How to improve the support of teachers in enhancing motivation among adult students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Irish Further Education environment?

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Declaration of Originality of Work

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment of the programme of study leading to the award of Master of Arts in Learning and Teaching is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed: ....

Date: July 2015

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this enquiry and all that I learned by carrying it out, to two people, my husband Paul Reddin and to the memory of my mother Anne Rocca.

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Abstract

The importance of further education is highlighted by Irish, European and International governments as crucial to our economic, social and cultural growth.

Further education needs to be of benefit to all participants but particularly to meet the educational, social and skill-force needs of the labour market. How then can we as teachers motivate and encourage prospective students to commence, participate and complete a course of study and become active participants in the workforce.

This dissertation sets out to examine how I can improve my practice and influence others by improving supports for teachers to help with adult student motivation. I focused on one main area within the study, the current support models available to teachers. Through reflection, I came to appreciate that the supports available could not address fully the issues faced by teachers in the college. Through this process I created an improved motivational framework as a supportive tool for teachers in the further education sector for the next academic year. This reflection brought me to a deeper understanding of myself as a leader in certain aspects of college structure.

An action research methodology was chosen which involved exploration of practices and areas I wished to improve. I used qualitative semi-structured interviews with nine FET sector teachers in a dual provision school to explore and review teachers' influences on their students. Action research stimulated me to examine my own values and the contradictions in my role as a co-ordinator.

The interviews highlighted areas of best practice that worked for individual teachers and the need for continued professional development for all teaching staff in the sector and supported strategies.

The research provides teaching practitioners, college management and other stake-holders interesting insights into the area of motivation in a further education context. Copies of the improved framework as a pedagogical support tool are also available.

Key words: Adult student, lifelong learning, disadvantaged, adult education, further education, vocational education, motivation, (intrinsic, extrinsic), improve, enhance, support, participation, engagement, FET, Ireland.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

BTEA	Back to Education Allowance
BTEI	Back to Education Initiative
CPD	Continued Professional Development
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DDLETB	Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board
DSP	Department of Social Protection
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ETB	Education and Training Board
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
FET	Further Education and Training
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
HE	Higher Education
LCA	Leaving certificate applied
NAPD	National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QQI	Qualifications and Quality Assurance Ireland
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate Course
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
SOLAS	Seirbhísí Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme

Contents

Chapter 1- Background and context

1.1   Introduction

This educational research sets out to explore motivational issues relating to adult students in a further education context in Ireland, as part of a dissertation for a Masters in Art, learning and teaching.

The further education and training sector in Ireland is seen by many as second chance education and little research has focused on the intentional ways that adult students of further education in Ireland engage with learning and their motivation to commence, participate and complete their course of study.

Further education is the only route for students who sit the leaving certificate applied and wish to progress to higher education. So is this the only reason for adult students to pursue a programme of study in a college of further education? What motivates them to participate and to eventually graduate? Are they only there because someone told them? Are they intrinsically motivated? What role do teachers play in motivating students? These are the types of questions the researcher is interested in.

Definition of adult student

It is important to identify the significance and recognition of further education today within the Irish context. There have been many attempts to define what is meant by further education. The Murphy Report (1973) was the first attempt by an Irish Government to address the nature of adult education in Ireland. In the report further education was defined as "The provision and utilisation of facilities whereby those who are no longer participants in full-time school system may learn whatever they need to learn at any time of their lives".

This was the agreed definition until a broader definition was provided in the (1973) report of the Commission on Adult Education: Lifelong Learning:

> Adult education includes all systemic learning by adults which contributes to their development as individuals and as members of the community and of society, apart

> from full-time instruction received by persons as part of their interrupted initial education and training. It may be formal education which takes place in institutions e.g. training centres, school, colleges, institutes and universities, or non-formal education, which is any other systematic form of learning, including self-directed learning (p. 9).

This definition was then used in the green paper in 1998 and the white paper in 2000. SOLAS (2014) in The Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 defines FET as:

> FET provides education and training and related supports to assist individuals to gain qualifications at Levels 1--6 on the NFQ or equivalent, to attain and refresh economically-valuable skills to access and sustain all types of employment, tackling skills shortages and boosting the future growth and competitiveness of the Irish economy. It provides a range of skills for labour market returners, for those interested in a new career direction, for those wishing to access 'second chance' education, and to prepare school--leavers and others for higher education. FET also plays an important role in helping people to lead fulfilling lives, supporting some of the hard--to--reach individuals and groups to achieve their potential and reducing the costs to society of exclusion (p. 21).

For the purpose of this dissertation the definition of a further education student will encompass at least the aspects of learning as described in the definition of FET above and the 1973 definition in terms of the individual learning needs of adult students.

Notwithstanding these definitions adult students may also have additional life issues compared to non-adult students such as family responsibilities, work commitments and/or financial issues. McCoy et al (2010) suggest that the barriers to learning facing adult students usually involve two main issues, namely, time and money but additionally adult students may demonstrate a lack of confidence. These additional issues may cause additional concerns and also create a conflict between college work and life balance, overall making things more difficult. Background to the study and structure of study

Chapter 1 introduces my research question and provides a rationale for the research. It also contextualises the issues relating to the problem posed. The study is an action research enquiry into how I can improve both my professional practice and provide a supportive tool to my fellow practitioners.

According to Bryman (2008) action research is "an approach in which the action researcher and members of a social setting collaborate in the diagnosis of a problem and in the development of a solution based on the diagnosis" (p. 382).

The research takes place in a community college. The college in question is a dual provision college combining second-level/post primary and further education within the one building. It is located in an urban area on the northside of Dublin and is designated as disadvantaged. The second-level/post primary provision is part of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) scheme.

I have been a teacher and a programme co-ordinator in this college for the last eleven years. Courses provided and subject areas studied in the further education sector of the college include modules in early childhood care and education, community and health care studies, health care support, beauty and complementary therapies, make-up artistry, portfolio preparation, PC maintenance, general learning and an introduction to ICT and cloud computing. The research participants will be teachers involved with further education provision in the college. The background, context and rationale that prompted this research evolved from pedagogical and programme co-ordinator practices in the further education sector in Ireland.

The funding mechanism for Government funded colleges offering these types of courses has historically been based on the post primary school model as outlined by the McIver report in 2003 and Watson et al (2006), "the administrative, management, staffing and ancillary support for the PLC sector have continued to be those of a second level school" (p. 1), but with the introduction of the Education and Training (ETB) bill in January 2013, which provided for the establishment of SOLAS and the subsequent Further Education Strategy (FET) strategy 2014-2019, it is predicted future funding for these programmes will be based on an outcome based model (SOLAS, 2013).

The work undertaken as part of this research study will be of great interest to me both as a programme co-ordinator with responsibility for adult students and as a teaching practitioner.

Other interested parties include colleagues and the college management. However the eventual findings of the research have potential to be of benefit not only to the college where the research takes place but it is envisaged that the research could influence practices in other further education colleges which are under the auspice of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) and the wider Education and Training Board's community

1.2   Research question

How to improve the support of teachers in enhancing motivation among adult students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Irish Further Education environment?

1.3   Research aim

The research study aims to explore the motivational factors of adult students in a college of further education in Ireland by examining how, as a co-ordinator, I can support teachers with the enhancement of student motivation and reflecting on how the use of support can contribute to this aim.

1.4   Research objective

The overall objective of the dissertation is to address the dissertation question, objectives and sub-objectives. The variables to be addressed include motivation, influence and educational disadvantage.

1.5   Research sub-objectives

1)   To identify what motivates adult students such as:

      a. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

      b. The environment

      c. The role of the teacher

2)   To apply established motivational frameworks:

      a. Teacher colleagues will apply the framework to their practice and critically review it as a motivational tool

      b. The research of Raymond Wlodkowski and the Keller ARCS model of motivational design will influence the initial stages of the framework development (note: I will ask teacher / practitioners to review these two models and then they will critically reflect on these frameworks. The feedback I receive will form part of the data collection).

3)   Propose an improved framework for implementation by fellow practitioners at the beginning of the next academic year which will:

      a. Address the issues faced in my college.

      b. Recognise the analysis of participant feedback and other motivational frameworks.

1.6   Layout of the dissertation

Chapter 1, this chapter will outline the research question and rationale as discussed above. Chapter 2, the literature review will explore, discuss and critique the literature pertaining to this study and will consider the following inter-related themes:

      a. Motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic

      b. Educational disadvantage

      c. Concept of lifelong learning

      d. Historical context of further education and training in Ireland

      e. Changing legislative landscape of the further education and training in Ireland

Chapter 3 will introduce the researcher's chosen research methodology and will consider the methodological framework for the research study. The key consideration addressed by the methodology employed will ensure that the research is valid, reliable, testable, empirical and ethical. I intend to explore action research as understood in terms of Whitehead and McNiff's (2006), *"living educational theory"* in order to address my research.

The reasons for using action research as the methodology for this study will be explored in detail in chapter 3 of this dissertation. This will involve reviewing relevant literature and considering how action research methods will be utilised through the enquiry.

I would suggest, action research as a methodology, may appeal to those interested in education because of its potential to provoke real change and lasting improvement in certain contexts. I intend to devise an action plan as part of this process.

Fullan & Hargreaves (1996) suggest that:

> Top down approaches to staff development embody a passive view of the teacher, who is empty, deficient, lacking in skills, needing to be filled up and fixed up with new techniques and strategies (p. 26).

I discuss how action research can avoid this top down approach, where improvement or further training is imposed on the teacher, as a solution to a problem. Improvement is elicited from the researcher/practitioner by enabling them to use their experiences as educators to examine an issue of concern or situation and to test their own solutions. It may help management and teachers to understand motivation and engage with the idea and to recognise the importance of their role in it.

In carrying out this particular action research enquiry, the researcher aims to improve the quality of service provision and motivation of adult students in a further education college environment. However, it may transpire that this study may draw attention to other agenda which would be the subject of consideration of further research as they are of a concern to me and I will include these items in my conclusion in chapter 6.

As the researcher, I examine implementation, review and evaluation of the cycle of the action research process. I also discuss the issues of validity and rigour in relation to the research enquiry.

Ethical considerations are also discussed. I suggest that as the teachers are known to me and this could have implications for their input, there may be considerations to be addressed. Teachers buy into a professional code of practice and have the foresight to consider that this research could improve and support their own professional practice if results are valid and reliable. I use my own experience of co-ordinating and teaching within the college as part of the study, but at the same time being cognisant of my own predispositions which will be extrapolated further in chapters 3, 4 and 5.

This study has the potential to improve and support their own professional practice if results are valid and reliable.

Chapter 4 of this dissertation describes the research implementation and data collection methods. It also examines the implementation of one cycle of the action research process.

Chapter 5 consists of the discussion about the findings of the research enquiry and tell of the story of the research. This chapter critiques the analysis of the research findings and

informs the reader about the journey of the researcher in terms of the action plan and the eventual design of a supportive tool for teachers in the further education sector in Ireland. A teaching and learning framework, based on the findings of my interviews with teacher practitioners about strategies that work on a day-to-day basis with class motivation, will be one of many tools and strategies available to teachers. My discussion for the most part takes the form of narrative and tells the story of both the research itself and the interviewees.

Chapter 6 consists of conclusions, research limitations and suggestions for future research. I present my overall conclusions through engaging with the research. I chart the growth of my learning and detail any limitations and recommendations for the future direction of research. An example of this is that with the exception of 'Finding a Voice' the experience of Mature Students in a College of Further Education (Hardiman, 2012) there is little research in Ireland regarding further education and training. Indeed this was picked up and reported on within OECD (2011) reviews of vocational education and training in Ireland. I used research relevant to further education in other jurisdictions, to higher education and my own experience of teaching within a college of further education, whilst being aware of any personal bias which might exist due to my proximity to the subject.

1.7   Research expectations

Expected Outcomes

1) A revised framework to enable teachers in the college to design motivational strategies for their students

2) Professional development for all participants

3) Improved filtration at inaugural stages

4) Greater comprehension of why students' stay/leave/enrol/don't enrol

5) Greater self- actualisation / intrinsic motivation for students/teachers

6) Shift in current beliefs and educational culture for the better

1.8   Reflective learning log

Through engaging with the research, I am able to chart the growth of my learning and to detail any limitations and recommendations for the future direction of research.

1.9   Major implementation steps and timeline

The timeline for the study was that all data was collected, literature was reviewed, the methodology chapter was completed and all data was analysed by the end of May 2015. All discussions findings and conclusions were drafted by the middle of June 2015. The first draft copy of the dissertation was completed by the end of June 2015. The final draft or soft copy was prepared by the middle of July 2015 and submitted by the end of July 2015.

Throughout this process I met with my supervisor Dr. Leo Casey at least once every three weeks.

1.10   Summary and conclusions

This chapter set out to provide the reader with a roadmap for the structure of the research study. The research will show the reasons adult students pursue a programme of study in a college of further education. The research will also show what motivates them to participate and to eventually graduate.

A supportive motivational tool will be produced for the teachers in this particular college, but it is envisaged that it could be useful in the wider further education community. The following chapter will consider literature pertaining to the discussion topics.

Chapter 2 - Literature review

2.1   Introduction

In order to understand various aspects of research being undertaken in any study it is useful to review and explore the context in which the research question was developed. The research question pertaining to this literature review is "How to improve the support of teachers in enhancing motivation among adult students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Irish Further Education environment? Beneficial insight can be provided by the consideration of previous research and literature. In addressing this research question, the literature pertaining to this study question considers the following inter-related themes:

It involves a review of the changing legislative landscape of further education and training in Ireland (FET) by reviewing briefly the historical context of further education and training in Ireland and looking at the SOLAS (2013) FET Strategy for further education and suggesting possible impacts including adult educational disadvantage.

It also involves a review of the concept of motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, the adult student and the influence the environment places in relation to course commencement (purpose, direction and persistence) and the role teachers' play within the lifelong learning sector. This involves reviewing and evaluating various systems in place in the college, including the admission policy.

As the goal of this particular research study is to develop a supportive tool for practitioners in the further education sector thus enabling them to encourage the idea of student empowerment and life skills for their students, it was useful to reflect on other such frameworks.

2.2   The Irish, European and global context

Before the concept of motivation is discussed it is useful to have an understanding of the quantative data relevant in the Irish context. In 2007, the inaugural "adult education survey" (also called the pilot study), organised by Eurostat described the motives of participation in adult education (Eurostat, 2007).

The data was provided by EU citizens in the 29 member-countries and was collected over four years from 2005 to 2008. Ireland did not take part initially in this pilot study and is therefore not included in the initial findings, but has since participated in the 2011 and subsequent surveys. According to the report on life-long learning, the percentage of participants in adult learning fell from 7.3% in 2006 to 6.2% in 2011, and the corresponding respective statistics in terms of males and females were as follows: Males in 2006 increased from 5.9% to 6.4% in 2011, while there was a decrease in female participation from 8.7% in 2006 to 8.2% in 2011 (EU commission, 2013). The Irish figures fall short of the EU strategic benchmark figure, which suggested that a target of 15% of adults between the ages of 25 and 64 should be engaged with adult education by 2020.   The findings of this report also suggest that participation is related to the level of personal prior academic achievement.   The three most commonly cited barriers to participation are no need of training for work, lack of time due to family commitments and responsibilities and lastly time constraints.

This would suggest that those who participate do so to get knowledge and skills related to interesting subjects, to perform better in their workplace, improve their career prospects, or obtain knowledge and skills useful for their everyday life. This concurs with the SOLAS (2014) strategy which suggests that we need to ensure that those who engage with further education, traditionally seen as a poor relation to higher education, successfully commence, participate and complete their chosen course of study and that other labour market initiatives including the "Youth Guarantee", "Intreo" and "Jobpath" support and enhance the further education and training sector in Ireland.

2.3   Further education and lifelong learning

Further education, previously referred to as the PLC programme, may be a pathway to lifelong learning and supports a culture of continuous professional development and

further learning. Watson, McCoy & Gorby (2006), state that the initial emphasis was to provide "vocational training for young people to bridge the gap between school and work". However, over time, the PLC programme has also developed as a route to further education.

The concept of life-long learning, according to Boeren et al. (2012) can be seen as the students responsibility alone in "dominant neo-liberal, contemporary societies" (p. 132).

However, they suggest that this is not always the case, and that empirical research shows that participation arises in what they call "bounded agency" between potential students, the academic institution and the regulating governments in welfare state regimes. (Boeren et al, 2010b; Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009) and that this in turn underpins their finding that motivating and stimulating adult students is as much about government policy, the academic institution's policies and practices as it has to do with the students' capicity to self-motivate.

A culture of lifelong learning and professional development has already arisen in many professions. Graduates may be required to engage with continuous professional development (CPD) and in some cases, to maintain a certain number of points per annum. This may in some way address the barrier of "no need of training for work" in the future. Indeed the requirement for CPD may increase the percentages of participants to meet the strategic benchmark.

Within the EU, various studies commissioned by EU Institutions have produced notable results. It is worth noting that in a European context the word "Further" is substituted with the word "Vocational". The European Commission's Education and Training Monitor (2014) reports that:

> VET, work-based learning and apprenticeships play a key role in tackling youth unemployment and facilitating the transition to the labour market, by linking more closely the worlds of education and work. This was the subject of no fewer than 22 CSRs in 2014, 8 of which explicitly referring to the "Youth Guarantee" (BG, ES, HR, IE, IT, PL, PT and SK). About half of upper secondary students across Europe follow vocational education and training (VET) programmes and around 27% of them are in combined school- and work- based learning programmes, including apprenticeships. Key challenges lie in raising the attractiveness of VET through improving its quality and relevance, particularly by feeding employability data back into VET programmes.

The country specific recommendations adopted by the member countries reflect the importance of education and training for Europe and yet, Ireland is one of 19 countries whose investment in education has dropped considerably over the last two years, particularly in terms of adult education. Further education is seen as key in tackling youth unemployment and supporting students with the transition to work, and it is imperative that the worlds of education and work are more closely linked. This would concur with the recommendations adopted by SOLAS in their five year strategy. These statistics were the subject of 22 reports across Europe during 2014, including Ireland.

Almost a half of senior cycle post primary students across Europe follow vocational education and training programmes and around 27% of them are in combined college and work-based learning programmes.

2.4 Challenges and opportunities

The vocational and further education sectors face many challenges but of primary importance should be a strengthening the provision of quality of education and training, reinforcement of the relevance of higher education and further education and training both at college and initial or continuing work based learning, apprenticeships with a through quality assurance, the continued use of labour market projections and initiatives to be supported with relevant career guidance and graduate tracking surveys would be seen by SOLAS's strategy as Ireland's answer to addressing these significant issues.

The European research goes some way towards investigating a variety of variables of adult student profiles and shares common points however, most variables previously studied included age, gender, education and occupational status but not all of them examine nationality and place of residence or marital status, income or number of children.

One limitation of this type of research is that some data relates only to the profile and the choice of subjects or courses in which people participate and do not necessarily study issues such as motivational factors or indeed barriers to participation which is the main topic of interest for this particular study.

The next part of the literature review attempts to illustrate some of the findings of research in the field of motivating factors for participation and completion.

2.5 Educational disadvantage

The Further Education and Training (FET) sector in Ireland is viewed by many as the poor relative in educational contexts but for those students who sit the leaving certificate applied (LCA) every year it is their only route to higher education. The PDST website, under the headings of LCA and career options state that:

> "Graduates of the Leaving Certificate Applied who progress to an approved further education award (e.g. PLC) can become eligible for admission to some third level courses in the Institutes of Technology and following that to some degree courses in the Institutes of Technology and in the Universities" (PDST, 2010).

Is this perhaps the only reason for these students to pursue a course of study in a college of further education? What motivates them and others to participate and to eventually graduate and are they at an educational disadvantage? Another topic of interest is the geographical location of the educational institution. The research will take place in a community college, a dual provision college combining second-level/post primary and non-compulsory further education within the one building. It is located in an urban area on the northside of Dublin and is designated as disadvantaged. The second-level/post primary provision is part of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) scheme and also participates in the school completion scheme, which aims to improve school attendance.

In 2005, the Irish Statutory Committee on Educational Disadvantage proposed "a new strategy that places the solutions to educational disadvantage within an inclusive lifelong learning framework" and to build partnerships between school-based and community-based education. Ng, (2010) in her journal article suggests that the role of a positive environment and the requirement of supportive relationships have an immense impact on the role of lifelong learning. Has this been the case? Since 1994 supports for educational disadvantage can be availed of and include funding from the Higher Education Authority (HEA), for students with documented specific language and learning disorders and specific support needs (HEA, 2015). The funding is based on a disability model.

An article in the NAPD review (2014) discussed O'Sullivan's conference address, to the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD FE), which outlined the issue of students progression from post primary education with support from the NCSE, which is based on a special educational needs model, rather than a disability model as described above, and how this anomaly causes stress and is a barrier to active

participation. It is a concern that needs to be addressed during the transition period for students commencing a further education programme. Of particular interest is the increase of 520% of approved funding from the HEA fund for students with disabilities from 1994 to 2014.

Humphrey (2014), stated that according to a HEA report only 15% living in Dublin 17, progress to higher education straight from school, the lowest percentage in the country and this coupled with the HEA estimates that only 12% of entrants to higher education are from DEIS schools suggests that those who attend post-primary education in a disadvantaged area remain at risk of being a disadvantaged adult learner. According to O'Sullivan (2013) the profile of further education students suggests that they are "typically of lower socio-economic status than HE learners, 33% are in receipt of a means tested PLC grant and 66% are exempt from the €200 PLC charge" a government levy where exemption is based on receipt of a medical card, receipt of social welfare or a PLC grant.

Bok, (2010) in her article suggests that "It's like making them do a play without a script", and discusses the idea that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, in Australia, do in fact, have substantial aspirations, but may have less developed capacities to enable them realise these aspirations. Socio-economic disadvantage is closely linked with educational disadvantage and needs to be tackled and supported throughout the learning life cycle, including further education as part of the life-long learning sector, a recommendation of Maunsell et al (2012) in the National Report on Lifelong learning in Ireland.

Boeren et al (2012) state that Flemish policymakers offer support for disadvantaged adults who wish to return to education by providing educational leave from work and training allowances, however, this they state, does not attract enough students. Their research is confined to those who choose to participate and is therefore limited, but it worth noting that of all the variables included in the study it was the classroom environment perception that had the strongest link with student satisfaction.

The college where this research study takes place, has put in place some such initiatives to support financially disadvantaged adult students with commencement and participation in post compulsory education. Schemes include the Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) and the Back to Education

allowance (BTEA) to ensure that, insofar as possible, money does not become the, or another, barrier for course participation and completion. This too may have limitations, in that it incentivises those who present to the college to participate, but may not be the particular barrier for those who are non-participants.

2.6   Motivational theories

At this stage of the review it is useful to reflect of the issue of motivation in a broad sense. According to the Oxford online dictionary (2015), motivation is "a reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way or a desire or willingness to do something". Motivational theories can be sub-divided into three distinct types, behavioural, cognitive and humanist.

Watson's theory developed in the early 20th century and Skinner, a psychologist and lecturer in the late 20th Century, believed as behavioural theorists, that it is peoples' experiences with the external environment that shape their behaviour. On the other hand, cognitive theorists such as Bandura in the 1980's examined the beliefs and expectations of students and their attempts to understand how the world works. Humanist theorists promote the belief that students need to self-actualise to reach their full potential. The most well-known example is Maslow and his hierarchy of needs theory.

Rogers & Horrocks (2010) make the point that "Motivation is usually defined as a drive directed towards meeting a need or achieving an intention, those factors energise and direct organisational patterns around a goal" (p. 105). This would propose that a student who is intrinsically motivated is one who is interested in the subject matter, finds it engaging and is stimulated to learn. The reward for the student happens as a result of the learning process itself as the student is connected with what they are learning and will also take responsibility for their own failures as well as successes. This would suggest that all adult students are intrinsically motivated.

There are many more current motivational theories that will be discussed further in this chapter such as Dweck and Pink, but the reason for discussing this idea was to demonstrate that there is more than one way to comprehend the concept of motivation.

2.7   Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

It is important to distinguish between the two main types of motivation, as identified within literature: intrinsic and extrinsic. Hodges (2004) finds that intrinsic motivation refers to a student's internal desire to engage in an activity for no reward other than to satisfy their curiosity and interest in the topic being covered. When a student is motivated by incentives external to their interest and satisfaction, these factors are termed extrinsic motivators. Extrinsic motivation proposes that the motivation is external to the person, for example monetary rewards or an accreditation are not perceived to be within the direct control of the student. Much of the literature deems intrinsic to be the most desirable form of motivation.

2.8   Intrinsic motivation extrapolated

Ryan and Deci, when considering intrinsic motivation, state that evidence would suggest that as babies everyone is intrinsically motivated but that maintenance requires support. The concept of cognitive evaluation theory (CET) a sub-theory of Self-Determined Theory (SDT), presented by Ryan and Deci in 1985, proposes that it is social and environment factors that influence self-motivation. In 2000 Ryan & Deci suggest that the focus is on the fundamental needs for competence and autonomy and that feelings of competence will not be enhance intrinsic motivation if there is not a sense of autonomy.

> "SDT is considered to be an influential contemporary macro motivational theory that differentiates between autonomous and controlled forms of motivation; the theory has been applied to predict behaviour and inform behaviour change in many contexts including: education, health care, work place setting, sport and parenting" (p. 68).

Their literature is centred on the socio contextual conditions that "facilitate v's forestall" the natural processes of self-motivation. Research led to three innate psychological needs, "Competence, Autonomy and Relatedness", which when satisfied yield self-motivation, which they suggest is "optimal". The ideas explore human beings as being active or passive, constructive or indolent (laid back) in social contextual conditions. Research is empirical and builds on previous research, of these authors and others, including the Baconian tradition of research, findings of competence (Harter, 1978 and White, 1963), autonomy (Decharmes, 1968 and Deci, 1975) and relatedness (Baumeister and Leary, 1995 Reis, 1994).

The nature of motivation is explored in the literature and comparisons are made between self-motivation and external regulation. SDT, they theorise is able to identify several distinct types of motivation all of which have significant consequences including the concept of self-regulation in terms of extrinsic motivation. Internalising (taking in) and integration (further transformation or understanding of regulation so that it becomes a part of self).

Facilitating integration of extrinsic motivation, how to promote autonomy for extrinsically motivated behaviour and the sense that this occurs better when there are feelings of relatedness is discussed by the writers. To integrate a regulation, they suggest, a person must understand it and be able to synthesis it with their own goals and values (Kuhl and Furmann, 1998), have a sense of choice "autonomy", and freedom and volition from external pressure.

One important aspect is the idea that autonomy not always individualistic and as such SDT recognises that extrinsic motivation and regulated actions can become self-determined.

The authors suggest that there are three needs, innate, essential and universal. Following their review of these ideas and theories, they conclude that cultural and developmental influences produce variances in personal or socially accepted goals, which in turn yield different levels of satisfaction and well-being. Their theory suggests it is possible to identify several distinct types of motivation all of which have significant consequences.

O'Reilly (2014) concurs with SDT proposed by Deci and Ryan and concludes in her research enquiry that perceived autonomy is linked with intrinsic motivation and that this perceived autonomy can be harnessed by the teacher to enhance and support the adult student's motivation and to enhance the learning outcomes. There are however, limitations to this research including that it focused solely on learner' perspectives and it may have been useful to include the teachers' experiences to better comprehend how intrinsic motivation, perceived autonomy support and proficiency interact. Haesler (2012), proposes that "The more we can move education away from a motivation framework based on avoiding failure (teachers and students) towards one constructed around self-discovery and genuine engagement the better."

On the other hand, Pink, presents three crucial concepts as the basis for motivation: autonomy, mastery and purpose. In his book "Drive" Pink (2010) suggests that when

people are engaged in meaningful work, the motivation for them to do better is not for pay but that they are motivated by these three concepts. This would suggest that in an academic setting autonomy could for example include providing students with frequent and authentic opportunities to make choices and engage in critical thinking and/or course design. Mastery suggests that students generally want to get better at their study because it makes them feel good. Not only will this produce better learning and be more satisfying, but to be successful in the world of work in Ireland today a mastery of learning is essential.

To meet the demands of the Irish curriculum in the further education sector students must be able to demonstrate mastery of knowledge and essential skills through a variety of assessment methodologies. The concept of purpose in the further education sector is evidenced by students asking such questions as: Why do I have to do this? When am I ever going to use this? Pink suggests that linking the world of work to the world of learning is the key, which students will get excited about the work, want to do it and want to do it well. This is in keeping with the ethos and philosophy of further education where preparation for the work of work is an integral component to each major award offered by the further education sector and should have "buy in "from the students.

2.9   Application to pedagogical practice in the further education sector

Having considered some of the motivational theorists and the Irish further education and training sector, it is useful to discuss these theories in an educational context, for example, the relevance of Maslow's ideas to adult education today comes from his reference to esteem, self-esteem, and self-actualisation. Each of these needs could be seen as a motivation to commence and participate in adult education, which is the subject matter of this research enquiry.

On the other hand our students are social beings and the theory of Abraham Maslow have been criticised for being too rigid and as an alternative Ryan and Deci (2000) suggest that there are three intrinsic needs involved in the concept of self-determination. Furthermore, these three basic psychological needs will enhance intrinsic motivation, thereby motivating a person to initiate effective and healthy actions. The first of these needs is the "autonomy" of being in control of your own life. The second is the "competence" to be able to do what you want to do, and finally the sense of "belonging" to be participatory

and engage with others. Dewey (1938) was keen to point out very early in the progressive education movement that students need to have choice, meaning, purpose and motivation throughout their learning process.

Further education provides the learner with a higher level of control through higher understanding, which in turn can promote a greater sense of competence in life. Educational environments are communal and therefore students feel part of a team or have a sense of belonging. The research of Sorinola et al. (2013) sets out to explore the gap between intrinsic motivation to learn and the mechanisms of that relationship. They suggest:

> Motivation is a multifaceted, multidimensional and dynamic concept on a continuum between intrinsically motivated to extrinsically motivated, as both types can be mutually interactive and reinforcing because the model itself is fluid (i.e. a person can move between different types of motivation depending on the situation) (p. 226).

The findings suggest that there is a link between engagement and perception and that educators can nurture motivation and engagement by addressing the student's individual needs and strive "to find new ways of increasing learner's propensity towards learning".

Wlodkowski's (2008) Integrated Levels of Adult Motivation Theory proposes that there are three integrated levels of adult motivation and they are based on the idea that adults want to be responsible and successful students. The most basic, or minimum level is the idea of "Success and Volition". An adult learner will feel more responsible if there is choice and accountability for the choice as in course commencement. To attain a higher level of motivation, the adult learner needs to find the learning meaningful and worthwhile and to achieve "Success, Volition and Value". Ginsberg (2005) suggests that this is particularly so for students in high poverty communities and that teachers need to design lessons that "elicit students' stories, opinions, values and interests as a catalyst for learning" (p. 220). The added value is the meaningful learning. The highest level according to Wlodowski is "Success, Volition, Value and Enjoyment". At this stage the adult learner takes pleasure in actively participating as well as the worthwhile learning and that this would lead to eventual completion of the course and progression to either higher education or the world of work.

Taylor & Trumpower (2014) maintain that the Wlodkowski's framework provides a useful tool in understanding intrinsic motivating conditions "for basic education learners" (p. 3).

Their research also demonstrated how extrinsic motivators also play a role in the teaching and learning process. The purpose of their study was to understand the role of the teaching particularly planning and utilising a range of motivational strategies to enhance the learning of diverse adult students in the Canadian context. The implications of their research has relevance to this dissertation enquiry on how to improve the support of teachers in enhancing motivation among adult students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Irish Further Education environment and the extrinsic motivators of the Canadian study are similar in that the purpose of the education is focused towards the labour market or towards progression to further education.

2.10   Motivation to commence a course

In the Irish further education sector, students are classified as adults. According to Knowles, (1990) one of the main characteristics of adult learning is motivation. Many students progress from educational systems where the motivation and rewards for learning are external including grades, parental reward etc., or indeed the lack of motivation could be attributed to the lack of these external motivational factors. Kungu and Machtmes (2009) argue that the ability for enable life-long learning is necessary if a person is to progress in a "rapidly-changing and technologically-complex global society" (p. 509) but that the intent on the student must be present.

The literature suggests that motivation for the majority of adult students becomes internal or intrinsic, where the value and usefulness of the knowledge or skill are more important than the external reward. In the further education sector in Ireland, there are little or no mandatory attendance requirements and the programme requirements assume that the students are self-directed. Motivated students are easy to teach as they interact with lessons, pay attention and direct their own learning pace. They engage with self-assessment and the critical skill of self-reflection.

However, this is not always the case and I want to explore the idea of motivation further. For example; while the timing may be opportunistic for a student to return to or commence a course of further education and the subject matter may be of interest to them, their motivation can waiver from time to time depending on issues external to them. The challenge is getting teachers to want to engage with students in a manner that lends support thus enhancing the students' motivation to continue and complete.

2.11 Motivation to participate and complete

Knowles (1975) states that in its broadest sense, self-directed learning describes a process:

> …in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes (p. 54).

Expectation to succeed supports Bandura's (1997) ideas about self-efficacy, the learner's belief in their ability to achieve what might seem a challenging task. Hodges, (2004) explains that Bandura's "Self-Efficacy" theory is based on four factors. Mastery of experiences, which suggests we learn from our past experience and judge ourselves on our success and failures. Social modelling, observing others successfully completing tasks raises the belief that the same task can be completed, or perhaps done even better. The third factor, social persuasion, suggests that people can be persuaded that they can complete a task successfully by getting positive encouragement. It may also help them overcome any concerns they may have about failure and supports them with focus on the task rather than the concept of failure. The fourth factor, psychological responses, that one's emotional response and/or physical reaction to a situation and how these responses are perceived by others can influence how one might feel about this type of situation in the future. This can act as either a motivator or produce a weak self-efficacy which may in turn become a barrier. If presented with the same situation again, a feeling of "I cannot do this" may be experienced. One can however, take control of these feelings and emotions and learn to ignore them when in the same situation again.

This is wholly relevant to the adult learning process. Mastery of experiences, social modeling and psychological responses are primarily within the control of the learner, whereas social persuasion usually involves the teachers and peers. Self-efficacy is at the heart of motivation. When designing learning experiences, this needs to be considered and efforts need to be made to increase the students' self-efficacy.

Mellard et al. (2013) suggest that it is not only motivation that is required for a student to participate and succeed but that high quality instruction in relevant and meaning curriculum is both necessary and the reason for students to succeed with their educational goals. Casey (2013) in his article, Learning beyond Competence to Participation,

concludes by suggesting that teachers view learning and teaching strategies through the lens of the students need to participate.

In summary, many of the ideas shared by the theorists suggest that for adult students, self-efficacy and a sense of belonging is at the heart of their motivation, this is at variance with the hierarchy of needs proposed by Abraham Maslow in 1943, where belonging can only be achieved once the basic needs have been met, which would imply that students from a disadvantaged area would not be capable of believing their own sense of power as the lower order needs are not being sufficiently met. It may be that we need to consider the role of the teacher as an educational leader and how this can impact on the motivational and education development of our students.

2.12   Course design, motivation and the role of the teacher in further education

The role of the teacher in the Irish further education context has historically been based on that of a teacher of post primary education. The introduction of section 31, regulation 5 of the Teaching Council Act has, since April 2013, made it mandatory for teachers in the further education sector to have a teaching qualification along with their level 8 primary degrees. There are currently eight higher education institutions (HEI) offering these teaching qualifications (Teaching Council, 2009).

This should ensure that going forward; teachers in the sector have the necessary skills and competences to design their course programme around the needs of their students. In his address to the FET Colloquium, Teaching Council representative, Ó'Ruairc, (2015) suggested that teachers as leaders of learning should develop the future well-being of others, this is in keeping with the FET strategy, which sets out to promote active inclusion. Bovill (2015) discussed the various frameworks she had critiqued and compared in terms of curriculum design and pedagogic implications. She discusses the challenges and opportunities of partnerships in learning between teachers and students and concludes by suggesting teachers disseminate and share good practice within the academic institutions, collaboration with peers and that by continuously questioning and reflecting on teaching practice "we are more likely to gain greater understanding to enhance future partnerships" (p. 3).

2.13   Models of motivational design

One such strategy for incorporating inspirational or motivational strategies into the learning experience is Keller's ARCS design model as described by Wiley, (2013) who suggested that this model operates under the premise that students will be motivated if they feel they can achieve success and that there is value in their learning. This model operates within the parameters of expectancy-value theory. The acronym, ARCS, stands for Attention, Relevance, Confidence and Satisfaction. "A problematic, yet common, assumption among educational researchers is that when teachers provide authentic problem-based experiences, students will automatically be engaged" (Blumenfeld, Kepler & Krajcik, 2006; Blumenfeld et al., 1991; Parsons & Ward, 2011 Willems & Gonzales-DeHass 2012) in (Belland et al., 2013). This they suggest is not always the case and that if motivation is ignored in the instructional design phasing, it can lead to declines in the motivation levels of students. This empirical research aims to design a framework for designing instructional scaffolds that improve motivation, engagement and cognition among the participants by having them solve authentic problems. The findings suggest that their framework should promote six goals that are broadly supported by motivational theories: establish task value, promote mastery goals, promote belonging, promote emotion regulation, promote expectancy for success and promote autonomy.

Alternatively, Goto and Martin (2009) maintain that teachers do generally concentrate on factors of motivational barriers that are within their control, but that it may be less clear what can be done to address the psychological barriers that may keep adult students from returning to study. Their findings suggest that the psychological factors which influence adult students to return to education are the influences of friends, peers and family members. Bovill (2015) discussed this issue at a conference about engaging students as partners in learning and teaching. Her discussion focused on faculty in higher education contexts and suggested a fully inclusive approach when selecting students to partake in activities; this could have implications for students at risk of dropping out particularly if they are marginalised students. This research is beneficial to the teacher in the enhancement and support of student motivation and is of relevance to this research enquiry.

Hakkarainen (2009) presents different approaches to learning including Descartes, "Empty vessel to be filled" and in contrast Sfard, Anderson, Reder and Simon (1996), who

described learning as a process of growing up and socialising to a social community with its norms and practices.

Hakkarainen added a third dimension to this which he called trialogical processes. His ideas build on the works of Vygotsky and Engstrom as constructivists. Ultimately what is being examined in this literature is based on Hakkarainen's idea of the trialogical research approach, which specifically focusses on epistemic processes based on social processes and cultural differences. It examines the reciprocal individual and the social and cognitive-technological transformations taking place in this context.

2.14 Learning to learn

Caruth (2014) maintains that adult students need to be taught how to learn to be able to independent, life-long learning. She concurs with the ideas of Knowles and suggests that there is a six point plan for teachers to engage the students in their classroom. Jordan (2015) in her address to lecturers at a conference in the Waterford Institute of Education, suggested that "a sceptical teacher is a good teacher" and that it is a tool for teachers to investigate and critique what they do as part of their professional practice.

Dweck (2000) argues that self-theories, which we form about our own intelligence at a very young age, help set up the goals we pursue and how these theories and goals in turn set up adaptive and maladaptive achievement patterns. The Theories of Dweck are somewhat at variance, or appear to challenge to some degree, the theories of Bandura and Hakkarainen regarding social persuasion. Dweck states that certain types of praise can lead students to fear failure, avoid risks, doubt themselves when they fail and cope poorly with set-backs.

When considering educational practice and approaches to learning and motivation, Biggs (1987) proposes that students' motivation for completing a task will affect the approach to learning that they adopt. He examines students' approaches to learning under two main headings; the surface approach and the deep approach. Students who adopt a surface approach to their learning are mainly interested in satisfying the assessment requirements of their course. In contrast, students who adopt a deep approach to their learning do so to gain greater understandings of the subject being taught.

Literature would appear to link extrinsic goals with more surface learning strategies and intrinsic goals with deeper learning strategies (Biggs, 1987). Furthermore, it advocates the deep approach as being the far superior strategy to adopt in learning (Biggs, 1999). However, one could argue that the motivation to learn something determines the more superior strategy. For example, in a survivalist situation, learning quickly could alter the outcome compared to researching the situation.

2.15   Course promotion and student recruitment

The Irish educational system recruits adult students through a number of different methods: websites, self-selection, advertisements in newspapers and other media, education fairs, open days and nights, interviews and through recruitment facilitators such as Fast-track Information Technology (FIT) and the Department of Social Protection (DSP) and Intreo formally FAS.

Ahl, (2006) advocates that because motivation in the area of adult education is focused on the recruitment and attainment of students, it pre-supposes that there are people who are not easily recruited. She argues that the motivational problems arise with the recruiter and those who do not wish to be recruited.

In their research, "The Effect of Student Readiness on Student Success in Online Courses", the authors highlight how reading skills impact on lifelong learning (Geiger, Morris, Subous, Shuttock & Vittero, 2014). According to NALA and the OECD Adult Skills Survey which indicates that "17.9%, that is 1 in 6, Irish adults are at or below level 1 on a five level literacy scale. Ireland ranks 15th out of 24 participating countries. At this level a person may be unable to understand basic written information." How then, are they to commence, effectively participate and successfully complete their chosen course in a further education setting in Ireland?

I perceive a danger that the expectation of potential students may not be managed in all such points of contact. For instance, when presenting at an open day, colleges are in effect competing for the attention of the learner.

Colleges may be responsible for creating a false expectation within potential students. What happens to students who were successfully drawn towards a particular course only to find they were never really capable of commencing the course? And what does their

admission policy state? How does the college handle the sense of rejection of potential students who do not meet the criteria? Are we killing their initiative from participating in future programs?

Dweck (2000) proposes that a learner with a history of high academic achievement will not necessarily out-perform another learner who has or may have a lower academic achievement, but higher interest in the subject specialism, particularly when faced with obstacles. The higher interest learner is more likely to problem solve. This may be the key to course participation and an example of this can be seen with hobby or interest courses.

Therefore a course recruiter needs to be mindful that no element of auto-suggesting reasons for doing a particular course or over-incentivising a potential learner creep into the process, as this can distort the selection process when choosing potential students.

The level of motivation already within the learner should be both clearly established and influential in the selection process. In addition, the reality of doing a particular course should also be made clear to the learner in terms of commitment, suitability and likelihood of completion and progression routes. Any supports in place for any individual needs, financial rewards or incentives such as childcare or travel expenses for Department of Social Protection funded students, work experience placements etc. should be clearly communicated to ensure the right choices are being made on both sides.

Theorists have helped highlight the downside of placing students into the wrong courses for the wrong reasons. Once on the wrong course are motivational techniques mainly used to keep them engaged and not drop out rather than maximising their potential? Anecdotally, many colleges and universities report a high dropout in year one of courses, which would suggest that the selection processes may need review and in turn a knock-on effect will be non-participation and non-completion. Rogan (2012) considered this question in the University Times:

> Statistics suggest that one in three students in Dublin institutions will drop out… There are several reasons for the grossly high dropout rates amongst third level students in Ireland. Cost is often presented as the primary factor in the case of dropouts, and while this is, of course, a legitimate reason, I would suggest that a more influential reasoning in a number of cases might be that that student should never have been in college in the first place…

Rogan continues the debate by suggesting that the solution may lie with investment in further education and training sector, vocational education and a societal re-evaluation of

our outdated ideas of vocational training. This may be answer in addressing this statistic, perhaps if students completed a FE course they would be better ready for the demands of HE courses.

2.16   The road ahead

Since the Further Education and Training Bill 2013 was published by Minister Quinn and the establishment of SOLAS in 2013, and the associated action plan which aims to "Build the identity and values of a world-class integrated Further Education and Training system", the Further education and Training (FET) sector in Ireland has an established identity and the DES (2012) suggests that this sector will help with Ireland's economic recovery by upskilling for the jobs and society of tomorrow, which seems to be in keeping with the ideas of Rogan, and as a sector it is paramount that we do not fall into the trap of placing students on courses for the sake of it.

Finn, (2015) spoke about the need to "Maintain a learner Centred Ethos in a Changing Further Education Landscape". Following on from a National economic and social council strategic review of FET and the unemployed in 2013, Sweeney (2015) concluded that the FET sector must become a more equal partner with higher education by suggesting the following:

> There are significant labour market developments that support the ambition of the FET strategy to give the sector a stronger role in routing more people directly to good employment. If it can do so, it will leave behind the Cinderella status which has dogged the sector and enter into a more real partnership with higher education (p. 13).

NAPD FE, (2014), outlined many of the opportunities and challenges facing the FET sector and is supportive and enabling to educators in the sector. It embodies active inclusion which is at the heart of further education and concurs with the ideas of policy, strategy and leadership in the sector whilst drawing for the positive experiences of the past.

McCoy et al, (2014), suggest that 62% of school leavers who progressed to PLC courses felt that second level schooling had prepared them for their course as opposed to 52% for higher education. The report discusses the challenge for students at both higher and further education with the notion of self-directed learning. This information is of

relevance to teachers in the sector and should inform the process of learner induction and teaching strategies to enhance and support motivation.

Another interesting and relevant observation relates to the year some of the surveys discussed in this literature review were conducted. It seems that the findings in surveys conducted after 2010 indicate a shift from personal development and intrapersonal motives towards more work-focused or financial motives which could be viewed as extrinsic or external factors. This may be due to the recession which gripped Ireland since 2007 but now appears to be abating. The implementation of the further education and training strategy (SOLAS, 2014) will place a responsibility on providers of further education to offer labour orientated courses with a focus on "the work of work" and to ensure there are relevant and appropriate progression opportunities for graduates of their courses. Regardless of location, demographics or size a college of further education, the institution and teachers can benefit by taking into account learner perceptions of autonomy and belongingness and enhance and support student motivation for active participation and individual success.

The challenge is ensuring that this matches the motivational factors of potential students and I suggest that further research is required in Ireland to ensure that this match can be attained.

2.17   Summary and conclusion

I suggest that the works of Dweck, McCoy et al and Pink are influencing the way we view adults as potential students for particular courses and in doing so maximise their potential for course participation and eventual success. Further research needs to be carried out regarding the reasons students drop out or fail to successfully complete these types of courses in the further education sector.

It is likely that additional European and National funding will be provided in the continuing economic climate to re-train and up-skill future students to increase their employment prospects and maximise their transferrable skills. According to the European Commission (2015) Ireland should "Offer more workplace training, improve and ensure the relevance of FET courses and apprentices with respect to labour market needs" (p. 4). It is imperative, therefore, that we place potential students in the further education and

vocational training sector on suitable courses thus allowing them the opportunity to reach their full potential and to remain intrinsically self-motivated, self-directed and increase their sense of self-efficacy.

To concur with the research of Watson, McCoy and Gorby (2006), we may need to address the dual fold purpose which this sector supports. This is still the case but with the new legislative structure of SOLAS as a unified further education and training sector, there may be further accountability required of the sector in the future.

To sum up, it appears that the exploration of motivation factors requires a multi-dimensional approach and thorough reflection and investigation into many aspects of human behaviour and educational related activity. The following chapter will provide insight into my research methodology choice and rationale.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on and examines the methodology I selected in order to answer my research question, how to improve the support of teachers in enhancing motivation among adult students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Irish Further Education environment?

Firstly it provides an overview of other common research methodologies, empirical, interpretive and critical. I then consider action research as the methodology of choice for this enquiry, the rationale for this choice and the instruments used in conducting the research. An action plan outlining how the study is to be conducted is also included.

The chapter concludes with an examination of four key areas pertaining to the research: data, evidence, ethics and validity and explores the standards of judgement, used as a method of measuring the research thereby ensuring rigour and validity.

3.2 Research

The Oxford online dictionary defines research as being "the systematic study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions" (accessed 3rd April 2015).

I begin this chapter by providing a brief overview of some of the main research paradigms. I later explain Whitehead's "living educational theory" approach to action research which is the methodology I adopted in order to answer my research question.

In research contexts, a paradigm is understood as the particular conceptual framework through which a researcher operates. Carr and Kemmis (2005) maintain that the implicit beliefs, values and assumptions of each research paradigm structures the perceptions of researchers and shapes their subsequent theorising. Consequently they propose that any theoretical knowledge that is produced will be informed by the view of the reality that the paradigm supports.

Holden and Lynch (2004) concur with this idea and propose that it is imperative that the researcher' reviews their own philosophical approach in determining the methodology of choice as they believe that of utmost importance for the researcher is, not only how to research and what to research but, the question of why to research. This perspective they suggest is "based on the researcher's assumptions concerning the inter-related concepts of ontology, epistemology and human nature."

3.3   Positivism or empirical research

The first type of research, based predominantly on principles of science, is known as positivism. This research has its origins in France and its ideas were formulated by August Compte, a French philosopher, who accentuated the importance of observation and reason as a means of understanding human behaviour. The researcher approaches a question or problem from a quantitative viewpoint. The positivist approach to educational research rests on the implicit assumption that situations can be studied and anlaysed by external researchers, who remain outside the situation they are studying. Assumptions of this type of research were identified by (Cohen et al, 2000) as, determinism, empiricism, parsimony, and generality. The combination of these deliberations seems to leave the human being as a passive "object" with limited control or influence over what is going on. One might suggest that this is the main criticism levelled at positivist research. The research paradigm does not allow for subjectivism and does not consider the individual. Positivist forms of research are notionally value free. McNiff & Whitehead suggest that the researcher stays out of the research so as not to "contaminate it, and reports are written in the third person, which is supposed to reduce bias in the claim to objectivity" (p. 23).

This traditional positivist view has dominated research and theory for centuries. While the popularity of this type of research within educational contexts declined in the latter part of the twentieth century, positivist approaches including surveys and longitudinal studies are still considered to be relevant instruments of research. There will always be an interest in the inputs and outputs of an education system even though more recent movements such as action research have challenged this approach to research.

3.4 Interpretive research

This paradigm emphasises the personal within research. The research reality as viewed by the individual. Those researching using this approach reject attempts to measure statistically. Research undertaken includes ethnography, case study, focus groups, interviewing and phenomenology. Anti-positivists believe that reality is multi-layered and complex (Cohen et al, 2000) and that a single idea or phenomenon can have multiple interpretations.

One of the first areas of educational research which moved away from the positivist approach was sociology of education. Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey (1966 and 1970), were among the first to make extensive use of anti-positivist methodologies, in school enquiry studies undertaken by them. These studies concerned the streaming of students at post primary level. They did make use of some quantitative data in their studies but also made use of interviewing and observation as part of their methodologies. This mixture of quantitative and qualitative material and the methodologies engaged to collect them, influenced those conducting educational research. Although the researcher is still external to the research process, the interpretive approach includes human qualities.

3.5 Critical theoretic research

Critical theory is a school of thought that places importance on reflective evaluation and critique of our society and culture. In sociology the term critical theory describes the neo-Marxist philosophy of the Frankfurt School. The theory was established primarily by five theoreticians in the Frankfurt school and this paradigm has been advocated by second generation Frankfurt School scholar, Jurgen Habermas.

Habermas, a critical social theorist, presents a framework within which social critique may be developed. He was critical of earlier types of research because the aim was not to question or transform what existed. It required the researcher to understand the human interests involved and the social situation. The researcher is still placed outside of the process and not an active participant in the research. An analysis of actions and reactions came into research and led to the development of action research as a methodology.

3.6 Action research

Action research emerges from the critical theory paradigm. The critical theory approach gained momentum from the 1930s onwards as researchers became disillusioned with the failure of the then current methodologies to recognise the historical, cultural and social elements of their research (Mc Niff and Whitehead, 2002). The core of action research evolves around the researcher investigating his or her own practices with a view to altering them in a beneficial way (Dick, 2000). Action research encourages researchers to reflect methodically on their pedagogical practice while implementing informed action to bring about enhancement in that practice for social benefit.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) one of the main axioms governing this paradigm is that "the inquirer and the "object" of enquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable" (p. 37). The participative nature of action research where both researcher and subjects are active collaborative participants in the research process is an aspect of the method that I find particularly interesting and in keeping with the research question to be addressed. The personal reflective cycle is part of this learning cycle, in that it begins with a question, event or experience, a change takes place, reactions are documented and it is established what has been learned. The considerations may be taken away from the learning and applied to the research process. This concurs with Carr and Kemmis (1986), who perceive action research as being a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationale and balance of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which these practices are carried out.

Unlike traditional forms of research, critical theory research is an enquiry into the researcher's own practice. Consequently the focus shifts from the observer researcher as passive and onto the practitioner researcher as active and one who investigates their own practice by monitoring their learning and its influence on their actions. (Whitehead and Mc Niff, 2006).

This research method involves the researcher as an active participant in change and improvement of a question or problem studied and often a catalyst to addressing others. Kemmis & McTaggart, in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) argue that "to do action research is to plan, act, observe and reflect more carefully, more systematically and more rigorously than one usually does in everyday life" (p. 297).

Kemmis & McTaggart also identify that the research in this case is not done on other people; rather it is "research on their own work, to help them improve what they do, including how they work with and for others...". Noffke and Zeichner, in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), include other claims for teachers, including that action research increases feelings of self-worth and confidence, broadens views on teaching, school and society and improves the analogy between practical theories and practices.

A statement frequently quoted by writers on action research is what Francis Bacon (1607) said: "Truth is revealed and established more through testimony of actions than through logic or even observation", Bacon in, Reason and Bradbuy (2008, p. 30). They use it to underline the fact that actions, and reflections on those actions, are what contribute to praxis.

Ultimately this is what will lead to improvement of practice. While we reflect and observe in action research it is not in a scientific way, it is not just action that is important but the reflection is equally important. This is another reason why this type of research is suitable in addressing the ultimate aim of this study to enhance motivation of adult students in the further education sector.

Confucius seems more in keeping with that which is important in action research, as he links involvement to the process of learning, "Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand". (Confucius, c.450 BC)

Although there appears to be historical support of some of the principles of action research, the acceptance of it as a research type has been difficult and other forms of research have been more readily accepted. They are considered superior by some, mainly because their features are quantitative or scientific. Action research has on the other hand been open to criticism, which focuses particularly on areas of validation, generalisation and transferability.

Because the outcomes of action research cannot be measured in the same way as other research paradigms, action researchers must be meticulous about validity and rigour regarding every claim they make in order to be able to defend their position against such criticism.

The fact that action research is open to criticism may be a part of its real worth and possibly one of its most important qualities.

The theory is open to different interpretations, consideration of other points of view, review and continuous development of itself in a way that other research methods are not. This implores the question of whether, what appears to be a weakness of actions research might be actually be its greatest strength?

Various approaches fall under the overarching term that is action research. These approaches include Lawrence Stenhouse's interpretive approach, Stephen Kemmis and Wilf Carr's action-reflection spiral of cycles and Jack Whitehead's ideas around living educational theory (McNiff and Whitehead 2002). Nonetheless, most action research approaches revolve around the same common properties.

3.7   Reflection

Reflective practice is an integral component of the methodology that constitutes action research. Reflection moves learning forward by allowing the researcher to reach into deep implicit knowledge and raise it to explicit levels of awareness (McNiff and Whitehead, 2000). Action research is cyclical in nature, with a series of mutually dependent steps that involve continuous dialectical interaction between purposeful action and reflection. According to Denscombe (2007) this ongoing process of action and learning from experience results in "a feedback loop in which initial findings generate potentials for change which are then implemented and evaluated as a prelude to further investigation" (p. 123).

The researcher as an I in action research is perhaps the biggest difference between this and other forms of research. No longer is the researcher passive, remote and external to the study. Instead there is a practitioner-researcher deeply embedded in the research enquiry. This is one characteristic that I find most interesting. It along with my current role as an educational leader and co-ordinator are the principle reasons why I have chosen it as my methodological approach, which aims to address how to improve the support of teachers in enhancing motivation among adult students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Irish Further Education environment.

3.8 Action-reflection cycle

Action research does not have a defined end, but has the potential to evolve into endless new experiences of learning and practice. It emphasises the uniqueness of each social situation (the study of singularity), as opposed to the creation of a generic theory (Bassey, 1995). In fact much of the literature surrounding action research points to its capabilities to transform individuals and situations through this process of critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991, Farren, 2008).

McNiff & Whitehead (2006) suggests that changes develop into cycles which are an important feature of all approaches to action research. The spiral of action, monitoring, reviewing and evaluation and further planning ensures the living emergent nature of it or as they describe as "disciplined, systematic process in a cycle of observe – reflect – act – evaluate – modify – move in new directions" (p. 9).

Figure 1 – Action research cycle

With these evolving cycles of action reflection there are no rigid or fixed answers and no ways of predicting success or failure. This enables researchers to be flexible and to learn to accept the process as unclear and uncertain. According to Berlin in Mc Niff & Whitehead (2006) answers are often tentative, notional, open to change or variation. Therefore such individuals just have to live with the conflict and do the best they can.

3.9   Rationale for choice of approach for my research

Although I found the debate between the various research paradigms stimulating, I still needed to determine the precise meaning research holds for me on a personal level. I found the work of Schon to be particularly insightful in my journey to uncover the answer to this dilemma.

Schon (1995) proposes that researchers can place themselves on the hard ground, where they build abstract theories according to their standards of rigor about issues that are of little importance to society. Alternatively he states that they, the researchers, can descend to the swampy lowlands where they solve the problems of greatest concern, but cannot be rigorous while doing so. In order to address the dilemma practitioners' encounter concerning rigor or relevance, a re-evaluation is required, of what counts as scholarship. He proposes that the new scholarship take the form of action research, where practitioners study their own practice and generate their own theories out of that practice.   In order for the researcher to be content within a particular role the researcher's practice must be in line with their ontological values. Where this is not the case, a conflict exists for the practitioner. In a sense, values are in confusion and will internalise the struggle by attempting to send a message to the conscious self to remedy the situation.

McNiff (2002) discusses the process of working within education and the inter relationships within systems of education which should enable each person to advance and develop his/her capacity. Such relationships have to be worked at constantly and require "purposeful morally committed action". Action research is unique in being a caring research. The lack of impartiality is a unique feature of action research and it compels researchers to take responsibility for improving the quality of life or the learning of others, and supposes that they as researchers do not abandon the difficult situation but undertake to improve it.

3.10   Living educational theory

> A living theory is an explanation produced by an individual for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation in which they live and work (Whitehead, 2008, p. 104)

Within the family of approaches that action research incorporates, I propose to adopt the living educational theory approach for the purposes of my research enquiry. A defining characteristic of this particular approach to action research is the strong emphasis it places

on the practitioner's own educational values. Whitehead & Mc Niff (2006), propose that these values reflect "our commitment in terms of who we are and how we come to understand ourselves in the world" (p. 82). They also uphold that the values themselves can become the living standards by which we make judgements about the quality of our practices. I have chosen to adopt this form of enquiry as I found the philosophy of Whitehead's approach to be particularly persuasive and I also sense how critical it is for teachers to question their underlying assumptions and to articulate values that add significance and focus to their work.

Similar to many other practitioners in the field of education, I find that my values and beliefs are often in direct conflict with my everyday practice. According to Whitehead (2008) if we announce our values and then ignore them in the process, we become "living contradictions". For me the "living contradiction" is mainly due to the constraint of adhering to quality assurance processes, covering lenghty syllabi in a limited amount of time, while at the same time attempting to support teachers and adult students with motivational issues. I engaged in this particular research study primarily in order to overcome this contradiction, and to find ways of working that are more fulfilling for practice, supporting teachers and enhancing the experience for the adult students in the college. Through adopting a living education theory approach for improving practice and generating knowledge, I hope that I will engage more with my educational values and beliefs.

Living educational theory requires that the researcher make public the story of the research so that others can appraise its validity (Whitehead, 2008). Action research practitioner researchers test their claim to knowledge against the critical responses of others to see if they can tolerate the criticism and have validity.

I find the validation process an interesting prospect as experience has taught me that collaboration can play an extremely valuable role in shaping and adding focus to my practice.

3.11   Ontology and epistemology

Although action research developed out of critical theory research there are significant differences between the genres. Mc Niff and Whitehead (2006) suggest that what

differentiates a living theory as a form of action research from other forms of action research is that it is grounded in the ontological "I" of the researcher, and uses a living logic, that is, the researcher organises their thinking in terms of what they are experiencing at the particular moment in time.

Choosing this as an appropriate method for addressing my research study inspired me to explore my understanding of how I perceive myself in relation to other people, my ontology. I also contemplated how I perceive knowledge, my epistemology. My understanding of my ontological and epistemological stances greatly influenced my rationale for choosing to conduct the research study through action research. Pathirage, Amarantunga & Haigh (2008) maintain that:

> The idea of and "elective affinity" (Knox, 2004, p. 124) allows one to identify that one's ontological views do in fact select, or lend themselves to certain approaches but being aware of these allows one to select what is best, from the myriad of tools available, for a particular piece of research (p. 9).

My ontological perspective is that, as an educational leader in the further education sector, I am interested in exploring how I can use a motivational strategies framework to enhance teaching and learning practices by improving motivational practices among my teaching colleagues. I perceive this as being a collaborative process where I as a coordinator and the teachers and adult students in question are connected and influence and affect each other. Consequently we can offer explanations outlining our mutual influence on the learning of each other.

Whitehead and McNiff (2006), state that a person's epistemological stance is embedded within and emerges from their ontological stance or viewpoint.. Due to the interconnected nature of social beings, I perceive knowledge as being constructed through processes of social interaction. In my workplace context, I accept that I can construct my own knowledge by engaging with colleagues and students, all of whom are also in the process of constructing their own knowledge.

The proactive approach that action research requires emerges as the methodology most suited to the type of research I propose to conduct. It is appropriate to the idea of continuous improvement within education and also to me as a researcher. It is in keeping with my value of providing the best possible care and support to teachers and students.

Action research appeals to me as a practitioner-researcher who wishes to impact directly on aspects of my role. As it is directly connected with activity and action, rather than passive observation and analysis of a situation, I believe that it will be more dynamic in addressing areas of concern and will improve how I engage with my practice. I can see how this method could aid me in conducting research that addresses matters of importance to the further education sector in Ireland, whilst closing the gap between being relevant and being rigorous. As an educational researcher, this method of research informs my ontological and epistemological perspectives and more particularly Whitehead's model of "living educational theory".

3.12 The action plan

While carrying out my research study, I used the action plan as proposed by Whitehead and McNiff (2006) to bring a sense of order and a systematic approach to the process. Mc Niff (2002) maintains that asking questions in the form of those contained in the action plan enable the researcher practitioner to go in some way towards overcoming the "living contradiction", so that they might develop more completely in the direction of their educational values.

In using action research to explore a problem, it is important to put in place the support mechanisms to ensure that the question being posed is being systematically addressed. Planning considers the viability of the enquiry, the methodical approach, ethical issues and the standards against which findings will be judged, measured and tested. The purpose of action planning is to guide the practitioner/researcher through the process of research and ensure that they are answering the question posed which is essentially, how do I improve what I am doing? (Whitehead 1989).

I reviewed the questions posed by Whitehead and McNiff and I use those questions to give structure to my action plan. Steps, actions and results may not turn out as predicted and may need review and modification as the process evolves. However in order to be successful the process needs to be subjected to reflection, adjustment and adaptation. A plan is what we hope might happen and is aspirational by nature as an inflexible and rigid adherence to a specific action plan and efforts to pre-empt the action reflection cycles would interfere with the organic and developing cycle of enquiry.

The following action plan, as proposed by McNiff and Whitehead (2006), acts as the framework which defines the approach I take as I conduct my research and you can see my initial thoughts as answers to these questions below as I started my research journey.

- What is my concern?
- Why am I concerned?
- What experiences can I describe to show why I am concerned?
- What can I do about it?
- What will I do about it?
- What kind of data will I gather to show the situation as it unfolds?
- How will I explain my education influences in learning?
- How will I ensure that any conclusions I come to are reasonably fair and accurate?
- How will I evaluate the validity of the evidence-based account of my learning?
- How will I modify my concerns, ideas and practice in the light of my evaluations?

What is my concern?

My concern is how to improve the support of teachers in enhancing motivation among adult students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Irish Further Education environment? In relation to enhancing teaching and learning, the issues of student motivation and teacher supports are particularly of interest to me.

Why am I concerned?

I am committed to nurturing a passion for lifelong learning within the adult student cohorts in the college I practice in.

However, I have noticed that our teaching approach is not always favourable towards realising this ambition. All too often teachers fall into the trap of assuming a stance which is focused primarily on certification.

What experiences can I describe to show why I am concerned?

During the process of course completion teachers may overlook motivating students towards goals such as enthusiasm and passion for lifelong learning. This approach, in turn, contradicts my core values of dialogic co-enquiry and learner autonomy. I am consequently concerned as I find that my values are often in direct conflict with the everyday practices of the college. By embracing motivational strategies, I intend to overcome this "living contradiction" (Whitehead 2008), so that I can practice more in harmony with the direction of my own educational values.

What can I do about it?

I can engage with my fellow teacher practitioners through dialogue. I can review the processes currently in place in the college for the recruitment, admission and active participation of adult students through the teachers eyes and then reflect on what supports can be implemented to support teachers with the motivation of their student cohorts.

What will I do about it?

I will introduce an improved motivational framework to support the delivery of adult education within the college. The framework will contain a variety of resources to support teachers in the enhancement of motivation in their classes. I will pay particular attention to examining how the students' personal autonomy, motivation levels and love of lifelong learning are developing as a result of this process.

How will I gather evidence to show that I am influencing the situation?

I will gather evidence from a variety of sources. This will include my personal reflective journals, interviews and field notes, professional conversations and minutes of meetings and discussion groups with my teacher colleagues.

How will I explain my education influences in learning?

The narratives in my reflective log review and reflect on my educational practice. This includes my engagement with research as a practitioner-researcher in the college seeking to understand and explore my educational influences on the learning of my colleague teachers so that I can support and influence my colleagues in the enhancement of adult student motivation.

How will I ensure that any conclusions I make are reasonably fair and accurate?

Throughout the research study I constantly question and critically reflect on my approach. In particular I reflect on whether my actions are in line in with my educational values or not and demonstrate commitment towards living the beliefs through my practice.

How will I evaluate the validity of the evidence-based account of my learning?

Any claims I make in relation to the findings of my study is supported by evidence from the data gathered.

How will I modify my concerns, ideas and practices in the light of my valuations?

Action research is cyclical by nature. Each cycle involves continuous interplay between action, reflection and learning. As the enquiry progresses, being responsive to the findings that emerge is a fundamental part of the action research process. My values act as living standards of judgement that influence me as I reflect upon and consequently develop and progress with my research.

By conducting this research study using the principles of action research, I reach conclusions about my own praxis which you will see in the final chapter. Precision in the use of this methodology and the instruments used ensure that this is a rigorous process and the findings produced using these processes will be presented as more than a matter of opinion.

3.13 Data collection and ethical concerns

Whitehead and McNiff, (2006) describe data as constituting the actions and phenomena that are recorded, collected and stored throughout the duration of the research study. Following its collection, the data is examined methodically in order to generate evidence that will test a claim about improved practice as part of action research.

Maintaining appropriate focus is essential when gathering data. This ensures that the resulting outcomes are appropriate for supporting evidence that will withstand robust critique and be supportive of the researcher's claim to knowledge.

I accumulated a range of qualitative data to provide a rich source of evidence that aims to address my research question about how to improve the support of teachers in enhancing motivation among adult students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Irish Further Education environment? I adhere to Whitehead and McNiff's (2006) advice that the dual aims of data accumulation are to highlight experiences of practice and to demonstrate how I continuously develop my own practice, learning, and experiences.

3.14 Reflective learning journals

My personal reflective learning journals record the progression of my thinking and development over time. They provide a space where I can reflect on and make sense of the data that is emerging from the research process. Schon (1983) proposes that this "reflective conservation with the situation" (p. 103) is a vital process in determining future actions and reactions.

Reflection is an important feature of action research and reflections at every stage of the work are captured within my journal. It records not only reflections on actions, but also reflections on professional conversations and of validation groups. As I go through these processes I make extensive use of my reflective journal. I have already used journaling as a method of recording my initial thoughts about carrying out action research.

The use of the journal will become more frequent as the research and action reflection cycles commence and evolve. Reflection and observations of planning steps taken have already been recorded within the journal. It also provides a place for the recording of timely reflection upon various activities carried out. I have decided to record all pertinent facts and reflections in one place. Because many of the actions undertaken may appear

small, my journaling needs to be regular to ensure there is no loss of relevant data. Additional, deeper and critical considerations and reflections can be added later if required.

3.15   Individual interviews/professional conversations

I met with all teachers in the FE sector to conduct interviews. My aim was to capture their views and opinions concerning their experiences of motivational frameworks as supportive tools. I wanted their experiences of teacher motivation, student motivation and professional development. The interviews were semi-structured in nature and involved a number of open-ended questions which asked for development and elaboration. The whole process was enhanced through the use of follow-up questions that probed deeper wherever interesting themes emerge. This form of interview was conducive to my research as I wanted to gather as much information as possible to allow me to have an extensive overview of what teachers thought would support them in their practice.

My plan was already informed and enriched by my work colleagues. Excerpts from conversations with them will be used to illustrate how this was supportive to the study and the collaborative learning process. I suggest that collegial effort of this kind is of high value. Although genuine input can sometimes be difficult to attain, I suggest that professional conversations will contribute greatly to the data and eventual outcome.

3.16   Validating the evidence

Whitehead & McNiff (2006) suggest that an essential element of supporting a claim to knowledge is that action research practitioners submit their research findings for scrutiny by others. This process establishes the validity and legitimacy of a claim to knowledge. In (2002) they suggested the following:

> Validation is not the summative point in a programme that has led to closure, but a formative engagement in an experience which contains emergent property for the realiszation of new potentialities (p. 108).

I also refer to Habermas's (1987) criteria of social validity to help convey the validity of my research claim. Habermas upholds that a claim to knowledge can be judged in terms of whether it is sincere, authentic, comprehensible and appropriate to the situation.

Throughout the period of review I take care to continuously examine the standards that I use to make judgments in my practice and work. By doing this I demonstrate the rigorous nature of my findings and thereby support my findings by adhering to the six criteria for rigour as outlined by Winter (1996).

3.17   Validation groups

I propose that two validation groups provides validation for this research, a field validation group and an academic group. Validation of questions and findings is integral to any research. McNiff & Whitehead (2006) maintain that the purposes of the validation groups are:

> …to meet at crucial stages of the project, particularly at the reporting stage, to scrutinize your evidence and to listen to your claims to knowledge, and agree or not as to whether your claims and their evidence base are coherent and believable (p. 85).

My field validation group is made up of two members. One is the deputy principal and the other is the guidance counsellor who has previously acted in this capicity. This group agree that my concerns about adult motivation raised by the enquiry are valid. They are able to endorse the view of what I experience in my role and concur that improvements suggested by the implementation of an improved framework should result in delivery of a better service to the adult students in the college.

The group is supportive of proposed steps as outlined to them so far and I believe that this validation group will become more questioning and challenging of my findings as I move into the reporting phase. However, I acknowledge that this can be difficult in the context of a collegial setting as it can be difficult to be critical about findings of another colleague, even where critique is elicited by the researcher.

It will be emphasised to the group that their input is valued regardless of whether it is positive or negative and I will emphasise that that an important part of the validation of research findings is the testing, critique and discussion of it.

My second validation group is the academic group that meet in college. This is made up of my supervisor and two student peers. This validation group tends to be more questioning and challenging by nature. Indeed it has already played an important role in helping me to identify my highest concern and to articulate my research question in an appropriate manner.

I have used the support of colleagues, who are able to critique me and act in a similar way to validation groups and I find that the one-to-one formats for discussing topics with friends sometimes lends itself to a more useful conversation than the field validation group.

People seem to feel more comfortable making their observations and suggestions on this one-to-one basis. In the same way I have found that sometimes speaking to individual members of a validation group can prove to be more constructive.

3.18   Ethical issues

In terms of research ethical issues relate to the protection of human participants. It remains the responsibility of the researcher to protect their participants at all times and to conduct the research in an ethical manner. I suggest, an ethical consideration for me as an educational leader, is that the teachers are colleagues and this could have implications regarding the integrity of their input.

All participants will be given information regarding the research to help them understand the rationale for the research. Participants will be provided with the option to consent or decline participation voluntarily. The researcher will also explain to participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Teachers in the college must be registered with the Teaching Council and are will be governed by the professional code of conduct and practice. Point 4.6 of the Teaching Council's (2012) [Registration] Regulations states that teachers "inform their professional judgement and practice by engaging with, and reflecting on, pupil/student development, learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum development, ethical practice, educational policy and legislation" (p. 8).

This study has the potential to improve and support professional practice within the college if results are valid and reliable. I intend to use my own experience of co-ordinating and teaching within the college as part of the study, but at the same time being cognisant of my own predispositions.

3.19   Standards of judgement

Standards of judgment ensure that the research, which is taking place and the findings that are uncovered, are systematically and rigorously examined.

Action research is completed by individuals who adhere to values and commitments that stimulate and motivate their lives. Values act as their guiding principles. McNiff & Whitehead (2006) maintain that action research begins by articulating values and then asking whether one is being true to them. My values inform all of my research, work and the standards of judgement which I will be using.

In turn, this will strengthen and enhance the validity of any claims.

1. Have I ensured that I am operating in an ethical way with permissions sought and received from those participating in this enquiry?
2. Have I engaged my colleagues in my research, consulted with them as I have proceeded with it and have I given them ample opportunities to participate or decline to participate in the research and given them feedback on how it is progressing?
3. Have I regularly updated my reflective journal and used it to record developments and experiences?
4. Have I read the theories and research of others in the area of action research and have I made sure to cover a broad range of literature, including books, Government publications, journals and other publications issued by various bodies relating to adult and lifelong education?
5. Have I used my field and academic validation groups to verify and validate my concern around the research?
6. Have I presented research findings to my field and college validation groups accurately with a view to having they verify and validate it?
7. Have I engaged with my supervisor to verify and validate my work?

8. Have I been truthful in the reporting of my learning?

3.20   Summary and conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined my rationale for adopting an action research. I selected a living educational theory approach as the most suitable for this particular study. Through the development of Whitehead and McNiff's, (2006) Action Plan, I have outlined the steps to be followed in conducting the research.

Progression into the action/reflection cycles is undertaken with the knowledge of why the methodology is relevant. Action research provides the structures and framework needed in order to progress with the processes and cycle in the following chapters.

Finally, I examined four key areas pertaining directly to the research process: data, evidence, ethics and validity.

I have positioned these and my standards of judgement as the final item in this chapter. These standards of judgement, in combination with my values will be the guiding principles in the following chapters.

In the next chapter will disclose how I implemented and analysed the research findings.

Chapter 4 - Collection, analysis and implementation cycle

4.1   Introduction

Chapter four sets the scene for the action research enquiry as I endeavour to address my research question, how to improve the support of teachers in enhancing motivation among adult students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Irish Further Education environment?

A descriptive qualitative design has been chosen for this particular action research study. It proposes to explore the experiences of FET sector teachers in relation to adult learner motivation. Action research places the researcher at the core of the enquiry. Data is collected at all stages of the process, reflected on reviewed and improved and so the cycle commences again. Therefore the reflective log becomes part of the data being collected along with the contributions of the participants and any claims made are tentative at best and relevant to the data collection environment.

4.2   Data collection procedures

The aim of data collection is to generate data that is of unique quality. Having considered other qualitative methods, the first strategy chosen for this study is a focus group, which will be presented with two established frameworks for consideration (see appendices 2-8). The participants will test the frameworks as supportive tools to their pedagogical practice and provide feedback. This data will be analysed as cycle one of my research study.

Interviews are a common method of data collection, whereas a semi-structured interview approach will afford me the opportunity to pose open-ended questions and thereby encourage the participants to talk freely about their experiences. Face to face interviews are useful for obtaining more detailed or personal information from each respondent.

Cycle two will involve the collection of data during semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. These interviews will take place on a one to one basis. Davies (2007) maintains that the researcher must be able to engage with the interviewees in a setting that is relaxed and familiar to them, free from distractions and conducive to a conversation.

This will allow the participant to talk freely. An office in the college will be used and participants will be invited to attend at a mutually agreeable time.

Davies (2007) also maintains that interviews which are recorded are common in qualitative research to enable the researcher to engage with and pay attention to the participant and any non-verbal behaviour. The audio recording assists with the production of verbatim accounts of the participants' responses and facilitates easy production of transcripts for analysis. The length of each interview will depend on each participant but it is the intention that each interview will be scheduled for thirty minutes. Each participant was provided with an introductory letter.

Figure 2 – Letter of introduction

Letter to participants for interview

From: Martina (Tina) Reddin   To: Participants

Date: 1st May 2015   Subject: Interviews

My name is Tina Reddin and I am currently undertaking a dissertation relating to motivational factors and adult education learners for submission as part of a MA in learning and teaching with National College of Ireland. This research project has been approved by the National College of Ireland Ethics Committee.

To assist in the completion of my dissertation I am seeking your further assistance in gathering relevant data. On completion of the dissertation, I will be proposing a framework of motivational strategies as a support for teachers in the further education sector.

I intend to interview teachers of adult learners with a view to obtaining critical feedback regarding motivation. This data will inform and influence an improved framework to serve as a pedagogical tool for the next academic year. I would be most grateful if you would volunteer to attend an interview with me about student motivation and teaching/learning strategies.

Confidentiality: Interview notes will be logged using reference numbers only. There is no need to provide your name but it would be useful. No specific information on any individual teacher and/or learners will be stored or passed to any third parties. All information will be confidential and stored on my computer which is password protected and destroyed when there is no longer a need for it. Your information about learners will remain confidential and every effort will be made to preserve anonymity. Information will not be provided to third parties.

If you take part you will be welcome to a copy of my findings and conclusions. There is no obligation for any person to participate, however I would be extremely grateful if you could assist me.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to read and review this document .

Tina Reddin

4.3 Interview questions

The interview questions contain a list of open-ended questions which have been derived from the aims and objectives of the study.

Table 1 – Semi-structured interview questions

1	How do you encourage learners to be active/interested?
2	How do you deal with apathetic learners?
3	How do you get learners to prepare for my class?
4	How do you motivate learners who are not interested in the subject?
5	How do you deal with groups who are not functioning well together?
6	How can you recognise different learning abilities and work with them individually? (Differentiation)
7	How do you create assignments that are challenging but not overwhelming?
8	How do I inspire learners who are only taking my course because the "have to?", e.g. VTOS
9	How can teachers promote excellence and rigor in an encouraging environment?
10	To what extent should you care if the class likes or dislikes your teaching style and strategies?
11	How do you empower learners in my classroom?
12	Special educational needs?

4.4 Data collection

Data analysis is conducted to analyse, record, organise and give meaning to the research data collected. The principles of the Data Protection Acts of 1988 & 2003 will be adhered to. Notional names will be assigned to each participant to reduce the risk of personal or sensitive data being lost. Four letter names starting with the letter "A" in the alphabet will be assigned to each participant. All collected data will be stored in a locked cabinet which can only be accessed by me. This storage will remain in place for the requisite time of one to five years as this is in keeping with the recommendations of the Data Protection Acts (Data Protection Commissioner, 1998). After this time all electronic data will be overwritten and all manual data will be shredded. Participants will be assured that the data generated will not be used for any other purpose other than research for my dissertation.

Action research involved analyse of data throughout the cycles and therefore does not require a special method of analysis, however as a method of developing meaningful

findings and conclusions, I have reviewed the literature of Clarke and Braun (2012) relevant to thematic analysis. They suggest that this "*is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities*". They also advocate that the researcher "works with a full transcript while doing the analysis" (p. 57), and for this reason, I have completed verbatim transcripts of all nine interviews (appendices 19-27). A theme they suggest "captures something important in the data in relation to the research question" (p. 57).

4.5   Ethical considerations

From the outset of the research, ethics have been of importance to me. Firstly permission was sought from the principal of the college to carry out the research. Permission was also sought from the teaching staff of the college at a staff council meeting. Permission letters contained a brief statement of my ethics, ensuring their right to withdraw from the research at any time, to check data and make final reports available before submission. The ethics statement also committed to protecting the anonymity of participants. This, I suggest, is crucial where people may be encouraged to voice opinion, observations or criticisms of the current situation in the college

In all of my work at college I am guided by the code of ethics provided by the Teaching Council of Ireland, of which I am a member.

Cohen et al, (2000) propose that in conducting educational research there is an onus on the researcher to "strike the balance between the demands placed on them as professional scientists in pursuit of the truth, and their subjects' rights and values potentially threatened by the research" (p. 49). All voluntary participants will be guaranteed complete anonymity, confidentiality and privacy. They will be entitled to withdraw from the process at any stage. At all stages throughout the study, the development of my work will remain visible and open to suggestions from others.

4.6   Implementation plan for discussing the research story

I begin by setting the scene for the cycles of action and articulating the values that underpin my research. I explain how these values came to act as my living standards of

judgement in reflecting and evaluating my learning and my influence on the learning of others as suggested by Whitehead & McNiff (1996).

Figure 3 - Diagram depicting data collection, review and implementation plan for new supportive framework for teachers of adult students

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4.7   Established frameworks and cycle one

During cycle one of this study I made a presentation to the teachers, where I introduced two well know motivational frameworks, ARCS instructional design model and Wlodkowski's motivational framework.   Following the presentation I addressed questions and concerns raised by the teachers with a view to receiving feedback.

This process I suggest was firstly to raise awareness relating to student motivation and to encourage reflection on motivational issues encountered with pedagogical practice. Secondly the feedback acted as an aid for me to design themes for the semi-structured interviews which I arranged at the outset of cycle two. I was curious to review the

teachers' views regarding student motivation and in particular what they might perceive as a supportive tool. I started the stage of the action research in March 2015.

The presentation was well received and the teachers voiced a number of issues about the two different framework styles.   We discussed the similarities, differences and my rationale for the choice of frameworks presented. I explained that one was more relevant to course design and the other centred on cultural differences. I suggested that they review each one individually, then taking whichever they preferred or felt drawn to, purposefully teach a class and see if they could note any differences or preferences.   This is evidenced in memo 8 of my reflective journal (appendix E), "I made a presentation to my colleague about the research topic, my idea is to reflect on motivational frameworks in existence, allow them the time and opportunity to review one or both." and in an extract of the minutes of the staff council meeting which took place in April 2015, "Motivational Framework…. Tina requested that teachers review the two options and purposefully teach our students in FE…" (appendix C).

Some teachers suggested that the timing was not ideal as we were approaching the end of the academic year, that the students were being prepared for assessments, but most engaged with the information provided and felt that this would benefit their pedagogical practice, regardless of any future plan to produce another supportive tool. My goal at this stage was to receive some informative and enabling feedback. The feedback was excellent and well received.

4.8   What did I discover from this stage of the process?

The key item highlighted was that the Wlodkowski model was more useful than the ARCS design model, but that the ARCS model was a quick and easy model to follow. It did not involve a lot of preparation time for the teacher. Another interesting observation was that the majority of teachers who provided feedback suggested that they were already doing a lot of these activities.

Anna commented that while she agreed self-determination was ideal she felt

> I agree with this; however it is often not evident in our learners. It is difficult to nurture self-determination and get through a syllabus and produce portfolios at the end of year.

Anna felt that teachers are already under such time constraints that to support student motivation was difficult within the educational context. This concurred with the thoughts of Cara's about the Wlodkowski model who suggested that "The expanded model aligns with my thoughts though it is difficult to motivate students". The consensus toward this model was more positive in that the teachers thought it gave them some useful strategies.

On the subject of teacher motivation some interesting ideas were provided for instance; Bart suggested that teacher motivation is affected by students and not visa-versa stating that "As a year progresses I have found myself to be negatively influenced by students dropping out of my subject in spite of everything I try to do to keep them there."

The issue of feedback produced the types of response that would be expected from teachers and ranged from one line statements including "I would always use this method of feedback", from Anna and Bart's comment that:

> This is essential but negatives have to be couched in constructive language and be accompanied by encouragement. Adult learners are generally ready to allow the negatives overwhelm them.

To ideas from Dave which suggested that "Negative feedback must be constructive so I am not sure if this is a good idea I like to give positive feedback only".

In relation to relating college work to the work around them Dave's comment was very different from the other teachers when he stated that "This is not a concept I use", which differed entirely from the rest of the group who suggested that this was indeed a very important and relevant topic, including Bart's:

> Topical issue need to be incorporated in most subjects to keep the subjects relevant to modern society. Teachers must keep informed of current issues that may relate to their teaching subject. This I feel will engage the learner more and it works for me.

Other topics which received critical feedback included, teacher/student relationships, positive reinforcement and how teachers and students engage in learning activities not out of external reinforcement, but because they value academic work and success and finally using the interests of the learners in activities and assignments where discussed and produced findings that concurred with the motivational theorists that the learning needs to be of relevant to the student for it to be motivational.

Again this evidence can be further validated by my field validation group, who during a meeting in April 2015 discussed the comments of my colleagues, suggesting that my study has highlighted the issue of motivation with them, and that in itself, has had a beneficial effect, the deputy principal advised me that she has received many comments from teachers about the presentation on motivation and that it has been a positive contribution to the college both for teachers and the adult students both further education and post primary.

The minutes of this meeting form part of my reflective journal entry in April 2015 (appendix E).

4.9   Impact on interview question design and structure for cycle two

Following this review and reflective process the next stage in my plan was to interview teachers from the further education sector of the college. Semi structured interviews were scheduled and although the questions guided the interview process and were developed in line with the previous stage of the action research enquiry, they were not the rigidly adhered to. They were used as a guide and depended on the individual responses of the participants. The questions were designed as part of my reflection on cycle one and were not only about student motivation, but included teacher motivation, professional backgrounds, continuous professional development, teaching experience and motivational supports for teachers. I transcribed the interviews, again using pseudo names to protect the identities of the participants.

4.10   Interview research results

Adult student motivation has been of interest to me over the last few years and as such I had already initiated various initiatives including setting up an adult student council during the 2013/2014 academic year which provides opportunities for the adult students to voice their opinions about the college through formal communication structures. On-line surveys have been designed, which are analysed and reviewed by myself as FE co-ordinator and the college management. I felt, (see memo 2 of my reflective journal (appendix E) that "The economic climate has left many of our adult students with little or no confidence and this coupled with the low staff morale in the public sector has changed the teaching

atmosphere in the college." Having reflected on this issue prior to undertaking action research, I considered that it would be useful to focus on the needs and supports of teachers, and to see if these actions could prove worthwhile in supporting adult student motivation during the next academic year and the next cycle of review.

4.11 What did I discover about teacher motivation to teach?

There is no doubt that teachers may play an important role in shaping the adult students who attend the college through pedagogical processes. Teachers in the sector have many different motives for their choice, and this motivation may be important to guide them as a good teacher. Therefore, part of the interview process addressed the issue of motivation to be a teacher which influences the effectiveness and improvement of the further education process.

Of particular interest to me was that a significant number of teachers in the further education sector of the college, had themselves been lifelong learners, seven of the nine interviewees had not started out as teachers in either the post primary of the further education sector. This is contrary to the belief that most teachers in the further education sector were post primary teachers who had somehow drifted into or were steered towards teaching adults in a post primary school setting or a college of further education. Though this point cannot be generalised it is certainly true of this particular college. Of the nine teachers I interviewed, eight teachers teach only adult students. Kate, a teacher who brings the number to nine, wanted to take part as this year, she teaches only adult students on a part time and she is due to retire and wanted to be part of this research.

4.12 Teachers as lifelong learners

Cara suggested that her motivation was connected to her own life-long learning experience.

> I returned to education as a mature student myself so feel I have an understanding of how difficult that it em….. I wasn't too sure what to do then … and then a friend of mine who was a teacher here suggested that I call to GCC. This was the beginning of my teaching life twelve years ago ...

This was also the case for June and Lucy who stated:

Yes, well I have been teaching for the last five years now. I returned to education as a mature student. I went to UCD in my forties … my youngest is also just finished teacher training.

Anyway I feel that I can empathise with my students because of this and I am passionate about what I teach…

For Anna the path was slightly different in that:

I started my career as a teacher at the national learning network. I always resisted the idea of teaching and did not do a higher diploma after my degree. Looking back now I should have just gone into teaching instead of fighting it. I worked with FETAC and completed the JEBB computer training programme which led to teaching!!! … I personally feel that one of the strengths of further education teachers in the strength they bring from industry and the professionalism. They value the social construct also and see things in a far more over-arching way.

4.13   Influence of family members

Having family member who are teachers didn't appear to have influenced the teachers in this college as only three of the nine participants spoke about having family member who are or had been teachers. Kate however stated that,

I had family members who were principals in primary schools and two of my sisters are teachers. I trained as a bio-chemist and after years of working in a laboratory in a hospital, I decided it wasn't for me. I completed a higher diploma in education and have been teaching here in this school for the last 26 years.

4.14   Alternative paths to teaching in the further education sector

Bart had previously been a primary school teacher and returned to college to complete another degree with DCU and to travel "I have only been teaching adults for the last two years. Before that I was a teacher in primary school. It too was in a DEIS school…" His academic journey and his travels have brought him to the further education sector to teach business related courses.

Mary has another profession and teaches on a very part-time basis "Hi, yes thanks. I have been a medical professional for over ten years now and have been involved with teaching adult students for about five years I would say. It is very part-time as I only teach one module on the healthcare support programme." Mary had some interesting observations about adult student motivation and this will be discussed at a later stage.

Gary on the other hand, has a management position but was previously a teacher in the college. He is interested in the research question and requested that he be included as a participant. This particular interview added another dimension in relation to teacher and student motivation and his examples of strategies that are helpful in the motivation of adult students and can inform the updated framework.

4.15 Teacher perceptions about adult student motivation

When discussing student motivation Fred's idea of different people being demotivated at different times was an interesting concept "it may not only be one student it can be different students at different times throughout the duration of the course and at different times." He stated that he will "try to do is find what motivates the student and then bring the subject matter back through that style to enhance learning".

Cara, on the other hand, feels that it is the type of student that may shape their personal relevance's that acts on their motivation and the strategies they use for learning, "learners may be excellent at different aspects of their college work, be good listeners, but they are motivated by completely different types of things including interests and activities". This was also true of June but she went further and feels that it is a confidence issue for a lot of adult students returning to education particularly so in a disadvantaged area. She stated that "I think that my learners are very committed… most want to get all the qualifications they can and get a good job".

They almost always think they will fail, and say "I don't think I have done enough will you tell me what else I need to do", they hate exams and see the assignments as a better alternative. They find it hard to think that they can be good and are overjoyed with positive feedback. June uses feedback as a motivational tool but not just for the sake of it.

Bart believes that it is confidence that could motivate or demotivate adult students and suggested that "…they can feel like they are making academic progress in really important for motivation and can help remove the intimidation of those final exams".

Anna also spoke about this issue and proposed that:

> Sometimes it surprises me and other times not that our cohorts of adult students see
> themselves as less than they are, by that I mean they will always say to me "I think

I have this wrong", or "this is not very good but will you look at it".. the baseline we are starting from, confidence in the gutter.

The two participants suggest that this issue is definitely something that either motives or acts as a barrier to retention on further education courses.

Both Gary and Lucy feel that there needs to be an element of fun or social experience when motivating adult students and suggest the following:

> There has to be some fun element when you are dealing with adult students, especially adults who are returning to education... That becomes part of the fun or enjoyment of teaching adults, because it is not a mundane "today we are going to do this so open your book to page whatever…" it is about engagement with the student on a one-to-one basis in your class in so far as possible and bringing them to their individual best.

And as Lucy stated, "Fun is very much so a big part of it… I always say that learning comes easy when you are happy and your motivation to stay will increase".

Kate on the other hand suggests that while she is happy to mentor students and foster motivation, her thoughts about adult students in the college would suggest that it is a management issue to deal with the consequences of unmotivated students. She suggests that she is "a great believer in student compliance and doing what they are told. It has always worked when I thought in second level and I do not see why we need to change to suit adult students…they want to be spoon-fed like second level students but want to have the autonomy that comes with third level".

4.16   Sharing best practice

The teachers also discussed the teaching strategies that they found worked for adult students, their significance in terms of motivation, and the need to communicate with each other.

Cara uses:

> That small "mini assessment" exercise to review the skills of my new students and get a feel for where they are academically… I think that the type of feedback required at the early stage should be enabling I like to call it "careful feedback" or "low stake feedback".

In terms of their own motivation, teachers were increasingly confident in their own ability and provided various examples of good practice. For example, Fred stated that

> I try to encourage the students to think about examples from their own experience so that they can contextualise the meaning for themselves. I also give or provide them with some of my own life long experiences to give them a for instance… it also causes them to engage because we are starting to speak about a terms of reference that they comprehend and then we reverse engineer the whole idea back up to the more complex structure… "De-fearing" it...

Some of the participants identified that their own teachers had influenced them not only in choosing to teach but also influenced their style of teaching. This they suggest can have an impact on their students, Kate stated,

> I had a teacher in second level that was brilliant and had thought about doing teaching when I left college… when I want to ensure I am being the best teacher I can be!

Bart suggests:

> …the teacher has responsibility to engage with students, change strategies to suit the learner cohorts and provide leadership…. Making it relevant to where they are at, so that they are feeling that they are getting somewhere and achieving something… because it may encourage them to complete and it encourages good attendance and that in itself is a success in one way.

Anna on the other hand wants to break rules:

> ...I like to take a risk and try a new strategy… my style is very informal. I feel what good teachers do in the classes is break rules…. that's risky it can be hard especially if you always do something a certain way, I try and do it a different way and see what happens. Now it may not go right or it may not go terribly well, but at least you'll learn more about what you're doing.

June stated the following during her interview "I also believe the language that we as teachers use can be un-motivating for our students. Using terminology for example you are on a level 6 course, QQI, and FETAC, what does it all mean? I hardly understand it and then we start to speak in this language". This is something that students have said to me in the past and I suggest that it may be de-motivating and lack relevance for the adult students.

4.17   Continuous professional development

This topic was eluded to be most participants without prompt, Anna highlighted the need for professional development in IT with the arrival of new and innovative information technology and how to incorporate that into teaching.   This she suggests de-motivates some teachers.

Fred stated that his idea of cpd was the following and his comments include an alternative approach that could be looked at from the world of work both professional and industrial

> Yes you see CPD is very generic, but if you have a cpd session are teachers motivated by the cpd points? Or the subject matter of the cpd itself as a learning opportunity? …cpd can be a negative, whereas a top down culture change is far more successful. Regulation 5 and the requirement to be registered within the further education sector is a good thing and perhaps cpd will be good, but I think the qualifications themselves should include a module on student motivation…, I think we have a lot to learn from other industry and professional. The health care sector is now interested in motivation.., teachers should be subject to this also, similar to the works of say Daniel Pink, I have watched his presentations on TED talks and he would be one of the people I admire and be guided by…

Cara reflected on an event she had attended and she too saw it as a learning opportunity:

> …I met childcare teachers from the other colleges and that was very beneficial. In second level we have subject associations that would be a great idea I think. It would act as a support for teachers.

Gary felt that the motivation to attend would be an issue and that the mandatory attendance could in itself be a problem and a de-motivational factor,

> … again it is back to the point I just made, how do you motivate someone to do the cpd? … is it just to tick the box or they tell you the type of training you need to do and you are told to do it to enhance your skills… in fact it may suit me next year and so on.

Anna agreed with these sentiments and suggested that she did not want to have to engage,

> ..I suppose I feel a bit apathetic about further learning for the sake of it, it will depend on the context and what we are learning. I do not want to waste my time ticking boxes for the sake of it. I am a life-long learner myself, but that was born out of choice and I was "motivated" to attend and learn.

4.18   Other findings

Gary an education leader suggested that screening for inclusion worked very well in terms of preparation for learning

.. we continue to do that, the screening model... we often found that students would come in to do a course and not really understand what the course was, how much work was in it, "why do I have to do eight modules when I only want to mind children, one particular module will do surely so we all the time encourage and by talking to them ensure they are set up to succeed. This I feel helps with student motivation… We also have a student handbook which our mentor put together … It is a working document, it talks all about the student where they are, where they are going, supports available etc... It includes a student charter, the idea of QQI and what it is all about. This helps contextualise their learning and supports motivational issues other than specific classroom motivational issues.
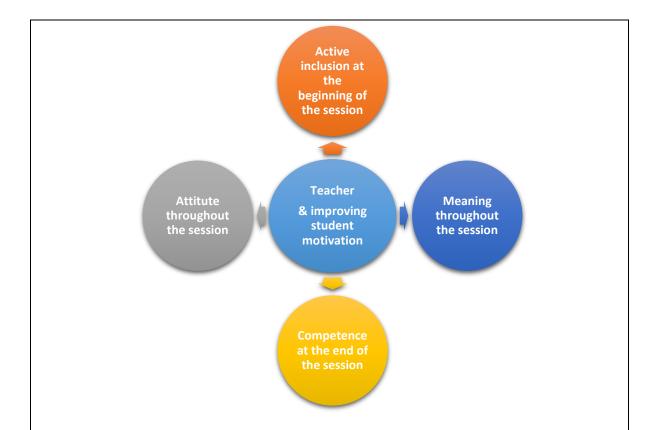
Mary suggested that we should look at motivational interviewing as an exit interview strategy for adult students in the college.

..It is not necessarily prompting them or kind of planting an idea in their head it is more if the person is already in the "cycle of change", that you are just kind of feeding into it and tapping into it and getting the person to come up with the reasons why they are doing what they are doing rather than telling them why they have to or why they shouldn't be doing that. Em…so then the idea would be that if someone is in the "pre contemplative stage" to change i.e. that they haven't actually thought about changing or made a decision to make a change in their motivation or whatever it is then you are kind of wasting your time, so to speak. It is a bit controversial in terms of adult education I think but if an adult has enrolled in a course they have made a decision and that is the first part of the change.

4.19   My reflection

At the end of this I felt that my educational values were still not being lived in practice. I became aware that I was so consumed with the data collection and analyse that I was in danger of negating my integral values. As I stepped into a more co-ordinator role in cycle two, my focus began to move from analyse of processes to supportive of teaching and learning. In taking this route, I could see evidence that my explicit practice was begining to harmonise with my implicit values. The reflection of action research stimulated me to design a college specific supportive tool to assist teachers with motivational issues in their practice.

Figure 4 – New motivational framework

The motivational framework can be integrated with instructional planning by converting the four motivational conditions into questions:

1. How do we create or affirm a learning atmosphere in which we feel respected and connected to one another?
2. How do we make use of personal relevance and learner volition to create or affirm a favourable disposition toward learning?
3. How do we create engaging and challenging learning experiences that include learner perspectives and values?
4. How do we create or affirm an understanding that learners have effectively learned something they value and perceive as authentic to their real world?

Table 2 - Example of how it might work

Condition-Timing	Motivational Purpose	Motivational Strategy	Learning Activity or Instructor Behaviour
Inclusion – beginning	To engender an awareness and feeling of connection	Emphasize the human purpose of what is being learned and its relationship to the learners' personal lives and contemporary situations. Clearly identify the learning objectives and goals for instruction. Assess learners' current expectations, needs, goals, and previous experience as it relates to your course or training.	Provide a short overview of the history of further education in the college and perhaps your own route into teaching if relevant. Introduce the learning objective for the lesson with a clear example on the interactive whiteboard. Pre assessment: Learners make a first attempt to write a reflective paragraph about themselves and their goal for the course. With a light touch and humour the learners share their initial writing.
Attitude – beginning and throughout	To build a positive attitude toward the subject.	Use assisted learning to scaffold complex learning.	Having estimated the students' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky) from their sharing activity, Demonstrate what is required, show them some incomplete or incorrect answers to the problem. As a group, students analyse and critique it. They identify features that define best examples of correct answers for the future. They can then individually practice completing and solving the problem.
Meaning - during	To deepen engagement and challenge	Use uncertainty, anticipation, and prediction to the degree that students enjoy them with a sense of security. Use an intriguing problem to make theoretical concepts meaningful.	Demonstrate practical skills and have two volunteers sit back to back. One verbally describes a skills and the other tries to practice. The group can coach them. Practice up to three rounds.
Competence – ending	To engender competence with assessment	Use collaborative and cooperative learning. Use relevant problems, research, and enquiry to facilitate learning. Use authentic performance tasks to enable adults to know that they can proficiently apply what they are learning to their real lives. Use self-assessment methods to improve learning and to provide learners with the opportunity to construct relevant insights and connections. Provide effective feedback.	The learners as a collaborative group write the best possible answer to questions projected on the interactive whiteboard and the teacher provides feedback. Post assessment: students compare to their assessment and note differences and improvements using a checklist. The teacher mingles among them, providing feedback as appropriate. The program ends with a large group discussion about what has been learned and how it will be applied.

4.20   Summary and conclusions

This chapter has outlined the research story to date in terms of data collection and associated concerns. An analysis of the data collected has taken place and the results have been discussed.

Cycle one reviewed established motivational frameworks and introducing the concept of motivation to the participants. Data was collected and analysed. This this cycle of the action research enquiry informed the questions for the semi structured interviews. Cycle two was concerned with the perceptions of the teachers in relation to enhancing and supporting the motivation of their students. Motivation, to commence, participate and complete are especially carefully considered throughout the narrative.

Some specific themes have emerged from the data.

Teacher motivation and the journey into teaching in the further education sector with or without a qualification was one such the topics that developed and is worthy of discussion.

The impact of teacher motivation on student motivation was also a strong idea that appeared and the inter-relatedness of teacher and student motivation in the further education sector.

The need for teachers to have a space to engage with personal and course reflection and discussion was highlighted. This may be the form of networks or a community of practice at a local level in the college to share and discuss strategies that work, don't work and how these ideas can synthesis with individual dispositions.

The need and desire for professional development was highlighted as beneficial but there needs to be a considered approach to the type of development provided.

Finally as part of the reflective process, the design of an improved motivational tool based on Wlodkowski's framework as a supportive tool for teachers in the further education sector.

The results are of course tentative, in that they are specific to the particular college in question. The following chapter will discuss the research findings.

Chapter 5 – Discussion, findings and recommendations

5.1   Introduction

Chapter five of the research centres on my action research story and discussion and findings which revolves around a cycles of action research, as I endeavour to address my research question, "How to improve the support of teachers in enhancing motivation among adult students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Irish Further Education environment? It outlines the main findings and discusses how I can strengthen areas of my role with a view to improving them to better meet the needs of the college

The main aim of this chapter is to achieve an improved and transformative influence in both my own practice and on the practices of the other teachers in the college. I will work towards the realisation by striving to reduce the contradictions I experience between my values and their perceived denial in my own educational practice. This action research enquiry looked at student motivation through the lens of the teachers. It aims to identify the motivational factors and teaching strategies used to support students' with their feelings of self-efficacy and to provide teachers with a supportive framework as a tool to help enhance motivation among their student cohorts.

5.2   Idea for research

As a practioner in the further education sector of a dual provision college, I was interested in the motivation of myself, my colleagues and the adult students in the college and how one might interact with the other. I wanted to look at ways of encouraging, supporting and enhancing adult student motivation indirectly by supporting teachers and my overall aim was to reduce the contradictions within my practice. The results encouraged me to produce an improved framework as a supportive teaching tool. Adult student motivation has been a concern of mine over the last few years and as a co-ordinator I had already looked at direct ways of supporting student motivation.

5.3   Findings

My finding fall into two categories, firstly teacher motivation, pathways to lifelong learning, perceptions about adult student motivation and confidence and sharing best practice and secondly refection on action research, my claim to knowledge and my own learning and standards of judgement.

5.4   What did I discover about teacher motivation to teach?

There is no doubt that teachers may play an important role in shaping the adult students who attend the college through pedagogical process. People have different motives for choosing to become a teacher particularly in the area of further education. Their motivation is important to guide them as a good teacher and this is particularly the case for students from disadvantaged background as discussed in chapter 2, Ginsberg (2005) and Taylor & Trumpower (2014), who suggest the Wlodkowski model as a beneficial support. Casey (2013) suggests that teachers need to be cognisant of the views of their students and this was addressed during the interviews and discussed in the previous chapter.

Of particular interest to me was that a significant number of teachers in the further education sector of the college who had themselves been lifelong learners, seven of the nine interviewees had not started out teaching and I have discussed some of their educational thoughts in the previous chapter. This is contrary to the belief that most teachers in the further education sector were post primary teachers who had somehow wandered into the further education sector. Though this point cannot be generalised it is certainly tentatively true of this particular college.

5.5   Alternative paths to teaching in the further education sector

> "Teaching is not to be regarded as a static accomplishment like riding a bicycle or keeping a ledger; it is, like all arts of high ambition, a strategy in the ace of an impossible ask" (Stenhouse, 1983, p. 95).

When I read this statement and recalled my own practice of learning and teaching and the comments of the interviewees, I suggest that it is not only transferring the knowledge and skills required of a particular course to adult students, but also educating for life and societal participation. An important aspect of being a good teacher is motivation. Motivation could lead a teacher to give their best performance and shape their students as

rounded people but this may not be the case if for example a teacher's motivation is for extrinsic reasons such holidays and remuneration only.

Caruth (2014) as discussed in chapter 2, proposes that adult students need to be educated to know how to learn and that this will enable them to become independent, life-long learners. Anne Jordan (2015) suggested that "a sceptical teacher is a good teacher" and that it is a tool for teachers to investigate and critique what they do as part of their professional practice. The participants who appear to be intrinsically motivated to teach are reflective in manner and thereby strive to improve their practice at all times. They endeavour to find creative, meaningful and interesting learning experiences for their adult student cohorts. We are fortunate in the college that these teachers have chosen to teach the adult students by their own volition and are therefore intrinsically motivated to be ambassadors for the sector.

5.6 Teacher perceptions about adult student motivation

What does all this mean? I suggest that the findings of my enquiry concur with the motivational theories of Pink discussed the literature review. He maintains that when people are engaged in meaningful work as they perceive it, they will be motivated to do better. Adult students need to feel valued, the courses need to have relevance to them as individuals and teachers can harness those individual goals to support motivation. O'Reilly (2014), a supporter of SDT as proposed by Deci and Ryan suggests that perceived autonomy can be used as an engaging strategy by a teacher to enhance student motivation.

The teachers, for the most part, found that connecting the course curriculum with the students' interests and motives for attendance was most effective when they could establish a connection and there were differing approaches to engaging with their student cohorts in terms of their motives for course commencement and participation. This concurs with the motivational theorists discussed in chapter 2, in that the students need to feel valued and the course needs to be relevant and meaningful for them.

Most teachers found that merging the course curriculum, knowledge and skills and personal knowledge caused students to learn much more than before. However this was not something that the teachers felt was part of the curriculum but that much of the

additional knowledge was gained by collaboration and discussions with their groups and their own experience of industry and the subject specialisms.

5.7   Reflection on student confidence

This issue the participants suggest is definitely something that either motives or acts as a barrier to commencement and retention on further education courses. Bandura believes that social modeling as one of the four factors for intrinsic motivation. This suggests that teachers and peers can persuade a student to complete a task successfully by providing positive encouragement.   However a counter-argument was provided to this by Blumenfeld et al (2006). A common assumption they maintain is that when teachers provide authentic problems, students will automatically become engaged.   Further education as considered in chapter 2, maybe a pathway to lifelong learning and the world of work, but it is important that self-efficacy and value are supported. Bok (2010) discussed the aspirations of students from socio-economic disadvantaged areas as being similar to others but that it is the under developed capacity to articulate their goals that acts as a barrier.

What does all this mean, on reflection, I suggest that the findings from my research concur with the motivational theories discussed the literature review. That adult students need to believe that there is a sense of autonomy, relevance and social aspect to what they are studying.

5.8   Sharing best practice

A topic that appears to have been unanimous among participants was the idea of a collaborative sharing of successful resources and activities for teaching adult students. It was felt that this could be significance in terms of motivation, and the need for a collaborative and reflective approach where teacher could share ideas of best practice would be beneficial.   Bovill (2015) proposes that there are opportunities to develop partnerships in learning both between teachers and students and between teachers within an academic institution. There have, in fact, been many opportunities to collaborate with others, both internally in the college and at other FE networks, so why are teachers not

availing of the opportunities presented. This is an issue that I feel needs further reflection and consideration. It is an issue that will feature as professional development for the coming academic year as I have already discussed this issue with the college management and we have scheduled several such meetings for the coming year.

5.9   My reflection on teaching

I have ideas that guide the way I teach my students. One being that every student can learn and be successful. The second is learning should be interesting, enjoyable, and rigorous. Thirdly I believe that students don't learn by passively sitting there and listening to me, I suggest that they learn by interacting with me, their peers, their own base knowledge and relevance and the course material. This allows them to construct new skills and knowledge. This concurs with the thoughts of Caruth (2014), who believes that adult students should be taught how to learn (p. 1). As an educational leader in the college, these are ideas that I share with my colleagues.

5.10   My reflection on action research

For me the action in action research involved doing, intervening, intending to improve, being committed, motivated, enthusiastic and passionate about what I wanted to improve. The research involved being enquiring, systematic, producing evidence that can be validated and being rigorous and I have been privileged to have been part of many dialogical groups who have questioned and critiqued my actions, opinions and claims. Much of this can be evidenced in my reflective journal (appendix E). So what then were my actions?

I took action towards supporting teachers with student motivation. I intervened by facilitating meetings and raising awareness of motivational issues in general but specifically by demonstrating how various teaching and learning strategies may have beneficial effects. My intention was to create an improvement and change the way in which we communicate with each other and communicate with students. I achieved this by producing a motivational framework specific to the needs of the college.

This supportive tool has been reviewed by my field validation group. It will be introduced to the teachers at the first staff meeting of the next academic year. This has been a very proactive stance for me to take as an educational leader in the college and I suggest it has demonstrated my motivation, enthusiasm and commitment to improving practice.

5.11   My claim to knowledge

Because the nature of action research is collaborative, collective knowledge is also increased. During this enquiry I have worked extensively with management, colleagues, my own students and others connected with the further education provision in the college.

I have shared my value of addressing and improving aspects of the college within the further education sector. I have shared knowledge about what I consider to be important in order to bring about improvement in my practice, the practice of others and ultimately to improve the experience of our students which is in keeping with my educational values.

In addition to claiming to have improved my own practice as an educational leader, my claim to knowledge has also increased, in that much of my implicit knowledge has now become clear and unambiguous. I have attempted to realign my own practice and values in terms of a living educational theory.

5.11   My own learning

In chapter 3 of this enquiry I suggested that I was experiencing a sense of living contradiction in my role as a coordinator, in that my role conflicted with my ontological values. This is still true to an extent, however the depth of learning I have experienced throughout this process has caused me to reflect more accurately and deeply, to combine this with my epistemology and thereby use it to improve my practice.

Personal learning took place for me by engaging with my colleagues through scheduled meetings, interviews, formal and informal professional discussions and meetings with both validation groups.

Further learning took place through engagement with literature. I have always engaged with further learning and continuous development however, I have learned to value engagement with myself and others both in practice and academic literature as a valuable enrichment of my practice.

5.12   Standards of judgement and values

The eight questions posed in chapter 3 have been my standards and have guided me through each stage of the research enquiry. Throughout this process, I have reflected on these standards to ensure that I can answer yes to all questions posed.

To me it now appears obvious that my values must be considered relative to any role I undertake in the college. I had not previously reflected on or articulated in such as explicit manner the values that now make an active contribution to my practice. Reflection and reengagement with my values has helped me to move from a position of living a contradiction. I will now ensure that I make time to reflect on what is happening to ensure that I am being true to my own values. This I suggest has been a valuable experience for my personal development and growth as a leader of others and is something I will endeavour to promote.

5.13   Recommendations and looking ahead

There are still many things that need to take place and I will need to complete these tasks during the next academic year. This will involve co-ordinating further development of processes and supports to enhance both teacher and student motivation. However, having already started the improvements I welcome the opportunity to continue. I hope this will encourage others to become actively involved with future initiatives. In fact, many of the interviewees have already expressed their interest, so this should improve the college in a more collaborative manner. Some of the suggestions are included in the following paragraphs and I have already led co-ordinated and commenced initial stages of these projects as outlined below.

Screening prior to course commencement

The suggestion of screening for participation rather than exclusion was mentioned by a colleague during the interview phase of this enquiry. This has been discussed with management and included as an agenda item for both the next staff council and adult student council meeting.

Induction for adult students

Students new to further education should be provided with a coherent induction process. The process should ask the students what their expectations are and it should be explained what is expected of them. It should also identify choices faced by the students in terms of their approach to learning and emphasis the differences between post primary and further education. Much of this already takes place in the college, however it is now an apt and timely opportunity to review and reflect on the process with a view to improvement in terms of student motivation. I intend to highlight this to teachers at the return to work meeting at the beginning of the next academic year along with an improved motivational framework as a supportive tool. By the end of October 2015, we should be in a position to hold a reflective meeting to consider both the improved framework and an improved induction programme. Having completed this action research enquiry, I am confident that this can become part of our annual self-evaluation review.

Teacher collaboration and communities of practice

The challenges I faced during this research were not unique to my own practice as I discovered during informal and professional discussions with colleagues. Other participants offered their own explanations during the semi-structured interviews. This was borne in conversation with my field validation group, memo 10 (appendix E), "I expressed my worries about our approach to adult students and the lack of information provided to them and also the lack of emotional support available to these students in the college. It has reinforced my goal to invest in a teaching support strategy, in a professional context to support teachers with student empowerment to meet the lifelong skills and challenges they face."

A collaborative effort by fellow practitioners, perhaps taking the format of a communities of practice model should be considered and put on each agenda for adult education meetings in the college. Teachers could actively participate and discuss pedagogical practices which would support and help peers with the challenges they face and share experiences for better practice in relation to class activities.

Continuous professional development

This point is somewhat linked to the previous recommendation, in that engaging with reflective practice and attending presentations and discussions on best practice there is an informal process of professional development taking place. However a more formal personal and professional development practice should be encouraged by the senior management of the college.

5.14   Summary and conclusions

Based on the above discussion a factor that motivated the majority of participants to become teachers developed, namely being mature learners themselves re-engaging with education in a lifelong learning context. Most participants mentioned that the major factor that influenced them to be a teacher is previous teaching or supportive experiences when they interacted with adults and helped in some way. In summary their intrinsic motivations encouraged them to ignore external factors. Another interesting factor that influenced them is the idea of being a passionate role model and thereby being influential and enthusiastic teachers to their adult student cohorts.

The majority of the interviewees had experienced and explained scenarios of best practice in terms of motivation strategies for adult students and were willing to share these ideas with their fellow practitioners.

Most teachers perceived problems as challenges and aspired to provide the best opportunity possible for their adult student cohorts. Many felt that teacher motivation directly impacted on the motivation of their own students and suggested that teachers should collaborate more about this and other topics in terms of best practice.

Professional development was highlighted by all but one teacher to be an increasingly important issue, which was identified as an enabler for self-belief, improved teacher confidence and importantly adult student success and increased motivation. The teachers were also honest in identifying their shortcomings in terms of organisation and time management.

Throughout this process I continually contemplated and reflected on my own learning and the influence of my learning on others. I explained how I hope to continue to overcome the 'living contradiction' (Whitehead 2008), so that I might appreciate an increased compatibility between my implicit values and my explicit practice as a co-ordinator and teacher in this educational sector. The path of this research enquiry has comprised of a multifaceted and dynamic interplay of actions, reflection on actions and the informed decisions made within this context.

For me, the key learning for teaching and learning were the points made that the teachers feel more motivated and engaged in their work when they are sufficiently supported and that they too require constructive feedback and recognition of their efforts to remain motivated and that they felt that they would benefit from the supportive tool which is the ultimate aim of this enquiry.

Larry Ferlazzo suggests that we cannot motivate another person over the long-term. Ken Robinson has said, we as teachers can "create the conditions" for self-motivation to flourish. Researchers, as discussed in chapter 2, have found four key elements that can contribute to the development of intrinsic motivation; autonomy, having some control over what you do and how you do it; competence, feeling like you have the skill to accomplish what you're being asked to do; relatedness, doing it helps you build and strengthen relationships with people with whom you want to be connected; and/or relevance, you need to feel like the task will help you achieve your goals or you're just interested in the topic.

These four elements concur with the thoughts of the enquiry participants and where the areas for consideration when I develop an updated framework to ultimately improve support for teachers and enhance adult student motivation in the further education sector on the college.

Chapter 6 – Limitations, areas for further research and final conclusions

6.1   Introduction

This will be the final chapter in my research dissertation which focused on how to improve the support of teachers in enhancing motivation among adult students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Irish Further Education environment? This chapter sets out to consider any limitations of the study in question, suggestions for further study and the overall conclusion.

6.2   Limitations

Bielenberg (2015), in his article for the Irish Independent, suggests that some students may be "better off going straight into the workforce or training as an apprentice, rather than spending three or four years at college", as the number of students going to university is expected to rise by a further 30% in the next decade. This may have an impact on adult student's motivation to commence, participate and complete a course with the further education and training sector in Ireland.

The study took place in an urban college of further education. The research is an accurate account of the experiences of the teachers who participated in the interviews. Comparable research in a different geographical setting, perhaps a rural area, might yield diverse findings such as family influence to become teachers or the size of and student population of rural colleges of further education. It may be of interest to look at motivational indicators in a qualitative research study.

Common themes in teachers responses were sorted into different categories as outlined in chapter 5. These findings were interpreted to find meaningful patterns in terms of the research question about adult student motivation. The analysis of the data involved measuring words in both written and verbal form in order to find these meanings. It should be noted that it is recognised that the findings are limited to the college where the research took place and are tentative at best.

6.3   Future research opportunities

In terms of motivation there are many issues that warrant further attention and focus and are embodied in the concept of student motivation. I have reflected on this over the duration of this research study and I believe that the following seven suggestions are worth further research and investigation.

6.4   Mindfulness and motivation

I suggest that one area of interest for the further education and training sector should focus on research in the area of mindfulness and mental health awareness. This may be another cause of lack of engagement, participation, lack of or loss of confidence and completion for the sector in Ireland today. In fact I have already suggested this idea to the college management based on my literature review and we have planned to implement two workshops on mindfulness with our second year adult student cohorts. A professional development morning has been organised for teachers on the same subject at the beginning of the next academic year. These events will be offered as a support to both adult students and the teachers in conjunction with the new improved motivational framework. This process will of course be reviewed as part of our self-evaluation plan but it would be useful to conduct some research on this concept in a further education setting.

6.5   The teacher, student scores and motivational issues

Another idea is the study of quantative data analysis on the difference between an FET sector teacher as amotivational and alternatively motivational and whether the teacher's motivational stance can impact on student scores or indeed their motivational beliefs.

6.6   Motivational interviewing concept in an educational context

The health sector has conducted research into the concept of motivational interviewing as a method to encourage patient participation with health care regimes. It would be worth looking at this methodology within an adult education academic setting.

6.7 Screening tools and adult student motivation

The use of screening tools prior to course commencement, ensuring students are enrolling on the correct course and level of academic ability, thereby increasing their prospects' of successfully participating and completing a course of study in the further education. Do we need a standardised list of interview questions or a standardised assessment to ensure we are setting students up to success rather than fail?

6.8 Marketing, motivation and the further education sector

"Everyone is going to university", as discussed in the action research limitations (Bielenberg, 2015). Does the further education and training sector need to re-evaluate the marketing of courses as positive alternative routes to successful employment to the public, industry, tertiary and second level educational institutions and thereby encouraging and enhancing general societal motivation to participate in courses provided by this sector.

6.9 Transferability of the new framework

As this particular motivational framework was produced in a dual provision college it may be worth implementing it as a supportive tool to the FET sector teachers in the second level or post primary aspect of the college to see if this will have a positive impact on our second level student groups, or indeed in another further education setting.

6.10 Is teacher motivation affected by student motivation?

This idea was highlighted by one of the participants in my initial cycle of action research, where I was investigating the concept of motivational framework models. A participant stated that "As a year progresses I have found myself to be negatively influenced by students dropping out of my subject in spite of everything I try to do to keep them there" .

6.11 Conclusion

Action research provided me with the most effective research base for facilitating improvement of my practice. My reasons for making such a statement are that action research offered me the benefits of improving my practice through self-reflection,

collaborating with my college colleagues and validation groups to hopefully bring about an enhanced environment with greater emphasis on adult student motivation. I have enhanced my role as a coordinator with the potential to bring about organisational change.

I hope I could also influence my colleagues or even the wider further education community in their understanding of how knowledge is produced by the individual and collective practices through this type of research, so that greater improvements can be achieved in different areas of educational practice. In this way, we are improving our professional development and we are making our contribution to the educational development of our adult students.

This research study would seem to indicate that there is a link between motivation and how adult students engage with life-long learning.

I can conclude that being supportive of FET sector teachers and advocating a student-centered approach should enhance motivation within the adult students' cohorts in the college.

By the methods I have used through action research and engaging with reflective thinking about the teaching and learning practice in the college, most FET sector teacher practitioners feel supported and have demonstrated greater initiative in their practice. These elements are what Carl Rogers (1983) in "Freedom to learn for the 80's" characterised as motivation in learning.

I have achieved what I set out to do. I have improved the support of FET sector teachers in enhancing motivation among adult students from disadvantaged backgrounds and thereby improved the quality of the learning experience for the students.

Through critically reflecting on my own practice, I have acted in accordance with my own values and beliefs. I now have clarity about my own potential and the positive power of believing in my own capacity to improve the quality of my position within the college. This action research enquiry has afforded me the opportunity to engage with professional development. Through this enquiry I have shown how the methodology influences and determines the learning development for both FET sector teachers and students. I now understand how I have generated my own ideas out of my professional practice and how the ideas themselves are actually part of my practice.

Finally, producing this dissertation has significantly helped me understand my own educational development and values. Reflective thinking from practice inspires me to go further insofar as educational development has led to the improvement of my leadership and thereby the students' learning experience. I have developed my own living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989) in my own practice and that I have supported my colleagues with the development of a new and improved supportive framework.

6.12   On a final note

This is my first action research study; to improve this process in the future I will, continue to review the literature on action research, while looking for my enquiry as I believe that practice makes perfect.

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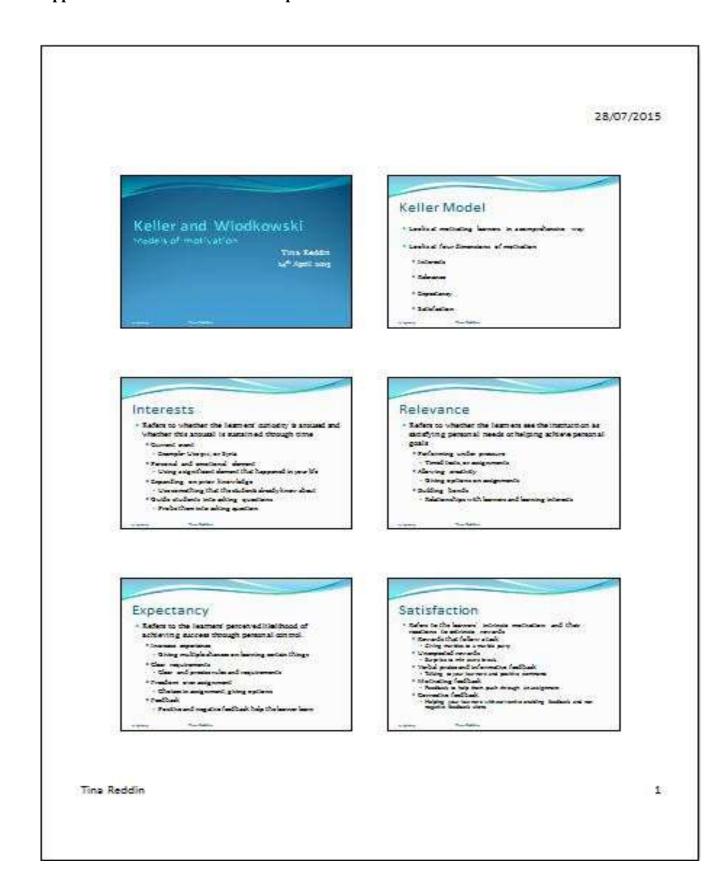
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Appendices

Appendix A - Wlodkowski + Keller presentation

28/07/2015

Appendix B - Composite feedback findings on motivational models

Originals viewed by my field validation group in April 2015 see reflective journal entry

General finding were that the Wlodkowski model was the best in terms of providing useful strategies. A number of teachers pointed out that it was good and clearly broke the lesson down into three distinct parts and that them the ARCS design model could be utilised a bit better.

However the majority found the Wlodkowski model a bit wordy and hard to remember everything but it is definitely a useful resource. Preferred the one page design of the ARCS model diagram page

Selection of composite answers to the questions in the template.

NOTE: Not all teachers responded to each question. A selection of the individual teacher feedback sheets (further education teachers only) can be found in appendices 7 – 10. This information was provided on a voluntary basis where the teachers in question used the two motivational models, Wlodkowski and ARCS as tools, by purposefully teaching their classes following a review of each model. This feedback was used then used as the basis to inform the semi-structured questions with the intention of producing an improved and more useful framework for the college in question.

1. Both students and teachers need to have a feeling of efficacy and success

- I agree with this, however it is often not evident in our learners. It is difficult to nurture self-determination and get through a syllabus and produce portfolios at the end of year!! Teachers should need this to a lesser extent in by opinion; they are employed to do a job!
- Students need to be consistently be motivated.
- Feelings of success are paramount for learners, adult learners are often fearful of their own level of ability in approaching a new course.
- The expanded model aligns with my thoughts though it is difficult to motivate students.
- This model aligns with my thoughts though it is difficult to motivate students.

2. Teachers and students have a natural need to feel self-determining. They believe that they are engaging in activities by their own willpower

- As a year progresses I have found myself to be negatively influenced by students dropping out of my subject in spite of everything I try to do to keep them there.
- Teachers and students have a natural need to feel self-determining. They believe that they are engaging in activities by their own willpower.
- Students in particular need to feel successful to be able to maintain interest in education

3. Teachers and students engage in learning activities not out of external reinforcement, but because they value academic work and success

- Similar to the previous point, ideally this would be the case.
- Positive reinforcement is not included here
- Teachers and students engage in learning activities not out of external reinforcement, but because they value academic work and success
- It is the academic piece that is most challenging to our learners. The hands on/practical work is where they find this feeling of value and success. E.g. carrying out a facial, v's the theory of it.
- For those students who have not achieved success through academically recognised awards they sometimes may feel outside the norms of society or indeed sometime they feel inferior. However, once a level of academia is achieved they voluntarily go further out of sheer interest.
- This model might provide some insight for teachers and their own motivational issues
- This model might provide some insight for teachers and their own motivational issues
- I think many adults find returning to education a different experience to when they were younger and often value it more
- In my opinion a feeling of self-determination is only achieved with time and confidence. Activities that allow confidence to grow will always lead to empowerment. Success can be measured by participation rates but not always the outcomes.

4. Positive and negative feedback.

- This was a good model for quick ideas about student engagement
- This was quite clear and concise
- I would always use this method of feedback
- Similar to the previous point, ideally this would be the case. It is the academic piece that is most challenging to our learners. The hands on/practical work is where they find this feeling of value and success. E.g. carrying out a facial, v's the theory of it.

- This is essential but negatives have to be couched in constructive language and be accompanied by encouragement. Adult learners are generally ready to allow the negatives overwhelm them
- Negative feedback must be constructive so I am not sure if this is a good idea I like to give positive feedback only.
- The theories of B.F. Skinner on positive and negative reinforcement have been well proven as successful in both behavioural and academic studies. I believe that well-structured negative feedback given with the right attitude can lead directly to a better outcome for the learner.
- Negative feedback must be constructive so I am not sure if this is a good idea I like to give positive feedback only.
- Negative feedback must be constructive
- I would do this all the time.
- Totally agree with this

5. Using the interests of the learners in activities and assignments

- ARCS model was the best for quick ideas.
- I found this useful and the ideas in Wlodkowski were good.
- I try to use the Wlodkowski method
- I found this useful and the ideas were good

6. Relating it the world around them at present time

- This is not a concept I use.
- Yes this marries really well with work experience, we have many great discussions about previous and during course work experiences. Many of them also enjoy stories of the tutor/teacher – I find this makes them talk and engage even more and makes for a lively and participative class. Also helps those who have none or little of work experience.
- Topical issue need to be incorporated in most subjects to keep the subjects relevant to modern society. Teachers must keep informed of current issues that may relate to their teaching subject. This I feel will engage the learner more and it works for me.
- I would regularly tailor assignments around topical issues.

7. Building professional relationships with the learners

- This is not considered very well in the ARCS model.
- Yes I agree with this point generally but with adult learners the balance needs to be right. Too much formality or too much of a casual attitude can backfire.
- I like to get to know them personally.
- I find this happens naturally
- Professional relationships are essential. However professional boundaries must be adhered to on both sides. Teachers must take the lead and give good example.

8. Praise and reinforcement will help motivate learners

- I agree in praising where it's due but not if the work is not forthcoming.
- I agree with praise where it is due
- To a point maybe. However I believe the learners own self-belief and attention to positive thinking patterns helps more.
- To achieve continued success we all need acknowledgement and validation. Genuine praise and reinforcement are the best tools for motivating people and learners alike. Bearing in mind we are individuals first and then everything else follows.

Appendix C – Extract from minutes of staff meeting

Minutes of Staff Meeting 14th April 2015 – college library

Motivational Framework

Tina made a brief follow up presentation on a motivational framework she is currently working on as part of her master's dissertation. Tina requested that teachers review the two options and purposefully teach our students in FE using whichever of the 2 frameworks that best suit our needs or both. The frameworks by Keller and Wlodkowski provide ideas about responsive teaching for both cultural inclusiveness and motivational attitudes. Teachers should provide feedback to Tina by the end of April if possible. She answered some questions and it was agreed that this is an issue for us that along with the financial and emotional difficulties we are dealing with from students it is extremely hard to keep morale up. . Tina will then be looking for some teachers to interview...

Appendix D – Schedule of interview times

Schedule of interviews with Tina Reddin for MA learning in teaching

Date	Time	Place	ID name/Name	Identity/participant number
18/05/2015	8:30am	Grange Community College	Fred	Participant 1
18/05/2015	11:00am	Grange Community College	Cara	Participant 2
18/05/2015	3:00pm	Grange Community College	Gary	Participant 3
19/05/2015	9:00am	Grange Community College	June	Participant 4
19/05/2015	11:15am	Grange Community College	Kate	Participant 5
19/05/2015	12:30pm	Grange Community College	Anna	Participant 6
20/05/2015	11:15am	Grange Community College	Lucy	Participant 7
25/05/2015	10:00am	Grange Community College	Bart	Participant 8
25/05/2015	12:15pm	Grange Community College	Mary	Participant 9

Appendix E – TR Reflective journal

"Without reflection, we go blindly on our way, creating more

unintended consequences and failing to achieve anything useful."

(Margaret J. Wheatley*)*

Memo 1 - January 2015

I met with both the principal and deputy principal of the college to firstly gaining their permission to carry out my research "whatever that may be" in the college. They are both committed to teaching and learning and the professional development of all teaching staff within the college and were delighted that a teacher from the further education sector would carry out according to the principal "some much needed and relevant research into the sector within our education and training board". This meeting proved very helpful as it is beneficial to have their support with this process.

I discuss my proposed research question with my colleagues in college and they feel that the subject area is still too big and not defined enough. This caused me to rethink the question I would like to address as I would like to have my proposal ready before the end of January. I have reviewed other dissertations both masters and PHDs and am aware that there is quite a lot of work to complete. I have still not fully settled on the methodology, but at the moment a qualitative approach is sitting better with me. I have discussed options with others in school and there does not appear to be consensus about any particular type. The method chosen by others seems to be relevant to their subject areas. I plan to investigate the concept of Action research. This was discussed briefly in college but at the time I was a bit overwhelmed and had not fully considered this option.

Memo 2 - February 2015

My thought process has developed in relation to research methodology and I would like to use action research as my methodology. My research question appears to be guided by my work as a co-ordinator as well as a teacher in the further education sector.

Over the last two academic years there has been much upheaval in the FE sector, with the statutory status of SOLAS. My own college is a former VEC which now evolved into DDLETB an amalgamation of Co Dublin VEC and Dun Laoghaire VEC and finally the amalgamation of HETAC, FETAC and the NQAI into the newly formed QQI. This change has had an impact many teachers on the ground in the further education college. The culture of two merging organisations has had a dramatic impact on the educational leadership and this has trickled down to the colleges.

The economic climate has left many of our adult students with little or no confidence and this coupled with the low morale of the teaching staff has changed the teaching atmosphere in the college.

My motivation is to develop a supportive tool for teachers that may promote motivational factors for their learners. I remember that a student who was returning to study this academic year, after a long absence said to me:

> One of the things I most enjoyed about this course was the interaction between all of us, as students. I learned so much from listening to other participants talking about their own learning experiences, both about this course and others that they are undertaking. I felt that these different perspectives gave me food for thought and gave me a broader view than I would have previously had. Overall, I learned that being a mature student can be stressful and time management can be a problem for adult learners.

Our students are not that different to us. Another thought I had is that I think it also supports the goals and objectives of the further education and training strategy and this in itself is useful. My intentions however are to improve the learning and self-development for all the students within my responsibility.

Memo 3 – March 2015

My own discussion with myself about the study has evolved again and during a professional conversation with a colleague I have concerns that I have too many objectives in my research question and I intend to make it much more specific before I meet with my supervisor.

Memo 4 – March 2015

I met with my supervisor today for the 1st time and I have to say I found this reassuring, especially in view of the fact that I felt as if my research question had yet again shifted focus. I feel today that I have finally arrived at the question that I would like to reflect on and I intend to state specifically what it is I am planning to undertake. At the moment I would like to develop a supportive teaching tool for my fellow practitioners to use within the context of our college. Student empowerment and life skills are my ultimate goal but my strategy to get there is to support my fellow practitioners. I feel more settled with this topic than I did with any of the others I considered; I feel that this is the biggest question in my practice at present. Methodology, I have reviewed the literature on various methods and at present I fell drawn to Action Research. I am spending some time familiarising myself with this method and intend to research it further and commence my methodology chapter of the dissertation.

Memo 5 – March 2015

Validation group, I need these if I am to undertake an action research enquiry. I spoke with both David and Brendan my colleagues undertaking this master's programme and both have agreed to be my peer validation group. The deputy principal and the guidance counsellor in my own school have agreed to be my field validation group. Phew! I think I have that sorted. I can bring this issue up in my meeting with the examiners, due to take place in a week's time.

Memo 6 – April 2015

I have spent the last week trying to get my head around action research and have started a methodology chapter for my final dissertation. "Is this the place to start" I have asked myself but I do feel that I need to start writing. I have a tendency to overthink things and over research, I need to start somewhere and this is as good a place as any.

I have looked at quantative methods and feel I would be much more comfortable as being part of the research question rather than an observer.

Memo 7 – April 2015

Following the interim review meeting I feel I have dealt with the issue of my topic being too broad. Even if all the ideas are valid I'm not really sure how I could collect data and proof of activities and do enough journaling to cover everything. Part of me feels that I should go back to scratch and change the question but the other part of me thinks that this is part of the action research process and I really am interested in this topic and feel it would be beneficial to me as a practitioner and my colleagues in the college who are struggling with the new QQI common award system modules, the new quality assurance processes, the merging of two former VEC's into a new ETB and the cultural impact of this merger.

I considered my options but strongly feel that this is actually part of the action research process.

Memo 8 – April 2015 - Staff council meeting

I made a presentation to my colleague about the research topic, my idea is to reflect on motivational frameworks in existence, allow them the time and opportunity to review one or both. Use the frameworks as a supportive tool and provide feedback which when analysed could inform a new updated framework to support the teaching and learning of our adult student cohort. The presentation centred on two different types of framework, one a framework to aid motivation programme design and the other to assist with strategies to motivate students.

In fact, as the school is a dual provision school the second level teachers were also interested in this topic and took copies of Wlodkowski's model to reflect on. I had discussed the Keller's model and one or two others and although I feel that the Keller model is more applicable to course design and not quite what we need one teacher expressed an interest in this model. I left the group to reflect on both and to revert to me with their thoughts.

Memo 9 – April 2015

"We need to look after our new students starting in September and ensure that they have an enjoyable college experience", the thought of a colleague that resonated with me. As the year

draws to a close I intend to interview my colleagues about "motivation" and analysis the interviews in a thematic manner. I image that I may find that it is the motivational levels of the teaching staff as well as the students that impacts on the class dynamic, attendance and retention rates.

Some of my colleagues agreed to provide me with feedback following my presentation and asked that I provide them with a template to complete. I have created and circulated a template for those who wish to use it. I feel that this process will add a dimension of criticality to my work as it was be as democratic a process as possible given that it is my work to complete the dissertation. I would aim to produce something of relevant to my teaching colleagues and inform best practice in the further education sector.

Memo 10 – April 2015

I had a professional conversation with one of my validation group in the college today about some issues of concern to me. The college management structure of which I am part of, seem to me to be reactive rather than proactive. This I feel is an issue that affects teacher motivation. Someone has a good idea, it goes nowhere, the person may or may not be extrinsically motivated and it has a knock on affect!

I expressed my worries about our approach to adult students and the lack of information provided to them and also the lack of emotional support available to these students in the school. It has reinforced my goal to invest in a teaching support strategy, in a professional context to support teachers with student empowerment to meet the lifelong skills and challenges they face.

On a good note however, the deputy principal advised me that she has received many comments from teachers about the presentation on motivation and that it has been a positive contribution to the college both for teachers and the adult students both further education and post primary.

Memo 11 – May 2015

A student called in to see me today and this is what she said:

> One of the most difficult things for me as an adult student, was the difficulty in balancing the demands of my course and my home and work life. I found that I was constantly tired and usually feeling guilty because what little time I had at home was being spent studying. Developing a study plan helped me to overcome this. I found that if I set time aside to study on a particular day or evening that my family accepted this, as they knew that the next day I would have time to spend with them. I found that this way, I was tackling my work load and my guilt issues in one go! It also meant that I felt less tired as I had time to "switch off" rather than constantly thinking about how I needed to do this or that.

This has inspired me to stay with my initial thought about motivation. I have received back feedback in relation to the two frameworks and will analyse this in detail before commencing my interviews. Most teachers have passed comments about the tool as a resource with or without the improvements and that they may keep this information in their "resource file". Of interest though is that the teachers feel they have more of awareness about motivation in general following the presentation.

Memo 12 – May 2015

I have almost completed my chapters on action research which is my chosen research methodology and my literature review. I will soon be facing the chapter on my data collection methodology and the data analysis chapter. Having considered many other options I feel that one-on-one semi structured interviews will be my method. I plan to interview all teachers of further education in my college and analyse the results by looking for the main themes which emerge and reflecting on a new supportive tool to aid with student motivation. (Though not specifically thematically analysed in its truest form)

Memo 13 – May 2015

Over the last few days I have reflected on the setting for my interviews and the data collection method. I had a professional conversation with a colleague about this and I have decided that I will use an office in the college, so that the participants are on familiar territory. This feels significant. I plan to interview participants in a semi-structured style and allow the flow of conversation as much as possible. Having reviewed the feedback on the two different frameworks, I am now confident in my decision to update the original Wlodkowski motivational framework and make it suitable for our college. The process of planning around the different models informed my first cycle of this action research project and I plan to write about this as part of my initial findings.

Memo 14 – May 2015

I have finalised my prompt questions, but feel that it is just a resource. I would much prefer to gain valuable rich data from my participants. I have prepared an introductory letter for them and how timetabled eight interviews over the next two weeks. I did a pilot with a colleague from second level and it went OK but it caused me to rethink the timing. I had initially planned for one hour but I now feel that this is too long for teachers at the end of the academic year. Also we tended to wander off the topic. I am now suggesting 30-45 minutes per interview and I will try to keep the interviewee on topic.

This will also help me keep focused on what teacher think their responsibilities are in relation to student motivation, student motivation perceptions and the value of professional development to support teachers with motivational strategies.

Memo 15 – May 2015

So far so good, nine interviews completed and I have spent most of this week, listening to the recordings, transcribing the recordings (a very time consuming exercise) but hopefully it will provide me with the required data to inform a new updated framework for my particular college. I was asked by a former colleague, who is now an adult education officer if I would include him as part of the process. We are on several networks together and work collaboratively on behalf of DDLETB so I felt that he could add an extra layer of in depth knowledge to the research.

Memo 16 – May 2015

I have met with my peers in NCI as my peer validation group and am impressed with their knowledge regarding motivation. We were able to exchange ideas about the notion of the student voice for instance and are this part of the college experience for adult students?

The school validation group I have surrounded myself with are of great support, the principal and deputy are allowing me the time and space to collect this data at a pinch-point time in the academic year. I have my own responsibilities to my students in terms of the national and international exams they are currently undertaking and as a co-ordinator to act as a support to other teachers' thought the internal verification process and to act as a liaison with external authenticators. My colleagues have all given up their precious time to accommodate my interviews and are looking forward to some supportive tool for the next academic year.

Memo 17 – May 2015

All interviews complete and transcripts have been typed verbatim. I have the initial draft of my introduction, my literature review, my methodology chapter and the initial draft of the data collection chapters complete. They will all of course need to be re drafted but I am starting to feel I understand the learning process of this undertaking myself.

Memo 18 – May 2015

I had a meeting with my supervisor this week and feel that I am on track with my progress. I will of course have to ensure that I stay that way and that I timetable enough time each day for writing. I have had many professional conversations this week, one of which was with a member of my field validation group in the school. We have discussed the research process and I find that this is helpful in keeping me on the chosen path of my research enquiry.

Memo 19 – May 2015

Professional discussion with my field validation group today – We discussed the research question, my progress and they allowed me to present my initial findings to them. This I feel helped me to articulate my thoughts and it proved very beneficial.

I have been asked to present my findings to the other FE teachers during the first week of the next academic year and to provide them with a new and hopefully improved framework to support them with their student cohorts.

Memo 20 – June 2015

I met with the two students who form my peer validation group today. Following my input regarding my research question I answer questions about my ontology and epistemology and value based questions I was reflecting on. In fact we all took the opportunity to discuss our research questions, where we are with our dissertation design, referencing etc. This is a supportive process as well as being part of the validation process for my action research, living theory design. I find that this in itself is a motivational strategy.

Memo 21 – June 2015

For my action research topic, I already decided supporting adult student motivation was to be my theme. When planning action research, it is vital to review literature of professional researchers. The purpose of a review is to set a research topic in a theoretical context and to lend credibility and validity to the research design. Finding and reading research articles that are relevant to my research topic can bring a new perspective and experience into my work.

Reflection on my literature review – As action research involves a process of reflection and review, I felt that at this stage I should review my literature review and bring it to mind when considering my discussion chapter. I have almost all finding analysed at this stage and am ready to commence the story of my research!!

Why am I floundering I ask myself, I suppose I have been so much on task, reflecting on my values and how my motivation may or may not affect my teaching style and strategies, that it appears strange to now have to reflect on the whole process and how I got here. Have I learnt anything? My answer is of course yes, I have. In purposeful reflection and being immersed in the research as is the case with living theory, I am finding it hard to dis-engage with the learning process for myself.

I feel the need to go back, read more, and learn more! I wonder if this is true of all research? Another subject to review.

I started this discussion with myself in the hope that I would be satisfied with the research I completed in my review, however I find that each day more and more things could be added, for instance yesterday there was an article in the Irish Times by Humphreys about the funding model

for FET going forward, the very notion that motived me to undertake this particular study. I feel however that if I want to finish the dissertation, I must engage with the participants now and tell their story.

Memo 22 – June 2015 - Reflection on action research to date

I wanted to know more about the effective teaching and learning process and this way my main reason for undertaking this master's programme of study.

Action research provides an opportunity to implement my learning into my teaching practice. In addition, action research gives me a chance to reflect on my own practices, the practices of my peers and the proficiencies of my students with an eye toward what works and what doesn't. I suggest that this action research enquiry will contribute to the development of my knowledge and skills relevant to teaching and learning.

Isolation can be one of the downsides of teaching as we are often the sole adult with the responsibility to design an engaging programme of content for our students. This can leave very little or no time scheduled for professional conversations with others.

However, one of the basic principles of action research is that the researcher needs the ideas of others to enhance stimulation and can the perspectives of peers to enrich one's own. Action research I suggest can be used as professional development. The role of teachers is critical in motivating their students to want to know more about their subject specialism and helping their students build understanding of the associated knowledge.

Memo 23 – June 2015

Personally, I suggest that the most difficult task in action research is to design the actions or tools that are used in the research because this step required creativity. In my research, I will design enquiry activities in which my peers will learn about motivational frameworks. Furthermore, I will find out the effectiveness of my ideas during the interviews and how implementation of purposeful teaching can improve student motivation.

And most importantly, I suggest that multiple sources of data are used to better comprehend what is happening in terms of motivation in the classrooms for the teachers in the sector in our college. I have used two data sources (triangulation) as evidences to back up the claims I make in terms of the motivational concepts under discussion in this action research study. Triangulation means looking at something from more than one perspective. Almost all participants provided me with two sources of data. One directly from the results of their purposeful actions in teaching their classes and the other the data collected during the semi-structured interviews. I wanted to note important elements or themes from the data, which I believe is where I am currently with my dissertation.

Then, I hope, I will summarize the data thematically and in a narrative form from which I will develop recommendations and a conceptual map or framework as a supportive tool for teachers.

Memo 23 – end of June 2015

I had a meeting with my field validation group today. They were supportive enough to organise this meeting for me whilst on holidays. I have designed a new motivational framework to be disseminated to teachers at the beginning of September 2015. The group reviewed my work and had a few questions and suggestions, which I will take into consideration. This has been an excellent opportunity for me to lead a group of senior college management and a final suggestion was made that the college should have a philosophy of research promotion within the further education of the college.

I discussed my findings and my thoughts for the future of adult education in the college. Towards the end of the discussion/meeting, the principal suggested that it would be useful if we planned the school calendar of meetings to include sessions on mindfulness, motivation and planned opportunities to share best practice. I thanked them for their input over the enquiry timeline.

Memo 24 – July 2015

Met with my peer validation group today to review my findings and the new framework. They both felt that it looked like a very supportive tool for teachers. We also discussed dissertation layouts, referencing and all other dissertation related stuff!

July 2015 - Final reflection and conclusion

As this will be my final reflection on my journey through this action research, I felt that it would be useful to review all my previous reflections. This was a different learning experience for me. I realised that I have a greater empathy for my colleagues and our students, they, like me, are adult learners with life responsibilities to deal with as well as staying motivated to complete their chosen course of study.

I felt that this study has afforded me the learning space to remember that I need to be critically reflective of my practice in order to develop my future teaching performance and to be an ever-improving practitioner as well as supporting my colleagues with their student cohorts. Although this is something that is easy to use as we reflect on day-to-day events, it becomes more difficult to reflect on our professional life.

John Dewey supported the need for, and benefit of, reflection in learning. Not only does reflective practice encourage us as teachers to reflect upon the principles and practice of our work but also to be prepared to change or modify our teaching in response to both the feedback we are given and that we give ourselves. Action research for me is the living embodiment of this idea, cyclical in process and ever changing.

During this journey I have used Jenny Moon's model of critical reflection. I found her book "The Park" a very useful tool for describing critical reflection and have used it in my own teaching practice and as part of this process of reflecting on my study. In her book "Learning Journals", Moon describes the process of how we can learn from critical reflective writing in that it slows

the pace of learning, increases the sense of ownership, and encourages metacognition whilst at the same time enhances learning through the process of writing. This describes exactly how I felt the process has evolved for me.

I have reflected on the reasons why I do things in a certain way. The critical reflection of both my teaching and learning practice has made my thinking more flexible in a constructivist manner. For example; I may have used a teaching strategy that I was shown without thinking why? The constructivist view that new material is linked with old but may be modified in the process of accommodation of this new material has caused me to re-think a lot of the teaching strategies that I may have used in the past and this as well as the data collected from my fellow practitioners has transformed my own thought process as well as developing a supportive tool.

This concurs with the constructivist theories of Piaget, Vygotsky and the theory of Knud Illeris' three dimensions of learning. My basic understanding of teaching and learning was that it was building blocks of information which we take in and assemble, but now I can reflect on what is meaningful and that just as all my prior learning affects my understanding and relevance of information, the past socialisation and learning experiences of my students' affects how they view their learning and its application and their motivation to pursue a course of study.

My personal thoughts as a co-ordinator and leader of teachers are that I hope I have managed to be a teacher-facilitator some of the time. I also hope I encouraged self-esteem within my colleagues and the students I teacher and that I have become a motivating and inspirational a teacher and supportive co-ordinator as described by Frank Mc Court, in his book "Teacher Man". I wanted to offer expertise, have understanding, display enthusiasm passion and present clarity. But above all I wanted to motivate the groups to want to learn and be a role model for the teachers who may be influenced by my practice.

I feel that I should mention my principal, deputy principal, and the guidance teacher as my field validation group and the teachers who participated and provided me with the data to reflect upon. They have been encouraging and have helped me at every stage during this process and this has enabled the new updated and improved motivational framework. This research, I suggest is only the beginning and it will require a reflective approach to ensure that the tool does not become obsolete or redundant. It is provided as a supportive tool for teachers, but the collective and individual needs of each cohort is unique and therefore a unique approach is required.

My final reflection on the influential people during this phase has to be my peer group at college who are my validation group or "committee" if I can call them that. A very small group but the interaction and communication have been a fundamental part in my growth as a researcher and teacher in the further education sector in Ireland today. We have shared anxieties, stresses and at times fun, if you ask them who was in the wrong place at the wrong time, I am sure they would mention me, but they have been unconditional in their support throughout.