)?**

-----

**5. What would you like to learn if all courses were free and available? Why?**

-----

**Is this course available next term/ year?-----**

**6. Are you planning to join more courses in the future?**

Yes  No

**Why** -----

**7. In your opinion, what is the best thing you find in joining adult education:**

Joining a community  Getting a qualification only

Gaining knowledge  Raise self-esteem

**Other** -----

**8. Do you think courses prices are fair?**

Good  Good value for money  expensive

**Thank you for completing the questionnaire**

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### Questionnaire- (Version III)

This research is part of my course at Brunel University to evaluate adult education under the current policies, and investigating its effect on different types of learners. Your help is very much appreciated and I would be grateful if you complete the questionnaire and return it to your tutor. Please note that, your contribution is entirely optional and all information given is confidential.

**1. Age group** 18-25  26-45  46-65  66 +

**2. Why did you join this course:**

Self interest  Find a job  Job centre want me   
Get more friends  Work requirement

**3. Did you ask anyone before choosing this course:**

No, I didn't  Yes, Learning advisor  Friends & family   
Job centre

**4. Why do you think in taking the course you will reach your goals (i.e. qualification to get a job)?**

-----

**5. What would you like to learn if all courses were free? Why?**

-----

**Is this course on offer next term/ year?**-----

**6. Are you planning to join more courses in the future?**

Yes  No

**Why** -----

**7. In your opinion, what is the best thing you find in joining adult education:**

Joining a community  Getting a qualification only

Gaining knowledge  Raise self-esteem

**Other** -----

**8. Do you think courses prices are fair?**

Good  Good value for money  expensive

**Thank you for completing the questionnaire**

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Questionnaires Data:

No	Age Group Q1	Reason join the course Q2	Course Advised by Q3	goal of the course Q4	preferred course Q5	why Q5	is it there Q5	plan to join more Q6	Why Q6	best in AE Q7	course fees Q8	course
1	46-65	self interest/ find job and get friends	learning advisor	refresh my knowledge and learn more	ICT next level	learn more		yes	personal achievement	joining community/ qualification/ gain knowledge and raise self esteem	expensive	CLAIT
2	46-65	self interest	job centre	need qualification for job	ICT	learn more skills	yes	yes	get the experience	gain knowledge	good value for money	computer beginner
3	65+	self interest	no, I didn't	to learn				yes	gain knowledge	gain knowledge and raise self esteem	good value for money	computer beginner
4	46-65	self interest	friend and family	to get job	English and computer	knowledge	I don't know	yes	learn more	gain knowledge	expensive	computer beginner
5	26-45	find a job	learning advisor	gain knowledge	music	self interest	yes	yes	knowledge	gain knowledge	expensive	computer beginner



6	18-25	self interest	friend and family	gain knowledge	ICT	learn skills	yes	yes	learn more	gain knowledge	good value for money	computer beginner
7	46-45	self interest and job requirement	learning advisor	need qualification for job	ICT	skills and raise self esteem		yes	get a job	gain knowledge	good value for money	computer beginner
8	18-25	self interest	job centre	need the knowledge when apply for nursing course	health and social care	self interest	I don't know	yes	qualification for better job	gain knowledge	good	computer beginner
9	46-65	find a job	learning advisor	skills help to get a job				yes	learn more	gain knowledge	good value for money	computer beginner
10	26-45	find job and get friends	learning advisor	qualification to get job	ICT	improve knowledge	yes	yes		qualification	expensive	computer beginner
11	26-45	find a job	learning advisor	learn English	learn more English	improve my English	I don't know	yes	learn more	raise self esteem	good	ESOL E1
12	46-65	find a job	learning advisor	learn English	English level 2	improve English		yes	learn more	raise self esteem	good	ESOL E1
13	26-45	self interest	learning advisor	learn English	learn more English	improve English		yes		join community and raise self esteem	good	ESOL E1

14	26-45	self interest	no, I didn't	get qualification	English level 2	improve English		yes	learn more	raise self esteem	good	ESOL E1
15	26-45	Find a job/self interest	family and friends	skills learned to work from home	every course	learn more skills	yes	yes	learn more	getting qualification/gaining knowledge and raise self esteem	expensive	Beauty
16	26-45	find a job/self interest	job centre	to find a job and would like to work from home	body massage and reflexology	expand my skills and get NVQ3	yes	yes	get a job and self improvement	gaining knowledge	good	Beauty
17	26-45	self interest and find a job	no, I didn't	get qualification to find a job	more beauty courses	expand my skills		yes	more knowledge	getting qualification and gaining knowledge	good	Beauty
18	26-45	self interest	no, I didn't	I like this field	more beauty courses	I enjoy this field	yes	yes	expand my learning	gaining knowledge and raise self esteem	good	Beauty
19	46-65	my work require this	work	need qualification	make up	work requirement	yes	yes	qualification	joining community and gaining knowledge	good	Beauty
20	26-45	self interest and find a job	no, I didn't	need qualification for better job	full beauty course	need the skills to be professional	yes	yes	qualification for better job	joining community and gaining knowledge and raise self esteem	good	Beauty

21	26-45	self interest and find a job	friends and family	knowledge for work	beauty	more skills	don't know	yes	qualification	qualification and getting knowledge	good	Beauty
22	26-45	find a job	no I didn't	get qualification for a job	hair dressing	for job	yes	yes	learn more	gain knowledge	Good	ESOL 3 Pathway
23	18-25	self interest and find a job	friends & family	get qualification for a job	child course/ maths	self interest	I don't think so	yes	self interest	qualification and gain knowledge	Good	ESOL 3 Pathway
24	26-45	self interest	no I didn't	learn	beauty (eyelashes/ extension) courses	self interest	No	yes	self improvement	qualification and gain knowledge	Good	ESOL 3 Pathway
25	26-45	self interest and find a job	no I didn't	qualification to open my own salon	beauty (eyelashes/ extension) courses	self interest	no	yes	self interest	join community/qualification and knowledge	good value for money	ESOL 3 Pathway
26	26-45	find a job	friends & family	qualification	beautician	self interest	I don't know	yes	qualification	gain knowledge and raise self esteem	good value for money	ESOL 3 Pathway
27	26-45	self interest and find a job	friends & family	need the qualification to get a job	beauty and English	self interest	I don't know	yes	qualification and interest	get qualification	good value for money	ESOL 3 Pathway
28	26-45	self interest and find a job	friends & family	need the qualification to get a job	beauty and English	self interest	I don't know	yes	qualification and interest	get qualification	good value for money	ESOL 3 Pathway

29	26-45	self interest/ find job and get friends	job centre/ family and friends	qualify to go to child care course	childcare/beaut y/ maths /IT	self interest	yes but not free and no crèche	yes	need to learn to help my children	all	expensiv e	ESOL 3
30	46-65	self interest	learnin g advisor	qualificatio n	IT	self interest		yes	learn more	qualification	good	ESOL 3
31	26-45	self interest	learnin g advisor	qualificatio n	hair dressing	self interest	yes	yes	improve my future	qualification/ self esteem	good	ESOL 3
32	26-45	self interest	friends and family	qualificatio n	IT	self interest	I don't know	yes	more experience	gain knowledge	expensiv e	ESOL 3

**Gray colour boxes = no answer**

## **Appendix II**

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**Clusters from Learners Interviews after first read to the data:**

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>Initial Patterns (Potential Theme)</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
Benefit from joining adult education courses	Improve current work					
	Join voluntary work					
	Help my children in their home work					
	Learn useful knowledge (language or skills) made life easier					
	Learn to have quality time with own children (Family Learning courses within AE)					
	Learning new knowledge open people to different job opportunities					
	Raise confidence					
	Add knowledge for what already known					
	Use what learnt at home and day to day life					
	Learning make people active, staying at home make them sick					
	Make money out of learning arts and crafts					
	Learning help people to relax and passed time in something useful when they are not employed					
	Help my child if I can get a job and pay for his extra classes outside school					

Motivation to learn	Knowledge/ skills needed for current work					
	Social Reasons: when you know you can help others					
	Build up knowledge to get a job					
	Gain qualification to be used now or later					
	Update existing knowledge					
learning concept	Learning is life process					
	Learning is an excitement					
	Learning to get a job					
	Learning is not just to get a job					
	Learning should available and free					
Learning path	Professional courses (i.e. teaching courses)					
	Any free course to be add on the CV					
	Courses relate to previous knowledge					
	Courses enhance or add to current knowledge					
	Different courses to gain skills for office work					
Next step in learning	Not happening if courses are not free					
	GCSE level courses					
	Arts and crafts					
	Any free course					
enquire about next course	Learning advisor in the main centre					
	Brochure					
Reasonable price for education	Any price if education guarantee work					
	Free					
	No more than £10.00					

Other training opportunities	Free training at work					
	Training offered through volunteering jobs (church, school, organisations)					
	Expensive private training					
Support from AE	Tutors are supportive					
	AE expected learners to have some resources					
Learners on learning advisor	Good service for someone who know the system					
	Can only advice in general professions like teaching					
	Learner prefer to use the brochure or centre's leaflet					
To which extent AE help to find / change your job?	Not if the courses are not funded					
	Job market require experience not education					
	Help to learn to write CV and search for job					
	Help in gaining required qualifications					
	Help in set learners on the beginning of the road but not until the job found					
Learners' reaching goals	Learning not complete if fees required in the future					
	Jobs are hard to get due to job market requirements					
	Qualifications offered not required in the job market					
	AE for people without basic skills but not for graduate.					
	Qualification gained					
Learners' hopes for AE	More courses funded					
	AE to be connected with real businesses i.e. agreement with businesses for AE to provide learning and businesses to provide work after completing courses.					
	Offer courses related to life					



	Provide more resources i.e. free phones, internet, childcare etc.								
	Courses doesn't matter who is it for, to get a job or to learn for fun								
Courses Fees	Funding only for unemployed								
	Prices are good when learners working not when learner unemployed								

**Clusters emerged from further reading to the data:**

Cluster	Patterns ( Theme)	A	B	C	D	E
Benefit from joining adult education courses	Improve current work					
	Join voluntary work					
	Help my children (directly with home work , spend quality time or indirectly get a job and pay for extra classes)					
	Learn knowledge (skills) useful for life					
	Learning new knowledge open people to different job opportunities					
	Raise confidence					
	Add knowledge for what already known					
	Learning make people active, staying at home make them sick					
	Make money out of learning arts and crafts					
	Learning help people to relax and passed time in something useful when they are not employed					
Motivation to learn	Knowledge/ skills needed for current work					
	Social Reasons: when you know you can help others					
	Build up knowledge to get a job					
	Gain qualification to enrich CV or get a certain job					

	Update existing knowledge					
	Learning better than doing nothing					
	Learning the language and communicate with others using the language					
	Learning what already known to them just to get the qualification					
learning concept	Learning is life process					
	Learning is an excitement					
	Learning to get a job					
	Learning is not just to get a job is personal achievement					
	Learning should available and free					
Learning path	Professional courses (i.e. teaching courses)					
	Any free course to be add on the CV					
	Courses relate to previous knowledge					
	Courses enhance or add to current knowledge					
	Different courses to gain skills for office work					
	Leisure courses					
Next step in learning	Not happening if courses are not free					
	GCSE level courses					
	Arts and crafts					
	Any free course					
enquire about next course	Learning advisor in the main centre					
	Brochure					
Reasonable price for education	Any price if education guarantee work					
	Free					
	No more than £10.00					

Other training opportunities outside AE	Free training at work					
	Training offered through volunteering jobs (church, school, organisations)					
	Expensive private training					
	Free courses for pensioners					
	Career development groups and organisation linked to Job Centre					
Support from AE	Tutors are supportive					
Learners on learning advisor	Good service for someone who know the system					
	Can only advice in general professions					
	Learner prefer to use the brochure or centre's leaflet					
To which extent AE helped learners to find / change your job?	Not if the courses are not funded					
	Job market require experience not education					
	Help included only learning to write CV and search for job					
	Help in gaining required qualifications					
	Help to set learners on the beginning of the road but not until the job found					
Learners' reaching goals	Learning not complete if fees required in the future					
	Jobs are hard to get due to job market requirements					
	Qualifications offered not required in the job market					
	AE for people without basic skills but not for graduate.					
	Qualification gained					
Learners' hopes for AE	More courses funded					

	AE to be connected with real businesses i.e. agreement between businesses and AE for the later to provide training and businesses to provide work after completing courses.					
	Offer courses related to life					
	Courses doesn't matter who is it for, to get a job or to learn for fun at the end education should be provided					
Other issues need to be taken in consideration	Transportation/ childcare an extra expenses learners need to pay					
	Different adults need different courses according to age, financial and personal circumstances					
	Provide more resources i.e. free phones, internet etc.					
	Women needs for education due to the cut in their careers' life while taking care of their children					
Courses Fees	Not fair - Funding only for unemployed					
	Prices are good when learners working not when learner unemployed					
15 clusters						

**Extra themes from  
Learners Interviews**

motivation	Learning better than doing nothing						
Other training opportunities	Free courses for pensioners						
	Career development groups and organisation linked to Job Centre						
Motivation	Learning the language and communicate with others using the language						
Learners' hopes for AE	Learners sometime are learning what they know already just to get the qualification						
	Transportation/ childcare an extra expenses learners need to pay						
	Different adults have different needs according to age, financial and personal circumstances						
	Women needs for education due to the cut in their careers' life while taking care of their children						

<b>Merged patterns</b>	
Help my children with their homework	
Help my child if I can get a job and pay for his extra classes outside school	
learn with Family Learning to have quality time with my child	New Cluster : Help my Children
AE expected learners to have some resources like internet or phones	New cluster : other issues to be taken in consideration
I still have to think about my transportation before paying for any course	
I still have to pay for my child care with the course	
Learn useful knowledge (skills) i.e. Internet, English	New Cluster: Learn knowledge or skills useful for life
Use what learnt at home and day to day life i.e. gardening	

**Clusters emerged from practitioners interviews:**

Cluster	Themes	Tutors			Learning advisor	
		F	H	J	I	G
purpose of AE	adult education is to support adults learning and fulfil their expectation					
	it gives sense of achievement, empower people and work with their own confidence					
	make learner feel that they worth while and open opportunities					
	create social life					
	Give them qualification for better job					
individual needs for younger and older learners	older like to be taught by board and chalk while younger with research base education					
	younger more like qualification courses lead to work					
	older join courses to stay active or to socialise with other learner					
	younger mum need A&C courses help them to relax , be able to help their children in doing quality time and be part of community					
does AE courses lead to get a job	it raises learner confidence and skills that resulted in getting the job					
	gain the qualification helped to get job					

	not necessary A&C lead to get job but help them indirectly					
AE as a respondent to job market needs	employers don't look specifically on the qualification, experience more important					
	employers still discriminate women and disable					
	English language need to be understandable not necessary very good to work					
	interview skills that convince employers to give the job					
tutor support	learners still go back to ask tutor when applying to jobs					
	chase learner day before the course					
Practitioner's knowledge of job market	I know nothing					
	I trained myself					
Practitioners' knowledge of funding	not much					
	I don't know anything about it					
effect of the changing policy	for older people no courses available or they not being prioritised					
	some learners have been sent to course from job centre					
	expected that all adults have same ability					



	new policies can offer something for unemployed and those who on benefit but not for employed to improve their job					
	older learners feeling pressurised by the qualification					
	expensive courses					
	leisure courses disappeared					
	the policy offers a lot for younger learner but I can't see more younger there					
	As a result lots of unemployed, women and single parent are back to work					
	Women are having another child after 12 years to stay on benefit					
	when agree the funding professionals should have their say from the boroughs or services					
AE and university gradated learners	CV writing is big help for graduate because universities fail to guided their learners of what the employer look for					
	learning advisor are very good for learners around 16 years old but not for university graduate					
hope of AE	offer courses with and without qualification					
	target groups according to their needs not jobs needs					
	honest when advise learner about their courses and inform them with the resources needed before start					
	offer to students environment similar to real work environments					
	crèche and reasonable fees are important thinks for any course					

	more training Learners for interview, work knowledge like how to behave or what gave you promotion					
Resources learners need	Transport					
	Course resources					
	Crèche					
	Know their rights i.e. how many hours need to work, payment, other work issues					
problem of retention	commitment hard for adult with jobs and family					
	drop out will always be there					
What satisfy learner and keep them committed to their courses	at time of enrolment learners should be made aware of the importance of their commitment					
	change the no refund policy when learner find first lesson the course not useful they should refunded					
	some learners come from different countries not it all they drop out because it is too basic for them					
	childcare or family care two important factors and want to be with friend another reasons to drop out					
centre	crèche					
	fees					
	advertise the course properly					
	variety of courses					
	Building confidence course					



programmes like Sure Start, Home Start and Parent Alone should continue

