

Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick

An embedded case study of how knowledge, competences and skills are acquired through coaching, mentoring and training for leadership at an Adult Education Centre in Ireland

Thesis submitted to Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick for the award of the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Education

By

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Contents

Declaration of originality and authenticity	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	v
Glossary of Terms	vi
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	ix
List of Figures and Tables	xi
List of Appendices	xiii
Reference List	A
Appendices	a

Declaration of originality and authenticity

I, Rabson Koto Mphululwa Ndlovu, hereby declare that this thesis titled ‘An embedded case study of how knowledge, competences and skills are acquired through coaching, mentoring and training for leadership at an Adult Education Centre in Ireland’ is my original work. All quotations from other sources are duly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with the latest edition of the Harvard Referencing Style.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Dedication

This thesis is a labour of love done in loving memory and as a special dedication to my late grandfather Mtheliswa Msindo Mpofu. With his guidance, belief in me, patience, emotional and financial support, he was instrumental and influential in the early years of my education. He set the trajectory that kept me working on the real-self in order to develop to the idealself. I thank him for sowing the seeds of what later became self-directed lifelong learning the products of which I continue to cultivate, nurture and reap. This piece of scholarly work is the apex of some of the educational projects that I have undertaken as I continue to revive and live the education dream. I also hope that this project will bear fruits that will keep trickling down to future generations and have a positive impact in the quality of their lives.

I would also like to dedicate this research project to the educational institutions of St Pius Mission in Njube and Methodist Community and Training Centre in Makokoba, where I respectively did my Junior Certificate and General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary ('O') Level. Both educational institutions are in the city of Bulawayo in Zimbabwe. My experiences in the 1970s when I was a non-formal student in the two education institutions motivated me to research on educational leadership in the non-formal education sector.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate my academic work to all my children, grandchildren, nephews and nieces. I hope this piece of work will encourage them to work hard and aspire for a better life that is informed by research.

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Abstract

Title: An embedded case study of how knowledge, competences and skills are acquired through coaching, mentoring and training for leadership at an Adult Education Centre in Ireland

By Rabson Koto Mphululwa Ndlovu

This study explores a proposed construct of leadership in the adult education sector. The construct is a fusion of sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership that is mediated by the Competing Values Framework (CVF). It develops an argument that leadership is a fluid role and is still growing as a field of study, and that its theoretical perspectives are still evolving. The examination of how students, administration and teaching staff experience leadership and the co-creation of new knowledge by capturing the voices of key stakeholders is central to this research process. The study is carried out at a Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) Adult Education Centre in Ireland. The Irish adult education sector has got challenges in that it has local, national, regional and international dimensions. As a result, the leadership in the VTOS programmes work through dilemmas because it has to meet competing expectations of the local communities and those of the national leadership. While notions of leadership in local communities are premised in the model of Professional Learning Communities, and are collaborative and democratic, the national organisational structures are hierarchical and bureaucratic. The lack of congruence in leadership style between the grassroots and national structures creates complexities and tensions. Harmonising the leadership style and narrowing the gap between the local and national structures requires locating and creating a new body of knowledge. The new body of knowledge will help to fill spaces and bridge gaps that exist between the local communities and national leaders even if we have never experienced those spaces and gaps ourselves. Research participants will co-create the new body of knowledge that will usher a new working relationship between local communities and national structures. This study is on an embedded single case. The single case is the VTOS Adult Education Centre, and the embedded units are the course groups. The researcher is of the opinion that this approach will help facilitate an indepth and holistic examination of the concept of leadership.

The study adopted a flexible mixed methods design in a sequential explanatory strategy embedded with an interpretivist paradigm with a critical constructivist stance, and a narrative approach. Findings reflect that some of the teachers that trained about two to three decades ago did not learn leadership skills during their training. However, they state that they have gained leadership skills during the course of their duties and through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses that are either sponsored by their organisation or privately funded. One of the teachers who did a degree course two years prior to this study says leadership skills were included in the course. Teachers transfer leadership skills to informal leaders by encouraging second-year students to coach first-year students. One of the teachers says that she puts students into groups and encourages them to rotate group leadership so that all members are given a chance to lead. The administration and teaching staff encourage students to plan activities such as field trips. The plans are then scrutinised by the staff members who check for costs and compliance with requirements. The organisation employs sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership approaches, but key stakeholders find it difficult to explicitly define and express the approaches that they use. Lack of laid down procedures makes it difficult for students to get insurance cover and to be granted access into historic sites. Students with disabilities find it difficult to access supports. The majority of adult learners assert that they get high quality support from peers and staff members, and the courses meet their objectives.

Glossary of Terms

Adult education – The working definition adopted for this study is the one proposed by Powell *et al.* (2003) as a template for use across Europe:

- *Adult learning involves an organised process which enables a person to acquire new skills, competencies or attributes*
- *It is undertaken by any person who has completed compulsory basic education*
- *It includes all types of learning, such as learning with and without accreditation in formal, informal and non-formal modes*
- *It includes a variety of delivery modes, including tutor-directed, class-based and distance learning; it can be undertaken in a wide range of settings, from traditional classrooms and workshops to museums and libraries, churches, public halls, public houses and the home*
- *It can be delivered by a range of different providers including public, private and voluntary sectors (p. 39).*

Axiology - Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010) define axiology as ‘beliefs about the role of values or ethics in conducting research’ (p. 4).

Critical/radical theory or critical pedagogy in education – has emerged in the last twenty years. Broadly defined as the ‘new sociology’ or a ‘critical theory of education’, critical pedagogy examines schools both in their historical context and as part of the existing social and political fabric that characterises the class-driven dominant society. Critical pedagogy poses a variety of important counterlogics to the positivistic, ahistorical, and depoliticised analysis employed by both liberal and conservative critics of schooling – an analysis all too readily visible in the training programmes in our colleges of education (McLaren, 2002, p. 185).

Education – is an activity undertaken or initiated by one or more agents that is designed to effect changes in the knowledge, skill, and attitudes of individuals, groups, or communities. The term emphasises the educator, the agent of change who presents stimuli and reinforcement for learning and designs activities to induce change (Knowles and Shepherd, 2005, p. 10).

Epistemology - Epistemology is ‘beliefs about the nature of knowledge, including those related to objectivity/subjectivity dualism’ (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2010, p. 4).

Formal education/learning – The definition adopted by the EU interpret formal learning as learning that takes place in and organised, structured setting. It is clearly defined as a learning activity such as that in primary, secondary or higher educational institutions, and by its very nature leads to certification (Powell *et al.* 2003, p. 20).

High technology service economy in Ireland - Most of the country's high-tech and largely foreignowned sectors are clustered in this region. These include computer hardware and components, computer software, and international financial services. Of the remaining high-tech sectors, pharmachem is clustered around Cork city and medical devices around Galway. Galway also has a smaller ICT cluster, as does Limerick, with hardware and/or components predominant in both locations (Barry, 2008)

Informal education/learning – According to the EU definition, informal learning occurs by chance or during everyday activities or learning through experience. It is not provided through any formal structure (Powell *et al.* 2003, p. 20).

Learning – Knowles and Shepherd (2005) state that ‘any discussion of definition of learning must be prefaced with an important and frequently made distinction – the one between education and learning’ (p. 10). According to Boyd, Apps, *et al.* (1980), ‘the term *learning*, by contrast, emphasises the person in whom the change occurs or is expected to occur. Learning is the act or process by which behavioural change, knowledge, skills, and attitudes are acquired (pp. 100 – 101, cited in Knowles and Shepherd, 2005, p. 10).

Lifelong learning - The lifelong dimension of Adult and Community Education refers to its place within a continuum of education from the cradle to the grave. It highlights the need to formulate education strategies which encompass the person's life-cycle, and challenges educational systems to be adaptive to the changing life-cycle requirements of learners and to ensuring that students in their early school experience acquire both the disposition and the capacity for lifelong learning (DES, 2000, p. 32).

Lifewide - The lifewide dimension of lifelong learning refers to the multiplicity of sites in which learning now occurs. With regard to adult learning it encompasses the school or other conventional educational institutions, training centres, the home (particularly through I.T. or other forms of homebased learning), the community and the workplace (DES, 2000, p. 32).

Literacy - Literacy conventionally refers to reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening effectively in a range of contexts. In the 21st century, the definition of literacy has expanded to refer to a flexible, sustainable mastery of a set of capabilities in the use and production of traditional texts and new communications technologies using spoken language, print and multimedia (DES, 2010, p. 9).

Non-formal education/learning – The definition adopted by the EU refers to non-formal education as organised activities that are not explicitly identified as learning activities but have a major learning

component. For example, it may occur in the workplace and does not lead to certification (Powell *et al.* 2003, p. 20).

Numeracy – is the capacity, confidence and disposition to use Mathematics to meet the demands of learning, school, home, work, community and civic life. This perspective on numeracy emphasises the key role of applications and utility in learning the discipline of Mathematics, and illustrates the way that Mathematics contributes to the study of other disciplines (DES, 2010, p. 9).

Ontology - Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010) define ontology as ‘beliefs about the nature of reality and others (e.g., the possibility of generalisations and the nature of causality)’ (p. 4).

Paradigm - Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that ‘paradigms represent a distillation of what we *think* about the world (but cannot prove). Our actions in the world, including actions that we take as inquirers, cannot occur without reference to those paradigms: “As we think, so do we act”’ (p. 15).

Pedagogy - Roger Simon (1987) distinguishes *pedagogy* from *teaching*. ‘Pedagogy [refers] to the integration of particular curriculum content and design, classroom strategies and techniques, and evaluation, purpose, and methods. All these aspects of educational practice come together in the realities of what happens in classrooms. Together they organise a view of how teacher’s work within an institutional context specifies a particular version of what knowledge is of most worth, what it means to know something, and how we might construct representations of ourselves, others, and our physical and social environment. In other words, talk about pedagogy is simultaneously talk about the details of what students and others might do together and the cultural politics such practices support. In this perspective, we cannot talk about teaching practices without talking about politics (cited in McLaren, 2002, p. 187).

Praxeology - Praxeology is what is sometimes referred to as methodology in the research realm (Souba, 2011, p. 2)

Theory – is an interrelated set of constructs (or variables) formed into propositions, hypotheses, that specify the relationship among variables (typically in terms of magnitude or direction). A theory might appear in a research study as an argument, a discussion, or a rationale, it helps to explain (or predict) phenomena that occur in the world (Creswell, 2009, p. 51). In addition, Singleton and Straits (2005) state that ‘a scientific theory consists of a set of interconnected propositions that have the same form as laws but are more general or abstract’ (p. 19).

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALO – Adult Literacy Organiser

APEL – Accreditation of Prior or Experiential Learning

BTEA – Back to Education Allowance

BTEI – Back to Education Initiative

CCII – Communities of Continuous Inquiry and Improvement

CPD – Continuous/Continuing Professional Development

CVF – Competing Values Framework

DES – Department of Education and Skills

ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

ESD – Education for Sustainable Development

ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages

ETB – Education and Training Board

FÁS – Irish National Training and Training Authority

FDI – Foreign Direct Investment

FETAC – Further Education Training Awards Council

GAA – Gaelic Athletic Association

High Dip in Ed – Higher Diploma in Education

IALS – International Adult Literacy Survey

ICTU – Irish Congress of Trade Unions

ITABE – Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education

LLP – Lifelong Learning Programme

MIC – Mary Immaculate College

MIREC – Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee

MMR – Mixed methods research

NALA – National Adult Literacy Agency

OECD – Organisation of Economic Cooperation Development

OFSTED – Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills

PLC – Post Leaving Certificate College

PTS – Performance Training Sect

RCE – Regional Centre of Expertise

SBR – Scientifically-based research

SLDI – Sisters’ Leadership Development Initiative

STTC – Senior Traveller Training Centres

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

VEC – Vocational Education Committee

VTOS – Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

List of Figures and Tables

Table 1.1: Leadership quadrants and role descriptions	16
Table 2.1: key milestones in the evolution of the European area of lifelong learning	32
Figure 2.1: The competing values framework of organisational effectiveness	43
Figure 2.2: Competing Values Framework	45
Figure 2.3: Leadership roles and profiles in the Competing Values Framework	46
Table 2.2: List of qualities and attributes of a good leader	49
Table 2.3 The emerging concept of sustainability in educational leadership	55
Table 2.4: Professional Learning Communities versus Performance Training Sects	59
Table 2.5: Timeline of developing the term ‘sustainability’	59
Table 2.6: Developing transformational leadership in education institutions	81
Figure 2.4: The conceptual map of power and its and its cognates	127
Figure 3.1: Framework for research design	147
Table 3.1: A summary of corresponding terms used by interpretivists and positivists	163
Figure 3.2: Doing Case Study Research: A linear but iterative process	168
Figure 3.3: Sequential Explanatory Design	175
Figure 3.4: Concurrent Triangulation Design	176
Figure 3.5 The Coding Process in Inductive Analysis	184
Table 3.2: Comparisons of qualitative data analysis approaches	185
Figure 3.6: Components of data analysis: Interactive model	189

Table 3.3: Axial coding	191
Table 3.3: Theoretical coding part 1	194
Figure 3.7: Number of Respondents per Age Group	195
Figure 3.8: Percentage of Respondents doing Specific Courses	196
Figure 3.9: Rating Literacy Tasks	198
Figure 3.10: Respondents versus Sources of News	199
Figure 3.11: Rating Personal Development and Study Skills	200
Figure 3.12: Rating Support that Respondents Get from Staff and Peers	201
Figure 3.13: Rating to establish if VTOS meets objectives of respondents	202
Table 4.1: Numbers of students and gender balance in Year 1 – 3	321
Table 4.2: Numbers of learners in each age group and the gender balance	321
Table 5.1: Theoretical coding part 2	354

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Summary - Evolution of Theories of Leadership	a
Appendix B: Information Sheet for VTOS Co-ordinator as leader of the Centre	c
Appendix C: Stage 1 Questionnaire for Teachers/Tutors	f
Appendix D: Stage 1 Questionnaire for students	h
Appendix E: Stage 1 - Informed Consent Form for Teachers/Tutors	k
Appendix F: Stage I - Informed Consent Form for Students	l
Appendix G: Stage 1 - Information Sheet for Teachers/Tutors	m
Appendix H: Stage 1 - Information Sheet for Students	p
Appendix I: Semi-structured questions for discussion with VTOS Coordinator	q
Appendix J: Permission Form for VTOS Coordinator	r
Appendix K: Informed Consent Form for VTOS Coordinator as research participant	s
Appendix L: Informed Consent Form for VTOS Coordinator as research participant	t
Appendix M: Information Sheet for VTOS Coordinator as Research Participant	u
Appendix N: Stage 2 Semi-structured questions for discussion with Teachers/Tutors	v
Appendix O: Stage 2 - Informed Consent Form for Teachers/Tutors	w
Appendix P: Stage 2 - Informed Consent Form for Students	x
Appendix Q: Stage 2 - Information Sheet for Students	y
Appendix R: Stage 2 – Focus Group Interview Questions for Students	z
Appendix S: Timeline of challenges encountered in trying to access research site	aa
Appendix T: Using reflexivity to identify areas of potential researcher bias	cc
Appendix U: The eight historical moments and their distinctive characteristics	dd
Appendix V: Summary of profiles of interviewees	ee

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	6
1.0 Conception and background of study	6
1.1 The reasons why the study is imperative	9
1.2 Rationale and scope of study	9
1.3 The conceptual framework	14
1.4 The research questions.....	17
1.5 Demarcation of the study.....	18
1.6 Overview of chapters.....	19
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	21
2.0 Introduction	21
2.1 Theories, policy and practice in adult education and training	21
2.1.1 <i>The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme</i>	23
2.1.2 <i>Qualifications for teachers serving in the VTOS programme</i>	27
2.1.3 <i>National policy on literacy and lifelong learning</i>	31
2.1.4 <i>Complexities and tensions in use of terms ‘adult learning’ and ‘adult education’</i>	36
2.2 The Competing Values Framework.....	39
2.3 Definitions and evolutionary theories of leadership.....	49
2.3.1 <i>Evolution of theories of leadership</i>	53
2.4 Theories and practice of sustainable leadership	55
2.4.1 <i>Principles of sustainable leadership</i>	61
2.4.2 <i>The action principle of activism</i>	67
2.4.3 <i>The action principle of vigilance</i>	68
2.4.4 <i>The action principle of patience</i>	68
2.4.5 <i>The action principle of transparency</i>	70
2.4.6 <i>The action principle of design</i>	71
2.5 Theories and practice of transformational leadership.....	71
2.5.1 <i>The Burns’ theoretical perspectives in transformational leadership</i>	82
2.5.2 <i>Critiquing Burns’ theoretical perspectives in transformational leadership</i>	83
2.6 Theories and practice in distributed leadership	86
2.6.1 <i>Complexities and tensions associated with distributed leadership</i>	89
2.6.2 <i>Socio-cultural theory and power</i>	92
2.6.3 <i>The socio-cultural theory versus macro-social theory</i>	95

2.6.4 <i>Critiquing theoretical perspectives in distributed leadership</i>	97
2.7 Conceptual analysis of power in leadership	99
2.7.1 <i>One-dimensional view of power</i>	101
2.7.2 <i>Two-dimensional view of power</i>	102
2.7.3 <i>The three-dimensional view of power</i>	104
2.8 Conceptual analysis of ethnicity in leadership	108
2.8.1 <i>The deep-seated moralism</i>	110
2.8.2 <i>An inescapable opportunism</i>	113
2.8.3 <i>A profound pessimism</i>	117
2.9 Conceptual analysis of gender in leadership	119
2.10 Unmasking power using critical theory	128
2.11 The Freirean philosophy and methodology	133
2.12 Conclusion	136
Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Methods	138
3.0 Introduction	138
3.1 The paradigm adopted by the study	140
3.1.1 <i>Role of philosophical underpinnings that shape leadership</i>	142
3.2 Research topic and purposes of research study	144
3.3 The research design	145
3.3.1 <i>Formulating research questions</i>	147
3.4 Ethical considerations	148
3.4.1 <i>Entry to research site and challenges encountered</i>	152
3.4.2 <i>Ethics Approval</i>	155
3.4.3 <i>Empathy and reflexivity</i>	156
3.4.4 <i>Data Management</i>	157
3.5 Quality	159
3.5.1 <i>Validity of the study</i>	159
3.5.2 <i>Reliability</i>	161
3.5.3 <i>Triangulation</i>	162
3.5.4 <i>Holism</i>	163
3.6 Qualitative procedures	164
3.6.1 <i>Methods, strategy and positionality of researcher</i>	165
3.6.2 <i>Mixed methods notation</i>	170

3.6.3	<i>Visual models of mixed methods designs</i>	171
3.6.4	<i>Critiquing mixed methods approaches</i>	174
3.6.5	<i>Sampling strategy</i>	178
3.7	Data Analysis	178
3.8	General inductive analysis	180
3.8.1	<i>The Coding Process in Inductive Analysis</i>	181
3.8.2	<i>Comparing qualitative data analysis approaches</i>	182
3.8.3	<i>Developing the 'Framework' as an analytic tool</i>	183
3.9	Content analysis	184
3.9.3	<i>Theoretical coding</i>	189
3.10	Data Collection	191
3.11	Presentation of data from questionnaires filled out by students	191
3.11.1	<i>Respondents' age group distribution</i>	192
3.11.2	<i>Distribution of students doing specific courses</i>	193
3.11.3	<i>Rating literacy tasks</i>	194
3.11.4	<i>Main sources of news about what is happening</i>	196
3.11.5	<i>Rating personal development and study skills</i>	197
3.11.6	<i>Rating amount and quality of support</i>	198
3.11.7	<i>Rating to establish if the VTOS meets objectives of respondents</i>	199
3.11.8	<i>Factors that influenced respondents to enrol on the VTOS programme</i>	200
3.12	Presentation of data from questionnaires filled out by teachers	202
3.13	Presentation of data from focus group and one-to-one interviews	204
3.13.1	<i>Interview with the first focus group</i>	205
3.13.2	<i>One-to-one interview with Ayanda (a teacher)</i>	215
3.13.3	<i>Interview with the second focus group</i>	230
3.13.4	<i>One-to-one interview with Bianca (a teacher)</i>	241
3.13.5	<i>Interview with the third focus group</i>	251
3.13.6	<i>One-to-one interview with Daisy (the VTOS Co-ordinator)</i>	262
3.13.7	<i>One-to-one interview with Connie (a teacher)</i>	279
3.14	Conclusion	292
Chapter 4:	Presentation of Findings	294
4.0	Introduction	294
4.1	Presentation of findings from questionnaires filled out by students	294

4.1.1 Age group distribution of respondents.....	294
4.1.2 Distribution of respondents doing specific courses	296
4.1.3 Rating literacy tasks	296
4.1.4 Main sources of news.....	297
4.1.5 Rating personal development and study skills	299
4.1.6 Rating the amount and quality of support	300
4.1.7 Investigating if the VTOS helps respondents to meet their objectives	302
4.1.8 Factors that influence respondents to enrol in the VTOS programme	304
4.2 Presentation of findings from questionnaires filled out by teachers.....	306
4.3 Presentation findings from focus group interviews with students	314
4.3.1 Difficulties in defining leadership.....	316
4.3.2 Respondents pass transferrable skills to peers and workmates	318
4.3.3 Leadership in course groups is distributed among informal leaders	323
4.3.4 Respondents highly rate support from peers and staff members	326
4.3.5 Respondents are benefiting from a two-year study programme	328
4.4 Presentation of findings based on one-to-one interviews with staff members	329
4.4.1 Leadership skills are embedded in the teaching curriculum	330
4.4.2 Informal leaders emerge in course groups	332
4.4.3 The VTOS Centre embrace client-centred approaches	334
4.4.4 The two-year study programme is beneficial to students.....	336
4.4.5 The importance of striking a balance between product and process.....	338
4.4.6 Failure of students to take responsibility.....	340
4.5 Conclusion	344
Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion of Findings.....	345
5.0 Introduction	345
5.1 Real Self	348
5.1.1 Anxiety and Demotivation.....	348
5.1.2 Client approaches and good public relations	351
5.2 The Transforming Self.....	356
5.2.1 Change.....	357
5.2.2 Resources	359
5.3 The Ideal Self.....	361
5.3.1 Confidence	361

5.3.2 <i>Guidance and Training</i>	363
5.3.3 <i>Active participation</i>	364
5.3.4 <i>Enabling environment</i>	365
5.3.5 <i>Motivation</i>	366
5.3.6 <i>Revised paradigms and self concept</i>	367
5.4 Defining theoretical perspectives of leadership.....	370
5.5 Benefits and challenges of employing leadership skills	372
5.6 Amount and quality of support received by students	374
5.7 Techniques that staff members use when transferring leadership skills.....	375
5.8 Establishing if leadership skills are included in training curriculum for teachers.....	376
5.9 Importance of literacy, numeracy and interpersonal skills to students.....	376
5. 10 Investigation if VTOS courses meet the objectives of students	378
5.11 Conclusion	378
Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations	382
6.0 Introduction	382
6.1 Summary of the study.....	382
6.2 Conclusion of the study	385
6.3 Limitations of the study.....	388
6.4 Recommendations of the study.....	389

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Conception and background of study

The study was necessitated by the premise that the bedrock and sustenance of modern economies is educated citizens supporting a learned and dynamic labour force. It has been realised that in order to keep people in employment there is a need for policy makers to establish lifelong education programmes that help citizens to learn new skills, up-skill and reskill at different stages throughout life (Barry, 2008; Department of Education and Science, 1998 and 2000; Figel, 2008; Hargreaves, 2003; Kirsch, 2001; Rodriguez *et al.*, 2010). Figel (2008) points out that 'Europe is undergoing a major transformation to become a worldleading knowledge-based society – making the pursuit of lifelong learning more important than ever' (p. 23). In Ireland, lifelong learning has been prioritised since the publication of the

Organisation of Economic Cooperation Development's (OECD's) International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) report in 1997 (National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), 2007).

NALA (2007) states that the publication of the IALS report in 1997 gave Irish policy makers some insight about the literacy levels, and resulted in major changes in policies and services that were targeted at tackling it. The IALS report showed that 25% of the Irish adults (16 – 64 years) operated at Level 1, which was the lowest level of the five levels that were surveyed.

The Department of Education and Science (1997) points out that 'people who score at this level are able to perform at best, only the simplest tasks, typically those that require the reader to locate a single piece of information in a text, when there is no distracting information and when the structure of the text assists the search' (p. vii). Furthermore, The Department of Education and Science (1997) states:

While the results should not be interpreted as meaning that one quarter of the Irish people is 'illiterate', it is true that a significant percentage have problems with all but the very simplest literacy tasks. Equally, it may be considered a matter of concern that only a small percentage of the population score at the highest levels of literacy given that given that the tasks at these levels were designed to be of a kind that might be encountered in everyday life and work (p. viii).

Hargreaves (2003) state the old basics were 'literacy, numeracy, obedience and punctuality' (p. 16) and the new basics are 'multiliteracy, creativity, and communication, Information Technology, teamwork, lifelong learning, adaptation and change, and environmental responsibility' (p. 16). Prior to the publication of the IALS report, it was presumed that the Irish were a learned society. Three domains that were assessed included the Prose literacy, that is, knowledge and skills that is required to use information from fiction, expository text and newspapers. The other domain assessed was

Document literacy, which refers to knowledge and skills that are needed to locate information from a map, official forms, charts and timetables. Lastly, Quantitative literacy was tested, which required respondents to use mathematical applications in data (Department of Education and Science, 1997, 1998 and 2000; DES, 2010; Hargreaves, 2003; Kirsch, 2001; NALA, 2007; The Teaching Council, 2014). The Department of Education and Science (1998) states:

This percentage is the highest in any of the countries surveyed, except for Poland. Only about 10% in the Netherlands scored at Level 1, while in Sweden, the figure was 6%. About 33% of the Swedish respondents scored at the highest levels (Level 4 and 5) while the corresponding figure in Ireland was about 12% (p. 31).

The definitions of reading and literacy keep changing and are influenced by evolving trends in society, economy and culture. Kirsch (2001) remarks:

Definitions of reading and literacy have changed over time in parallel with changes in our society, economy, and culture. The growing acceptance of the importance of lifelong learning has expanded the views and demands of reading and literacy. Literacy is no longer seen as an ability that is developed during the early school years, but is instead viewed as an advancing set of skills, knowledge, and strategies that individuals build on throughout their lives in various contexts and through interaction with their peers and with the larger communities in which they participate (p. 4).

NALA (2007) outlines that in Ireland lifelong learning is offered through adult education and training initiatives that include the following:

The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTC), Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) and Youthreach programmes. Literacy is also provided in many other settings and context, including...FAS...the Prison Education Service, Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Congress Centres, local authorities, the National Learning Network, community development and education, and NALA distance education initiatives (p. 5).

In other words, lifelong learning takes place in a wide variety of settings, that is, it has a lifewide dimension (Department of Education and Science, 1998 and 2000; Figel, 2008; Powell *et al.*, 2003; Walters, 2008)). This study investigates an Irish adult education and training institution that offers VTOS courses.

In the European Union, lifelong learning is supported through the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). Figel (2008) states there is a range of transnational mobility activities that are supported in 'four sectoral programmes of the Lifelong Learning Programme, i. e., Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo

da Vinci and Grundtvig' (p. 1). The Grundtvig Action is a strand of the Socrates programme (Powell *et al.*, 2003, Walters, 2008). The four sectoral programmes help participating countries and participants to share knowledge in teaching approaches, cultural ties and understanding organisational skills, and to acquire an improved command of other languages.

In March 2000 in Lisbon, the European Council reflected on the importance of education as a tool in enhancing the EU's competitive power and in achieving social and economic cohesion. Rodriguez *et al.* (2010) point out that an ambitious strategy was adopted by the European Council 'to become the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment' (p. 11). Adult education and training programmes have paid dividends by equipping the Irish labour force with skills needed to drive a modern knowledge-based economy (Barry, 2008; Department of Education and Science, 1998 and 2000; Figel, 2008; Hargreaves, 2003; Kirsch, 2001; Rodriguez *et al.*, 2010).

The skilled labour force boosted the competitiveness of the Irish economy attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) by multinational corporations in the high technology industrial sector. According to Barry (2008), 'of the 17 EU countries plus the US and Norway for which OECD (2005, E7) provides data, Ireland, at just over 20 percent, also records the highest share of services-sector employment in foreign-owned firms' (p. 3). Therefore, Ireland has benefited from FDI more than most EU countries.

The use of technology in the labour markets is speedily replacing manual labour. However, in order for this technology to accomplish its objectives, it needs the input of a well-trained labour force. Thus, humans cannot be completely eradicated from the labour market, but they need to keep up with the dynamic pace of change in technology. In order for technology to execute the activities that it is designed to do, it needs the input of well-educated and sophisticated human beings. To keep abreast with the speed at which technology is introduced and becomes obsolete, the labour force needs to keep learning new skills, upskilling and re-skilling (Barry, 2008; Department of Education and Science, 1998 and 2000; Figel, 2008; Hargreaves, 2003; Kirsch, 2001; Rodriguez *et al.*, 2010).

This section addressed the conception and background of the study. The section that follows discusses the imperativeness of the study.

1.1 The reasons why the study is imperative

This researcher is of the opinion that most research in educational leadership has been carried out in the formal education sector and very little has been focused on the non-formal sector. It is against this backdrop that the investigation to establish how leadership skills are transferred to teachers and how they in turn transfer them to students was conceived. It is envisaged that this small scale research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge about transfer of leadership skills in the non-formal education sector. At personal level, the research will be significant to the professional development of this researcher who already holds a Masters of Education in Adult and Continuing Education and has more than ten years of teaching experience in the formal and non-formal education sector, and did his secondary education within the non-formal education sector. At micro level, the results of the study will inform practice at the Adult Education Centre where the research was undertaken. At macro level, the outcomes of this research will inform government social policy as well as in nationwide adult education and training institutions.

This section discussed the imperative of the research study. The section that follows addresses the rationale and scope of the study.

1.2 Rationale and scope of study

The premise of the study is that adult education and training initiatives cannot achieve the desired objectives if the education institutions that deliver such services are not led by efficient and effective leaders with the necessary array of skills. Globalisation and migration is rapidly changing the cultural landscape of the adult education and training institutions' service users. 'In an increasingly connected and interdependent world effective communication not only becomes more important but also much more difficult' (Rutledge, 2011). This makes it more urgent than before to have leaders who are equipped with competences, knowledge and skills to deliver services to a culturally diverse clientele in the best way possible.

The 21st century adult education needs leadership that takes into consideration the manifestations of high context and low context cultural interactions. It is also important for this researcher to understand how high and low context cultures manifest themselves in order to deal with issues of empathy and reflexivity during the research process. People from high-context cultures are more cautious in initial interactions and have a greater tendency to make assumptions based upon a stranger's cultural background than do people from low-context cultures. People from high-context cultures are also akin to ask more questions about a stranger's background. However, this information does not provide a greater degree of predictive certainty with respect to a stranger's future behaviour. Rutledge (2011) points out:

A low context culture is one in which things are fully (though concisely) spelled out. Things are made explicit, and there is considerable dependence on what is actually said or written... In a high context culture, more responsibility is placed on the listener to keep up their knowledge base and remain plugged into informal networks.

This researcher does not prescribe the Irish to a particular communication cultural category. Rutledge (2011) states 'low context cultures include Anglos, Germanics and Scandinavians. High context cultures include Japanese, Arabs and French'. Aneas and Sandin (2009) point out that 'when we use the term "culture" it is important to bear in mind that culturally attributed social interaction processes are themselves the result of socially constructed processes'. Rutledge (2011) argues that 'it is often not dissimilar languages that cause the greatest problems but rather much more mundane and harder to detect cultural differences'. The findings of Prosser's (2009) study show 'that regardless of language or culture, human beings use the same qualifying and descriptive framework in allocating affective meanings of concepts involving attitudes, feelings, stereotypes, and values' (p. 2). Of course, the point is that in an age of diversity these cultural differences are just as likely to appear across an office or boardroom table as they are across national or regional borders. We can no longer take for granted that a common geographic location translates to a common cultural and traditional heritage.

Since 2008, the adult education sector has been operating in an unstable and hard-to-predict social, political and economic environment. This researcher is of the opinion that the type of leadership that can best address prevailing circumstances in a turbulent environment is a construct that is a fusion of sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership approaches. The construct of a fusion of the aforementioned leadership approaches focuses on a multiple of formal and informal leaders as its unity of analysis rather than an individual leader. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) argue that 'for the most part, the heroic leadership paradigm is a flawed and fading one' (p. 96). Spillane (2005) also confirms that the heroic leadership genre is on the decline. Hargreaves (2005) proposes a model in which, teaching and non-teaching staff, researchers, students, local communities and other key stakeholders work collaboratively. The model is called Professional Learning Community (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006) also known as Community of Continuous Inquiry and Improvement (Hord, 1997) or Community of Practice (Wenger, 2012). Professional Learning Communities recognise the pertinent and indispensable leadership roles played by all key stakeholders in leading local community education and development projects.

In addition to the leadership roles of co-ordinators and administrators, Professional Learning Communities appreciate the roles of teachers, non-teaching staff, students, board members and the immediate community and their important strategic contributions in taking local education

institutions to the next level. Professional Learning Communities view learning as a social enterprise in which local communities take ownership of local projects and run them with a degree of autonomy (Hargreaves, 2005; Hord, 1997; Wenger, 2012).

In Professional Learning Communities, project structures are decentralised, organic and have a social dimension. This debunks the traditional notions that view learning narrowly as an activity confined to the classroom while ignoring contributions of social learning. On the other hand, the organisational culture in national structures is hierarchical and bureaucratic. This creates tensions and complexities between the two organisational structures. Recognition of the social dimension of learning helps service users to enjoy the process as well as the product at a time when there is over-prioritisation of educational qualifications and certificates.

Since the publication of the IALS report in 1997, the Irish government has produced a number of policy documents that targeting literacy and adult education and training. The policy documents include: *Towards 2016*, *The National Development Plan (NDP) 2007-2013*, *National Skills Strategy*, and *The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 – 2016*.

According to NALA (2007), literacy programmes funding increased from €1.1 million to €26 million between 1998 and 2007 and VEC adult literacy programme participants increased from 5,000 to 40,000 in the same period. The DES (2013) report indicates that since the publication of the OECD's 1997 IALS report, Irish adult education sector has made remarkable and considerable gains. The Department of Education and Skills (DES) (2013) highlights:

Taking the adult population as a whole (aged 25-64), the rate of tertiary attainment in Ireland was above the OECD average (38% compared to 32%). However, the proportion of adults without a Leaving Certificate or above was 27% and was slightly more than the OECD average proportion, at 25%. Hence, there is a greater disparity in educational attainment, here, with a relatively better educated youth cohort and a relatively poorly educated cohort over the age of 50. On average, the proportion of adults with tertiary attainment in Ireland increased by 5.2% per annum since 2000. This compares to 3.3% per annum across the OECD in tertiary attainment among the adult population between 2000 and 2011 (p. 5).

In Ireland, the working population is considered to start at around 25 years after completing tertiary training and to end at 65 years, which is the retirement age. The 2013 DES report uses OCED indicators as reference points, which is an indication that researchers and policy makers are using the 1997 IALS report as a benchmark for measuring progress and lack of it.

The literature review reveals that for many years the concept of leadership has been of interest to both business practitioners and academics. It also explores and examines how theories of leadership

have evolved since the 1920s to some of the leadership concepts that at present we consider to be relatively new.

This researcher takes into account that leadership is still an expanding and growing field of study and the role is fluid. At the moment, there is no concise and precise definition for the term 'leadership'. In future it may join the *disciplines* of social sciences, history and philosophy in terms of academic recognition (Burns, 2003). Debates on whether leaders are born or nurtured, or both are still raging on with no overwhelming consensus. In spite of that, Goleman *et al.* (2002) assert that 'leaders are made, not born' (p. 100). In addition, Goleman and his colleagues point out:

The crux of leadership development that works is *self-directed learning*: intentionally developing or strengthening an aspect of who you are or who you want to be, or both. This requires first getting a strong image of your *ideal self*, as well as an accurate picture of your *real self*— who you are now. Such self-directed learning is most effective and sustainable when you understand the process of change – and the steps to achieve it – as you go through it (p. 109).

This researcher asserts that the knowledge gained from the findings of this study will not only be applicable to educational administration, but it will also be applicable to other areas of leadership in the private, public and voluntary sectors.

The emergence of sustainable leadership in educational administration took place in 2005.

The leadership concept got its name from the term 'sustainability', which is widely used in ecology and conservation of natural resources (Thomas, 2008). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2002) assert that the notion of sustainable development in education first came to the fore in the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

The principles and action principles of sustainable leadership facilitate collaboration rather than competition, and striking a balance between the product and the process. They also help leaders to deal with contentious issues of succession, and to implement and manage longterm policies in their organisations. All these are important aspects of leadership in the second decade of the new millennium.

The theoretical perspectives of transformational leadership were introduced by Burns (1987) when he wrote a book titled *Leadership*. Bass (1985) followed on Burns' footsteps and wrote a text on transformational leadership, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*. Transformational leadership evolved from the notions of transactional leadership. Anderson

(2006) points out that 'transformational leadership is often contrasted with transactional leadership, which is primarily based on exchanges of rewards for compliance. Transactional leadership plays on the self-interest of the employees' (p. 21). Theories of transformational leadership are based on motivational theory for managing change. Transformational leadership aims to motivate individuals to satisfy higher order needs through actualisation (Burns, 1978). The concept fully engages them within the change process, which often involves cultural and organizational change. Therefore, the unpredictability and turbulence of the social, political and economic environment in the adult education sector requires leaders that have got traits of transformational leadership.

The theoretical perspectives of distributed leadership are still relatively new although some researchers argue that they have been there before disguised in concealing outfits. The argument is that what might have been missing all along was the development of theories and coining a name for the leadership approach. Timperley (2005) remarks that 'distributed leadership is a relatively new theoretical concept' (p. 418) and 'it is only since the mid-1990s that the idea of *distributed leadership* has been the focus of serious consideration in the research literature' (p. 396). On the other hand, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) state that 'the basic idea of distributed leadership has, in different guises, been a central part of organisational theory and the field of educational administration since the 1960s' (p. 97).

Spillane (2005) comments:

Distributed leadership has garnered considerable attention in the United States and abroad. It is often used interchangeably with "shared leadership," "team leadership," and "democratic leadership." Some use distributed leadership to indicate that school leadership involves multiple leaders; others argue that leadership is an organizational quality, rather than an individual attribute (pp. 143 – 144).

There are two major reasons why distributed leadership approaches have received overwhelming support at the expense of the 'heroic leader' genre (Hargreaves, 2005; Spillane, 2005). The first reason is that equating leadership, for instance, only with the principal or headmistress/headmaster seems to lack logic because no leader runs an educational institution entirely on her/his own. In reality, leadership is distributed among multiples of formal and informal leaders.

The second reason is that it is argued advocates of the 'heroic leader' genre ignore leader practice. They concentrate on the structures, routines, functions and roles, that is, the 'what' of leadership. In contrast, proponents of distributed leadership pay more attention to establish how structures, routines, functions and roles are performed, in other words, the 'how' of leadership. This researcher

believes the 'how' of leadership is more appropriate as a unit of analysis rather than the 'what' of leadership. As a result, this study will have an emphasis and focus on the 'how' of leadership.

This section discussed the rationale and scope of the study. The section that follows examines the conceptual framework of the study.

1.3 The conceptual framework

The conceptual framework that informs this study is the Competing Values Framework (CVF). The CVF concept of organisational culture emerged in the early 1980s after organisational researchers identified a positive correlation between cultural change and effectiveness. In other words, where strategies were implemented without a change in organisational culture the strategies were not successful or effective.

Belasen and Frank (2010) assert that 'more recently the CVF has received renewed attention from leadership, organisation, and management development scholars' (p. 282). The renewed attention seems partly necessitated by the wide appropriateness of the CVF as a diagnostic and developmental tool. This is especially the case when there are cultural variables in associations between leadership roles and development of managers. It is also the case because of its applicability in human resource development and management, and adaptability when leaders switch among different roles in accordance with the demands of the organisational environment.

An organisation may find itself with a complexity of choices when dealing with its internal and external environment. A good example of a complexity of choices when responding to competing tensions is that in response to the internal environment the leadership uses the mentor and facilitator roles to achieve objectives of human relations. It can also use the coordinator and monitor roles to coordinate internal processes. However, when responding to external environment, the leadership uses innovator and broker roles when dealing with open systems. It can also employ the director and producer roles when the organisation wants to achieve rational goals. According to Belbin® North America (2015) a coordinator is someone who is 'mature, confident and a good team leader, clarifies goals, promotes decision-making and delegates well, while a monitor is 'sober, strategic, discerning, sees and evaluates options and judges accurately'. A mentor is a counsellor or an experienced person that guides a protégé (Adeyemi (2011; Bell and Treleaven, 2011; Bolt 2000; Fajana and Gbajumo-Sheriff, 2011; Herrera *et al.*, 2011; Ilesanmi, 2011; Ojedokun, 2011). A facilitator enables and empowers a group to arrive at a decision without imposing her/his decisions (Prendiville, 1995).

Another example of complexity of choices is when leadership and management have to adopt transformational roles (mentor, facilitator, innovator and broker) and exercise a certain degree of

flexibility when dealing with human relations and open systems. On the other hand, it assumes transactional roles (monitor, co-ordinator, director and producer) and employs rigidity and control when dealing with internal processes and rational goals. An innovator explores new ways of doing things and a broker uses transactional approaches during negotiations. A director provides clear direction, clarifies priorities, communicates the vision plans and a producer prioritises and emphasizes speed, hard work ethic, motivates people and initiates action (Zaft *et al.*, 2009).

Leadership and management exercise a degree of flexibility when exercising the facilitator, mentor, innovator and broker roles when dealing with human relations and open systems. On the other hand, the leadership and management display characteristics of rigidity and control when exercising the monitor, coordinator, director and producer roles when dealing internal processes and rational goals. Therefore, there is a need to strike a balance between the complexities of choices when responding to competing tensions.

Table 1.1 summarises what has been discussed above, the existence of complexities of choices when responding to competing frames/tensions in CVF. The table displays leadership quadrants/profiles, and the associated role descriptions.

Quadrant	Leadership Role
<i>Relating To People (RP)</i>	<u>Mentor</u> : Acknowledges personal needs, develops people, caring and empathetic.
	<u>Facilitator</u> : Acknowledge personal needs, develops people, practices participation and teambuilding, focuses on consensus building, manages conflict and encourages participative decision-making.
<i>Leading Change (LC)</i>	<u>Innovator</u> : Inspires, anticipates customers needs, initiates significant changes, new ideas, experiments, problem solves and is adaptable.
	<u>Broker</u> : Same functions as innovator including, sells ideas, Influences decisions at higher levels, acquires needed Resources and is strong negotiator.
<i>Managing Processes (MP)</i>	<u>Monitor</u> : Clarifies policies, expects accurate work, controls project, monitors progress, develops measure and checkpoint.
	<u>Coordinator</u> : Same functions as the monitor including brings order, plans schedules, provides stability, control and continuity.
<i>Producing Results (PR)</i>	<u>Producer</u> : Focuses on outside competition, emphasizes speed, hard work ethic, motivates people and initiates action.
	<u>Director</u> : Same functions as producer including providing clear direction, clarifies priorities, communicates the vision plans and prioritises.

Table 1.1: Leadership quadrants and role descriptions

Adapted from: Zaft *et al.* (2009, p. 275)

Leaders and managers that use effective approaches switch into appropriate roles in order communicate various tasks and goals to their peers and subordinates. They choose the most effective approach to communicate a specific message, task or goal. Belasen and Frank (2010) state

that 'understanding the shift across managerial levels could help reduce tension and the potential for communication breakdown across hierarchical levels' (p. 282). Tensions and communication breakdown often occur when members of an organisation view themselves as disconnected units that identify more with different sections or departments of an organisation rather than identifying themselves with the whole organisation. Individuals who are aware and knowledgeable about the existence of complexities of choices when responding to competing tensions or frames are able to use that knowledge to develop themselves individually, as team members, leaders or managers.

This researcher chose to use the CVF in researching educational leadership on the basis of its strengths. One of the strengths is that it is considered to be 'a critically important strategy in an organisation's repertoire for changing culture and improving performance' (Cameron and Quinn, 2006, p. 20). Other strengths that have already been cited in preceding paragraphs include its appropriateness as a diagnostic and developmental tool, and its applicability when there are cultural variables in associations between leadership roles and development of managers. The other strengths of CVF also include its applicability in human resource development and management, and adaptability when leaders switch among different roles in accordance with the demands of the organisational environment.

This section examined the conceptual framework of the study. The section that follows discusses the primary and secondary research questions.

1.4 The research questions

The following are the primary and the secondary research questions that were asked as a way of effectively and successfully investigating coaching, mentoring and training for sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership. The primary research question asked was: *How and in what ways does the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) of an Education Training Board (ETB) in Ireland transfer sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership skills to teachers/tutors in order to improve service delivery to adult learners?*

This researcher is of the opinion that this question will effectively and meaningfully facilitate the investigation to find out how the Adult Education Centre transfers leadership skills to its teachers in order to improve service delivery to adult learners.

Three of the ways in which organisations transfer leadership skills are coaching, mentoring and training and the choices are usually determined by a number of internal and external factors including availability of resources.

The secondary research questions were as follows:

1. How is sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership in the field of adult education defined by policy-makers, the VTOS Coordinator, adult educators and learners?
2. What are the benefits and challenges that the policy-makers and adult educators encounter in their quest to transfer sustainable, transformational or distributed leadership skills?
3. What do students say about the quality of support that they receive from the Administrator, Coordinator, teachers/tutors and peers?
4. How and in what ways do teachers/tutors transfer leadership skills to adult learners?
5. Do teachers/tutors think leadership skills were embedded in the curriculum of course(s) that they did when they trained as educators?
6. How important do adult learners think the skills of numeracy, reading, writing and interpersonal skills are to their personal lives?
7. Do adult learners think the VTOS courses that they are doing are helping them to achieve their objectives?

This section discussed the primary and secondary research questions. The section that follows examines the demarcation of the study.

1.5 Demarcation of the study

As stated in Section 1.1 of this chapter, the study is based in the expanding and growing field of leadership using Competing Values Framework theories in Section 1.2 and comprehensively presented in Chapter 2. The study uses methodological approaches from the humanities and social sciences that are explained in detail in Chapters 3 and 5.

The study will follow an exploratory embedded case study approach and is, therefore, limited to one selected organisation in the adult education sector that offers VTOS courses and is located in Ireland. The study will include in-depth focus group and one-to-one interviews with a sample of 23 students, three teachers and a Co-ordinator. The selected Irish organisation that offers adult education and training will in this study be referred to as the 'Adult Education Centre'. With regard to the research design and methodology, the study will be limited to primary and secondary source analyses and triangulation of theories and data, as stated in Chapter 3. The second stage of the research process will follow a qualitative methods approach, focusing on content analysis and the description of 'thick data', which are evaluated through in-depth data analyses, as shown in Chapter 4 and 5.

The focus of this research will be on investigating how the three key stakeholders, that is, students, teachers and the Co-ordinator experience leadership. Key themes will emerge from research

participants' narratives on perception and experience of leadership, tensions that arise, proposed improvements and positive interventions.

This study will not provide data that can be generalised for organisations offering VTOS courses in Ireland, but the results will provide insights and a deeper understanding of the exemplified leadership in the described and presented setting.

Finally, it is intended that the research results can be used to create tools for in the selected organisation, which could possibly also be emulated by other organisations in the Irish adult education sector.

This section examined the demarcation of the study. The section that follows discusses the overview of the chapters.

1.6 Overview of chapters

The layout of the write-up adopts a linear approach starting with the introduction, literature review, and data collection and presentation of findings, analysis and discussion including conclusions and recommendations. Chapter 1 includes the conception and background, rationale and scope, the conceptual framework, the research questions and the demarcation of the study.

Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature by exploring and examining theories, policy and practice in adult education and training; the conceptual framework of the study; evolutionary theories of leadership and their characteristics; and theories and practice in sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership. The chapter also reviews literature on conceptual analysis of power, ethnicity and gender in leadership. Lastly, the chapter reviews literature written on how critical theory can be used in unmasking power, and the Freirean philosophy and methodology.

Chapter 3 primarily addresses the methodological assumptions that form the philosophical foundations of the research design. The chapter does that by discussing the paradigm, stance and approach, research topic and purposes of the research study and the research design. In addition, the chapter addresses ethical considerations, quality, and qualitative procedures, challenges that were encountered in trying to access the site of research and how the final breakthrough was achieved. Chapter 3 also discusses the data analysis, the general inductive analysis, content analysis, data collection and presentation of data. This researcher plays a key role in conducting this study and clearly states his philosophical and theoretical positions in this chapter.

Chapter 4 deals with presentation of findings based on primary and secondary data collected during the fieldwork phase of the research process. The chapter does that by presenting findings from questionnaires filled out by students and teachers. It also does that by presenting findings based on

focus group interviews with students and one-to-one interviews with teachers and the VTOS Co-ordinator. Secondary data collection includes a review of a wide range of key Irish policy documents written about Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS).

Chapter 5 analyses and discusses findings based on data collection and presentation of findings. The chapter does that by discussing the core concepts/themes that emerged during data analysis. This research assigned them names the Real Self, Transforming Self and Ideal Self. The emergent core concepts and subsequent assignment of names matched the research participants' narratives during focus group and one-to-one interviews. The Real Self, Transforming Self and Ideal Self is premised on Goleman *et al.*'s (2002) theory, which dictates that the key to leadership development is self-directed learning that aims to build up on/from who/where you are or who/where you want to be, or both. The trajectory starts with having a strong vision of the ideal self as well as a precise reflection of the real self or who you are. Moving from the real self to the ideal self requires self-directed learning and understanding stages that are involved in achieving transformation. The chapter also evaluates whether the study has answered the primary and secondary research questions.

Chapter 6 addresses the summary, conclusion, limitations and recommendations of the study.

This chapter discussed the conception and background, the reasons why the study is imperative, rationale and scope, the conceptual framework, the research questions, the demarcation of the study and the overview of chapters. The next chapter addresses the literature review.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter addresses theories, policy and practice in adult education and training. It then examines the conceptual framework that informs the research study. The chapter also defines leadership and different approaches of leadership. It looks at how theories of leadership have evolved since the 1920s. Lastly, the chapter examines theories and practice in sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership. The section that follows examines theories, policy and practice in adult education and training initiatives.

The use and understanding of the meanings of the terms ‘adult learning’ and ‘adult education’ is sometimes confusing. Powell *et al.* (2003) point out that ‘generally, ‘adult learning’ is an inclusive term that refers to all types of learning activities for adults including formal, nonformal and informal, and ‘adult education’ is used to describe more formal types’ (p. 2). Knowles and Shepherd (2005) define education as ‘an activity undertaken or initiated by one or more agents that is designed to effect changes in the knowledge, skill, and attitudes of individuals, groups, or communities’ (p. 10). On the one hand, the term education puts an emphasis on the educator rather than the learner. On the other hand, the term learning emphasises the learner rather than the educator.

Sustainable leadership in educational administration emerged in 2005. The term ‘sustainability’ associated with ecology and conservation of natural resources (Thomas, 2008). Transformational leadership evolved from the notions of transactional leadership and the latter ‘is primarily based on exchanges of rewards for compliance. Transactional leadership plays on the self-interest of the employees’ (Anderson, 2006, p. 21). Theories of transformational leadership are based on motivational theory for managing change (Burns, 1978). The theoretical concepts of distributed leadership are relatively new and started to be given serious consideration in the mid-1990s (Timperley, 2005). However, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) state that the basic idea of distributed leadership in the field of educational administration has been in existence in various pretexts since the 1960s. This researcher considered to investigate the three approaches because many leaders switch between leadership approaches depending on the needs of the situation that they would be dealing with. The section that follows explores theories, policy and practice in adult education and training.

2.1 Theories, policy and practice in adult education and training

Adult education and training in Ireland falls under the jurisdiction of the Education and

Training Boards (ETBs), which were established under and are governed according to the Education and Training Boards Act 2013. Before the establishment of Education and Training Boards on the 1st of July 2013, adult education and training in Ireland was overseen by Vocational Education Committees (VECs).

There were 33 VECs, which were replaced by 16 ETBs. The Department of Education and Skills (2013) states:

On the 1st July 2013, the 33 Vocational Education Committees (VECs) were dissolved and replaced by 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). The ETBs are established under and governed according to the Education and Training Boards Act 2013. Each ETB is a statutory body with its own corporate status.

The Department of Education and Science (2000) defines adult education as ‘systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training’ (p. 27). It includes re-entry by adults to further education, which includes education and training which occurs between second and third level.

Furthermore, adult education includes higher education or participation in continuing education and training that is professional and/or vocational. It also encompasses community education and other systematic and deliberate learning (p. 27 – 28). The focus of this study was generally on the re-entry of adults to further education including ‘second-chance education such as the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme for the unemployed’ (DES, 2000, pp. 27 – 28). The VECs and ETBs have been the major providers of further education and ‘often work in partnership with the voluntary sector’ (City of Cork VEC, 2006, p. 9). Some of the City of Cork VEC’s (2006) 2006 – 2010 Education Plan’s Operational Objectives are to:

- Ensure that learners know the goal(s) that they wish to achieve, develop their selfmanagement skills towards attaining them and ensure that the outcomes of their endeavours are recorded and affirmed (p. 60)
- Ensure that learners, staff and members of the Committee and its Board have dialogue paths open for them in relation to their roles, their learning, their work and the work of the organisation (p. 61)
- Provide clear leadership in the provision of services and in their governance and management in accordance with the Committee’s Mission and Guiding Principles (p. 62)
- Ensure that services are learner focussed and, to support that focus, develop a learner’s Charter (p. 62)

- Ensure that there is capacity to be accountable within the structures and systems of the organisation (p. 63).

This researcher's opinion is that it is pertinent to have teaching and administration staff trained in leadership in order to achieve the above-mentioned operational objectives. The subsection that follows discusses VTOS programmes.

2.1.1 The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme programme offers full-time courses in general education and job skills. The Department of Social Protection (2010) states that VTOS 'is funded by the Department of Education and Science with the assistance of the European Social Fund'. The VTOS programme was set up by the government in 1989 as an administrative scheme not covered by legislation. There are no prerequisite educational entry requirements and students do not pay course and tuition fees. In addition to not paying course and tuition fees, students are offered free resources that they might need to successfully complete the programme. The schemes mainly target those who have a low level of education and/or those who have been out of employment for a long time. Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (2014) state:

The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme is a full-time general education and work related training programme for adults. The aim of the scheme is to provide unemployed adults with an opportunity to gain skills, confidence and certification which will enable them to enter/re-enter the work force, or progress to further education.

Prospective candidates for a VTOS course must be 21 years or more and would not have been in paid employment for a minimum of six months. The Citizens Information Board (2013) asserts that prospective students must be:

... over 21 years of age, unemployed and have been getting certain social welfare payments for at least 6 months you can apply for the Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme (VTOS). The VTOS scheme provides a range of courses to meet the education and training needs of unemployed people. It gives participants opportunities to improve their general level of education, gain certification, develop their skills and prepare for employment, self-employment and further education and training. VTOS is operated through local Education and Training Boards and is aimed in particular at unemployed people who are early school-leavers.

This restriction is discriminatory against those below 21 years and those who are less than 6 months unemployed. The majority of service providers of the VTOS programme do not state the age limit of prospective students for their courses, however, the Co. Wexford Vocational

Educational Committee website states 'VTOS set up in Bellefield Enniscorthy...is a further education course especially for adults between the ages of 21 and 60. It is especially suited for people who have had a negative experience of education through no fault of their own'. There is a wide range of social welfare payments that are considered as qualification for enrolling on to do VTOS courses. According to Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (2014), these are:

- Jobseeker's Benefit
- One-Parent Family Allowance
- Invalidity Pension
- Disability Allowance
- Disability Benefit
- Illness Benefit

Although Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (2014) does not include Jobseeker's Allowance in the aforementioned list, the Citizens Information Board (2013) indicates that it is also a qualifying social welfare payment. In fact, the majority of people who are in receipt of social welfare payment are in the Jobseeker's Allowance category (Central Statistics Office, 2013, p. 5). The other categories that qualify to apply for VTOS courses, as long as they meet the low level educational achievement and the age criteria are those in receipt of the following payments:

- Blind Person's Pension
- Deserted Wife's Allowance
- Deserted Wife's Benefit
- Widow's/Widower's non-contributory pension
- Prisoner's Wife's Allowance

Other people who qualify include persons recently made redundant but and not in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment. Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (2014) point out that 'this applies solely to persons in receipt of, or awaiting payment of agreed statutory redundancy, who are over 21 years of age and available for a full-time course'. The Citizens Information Board (2013) says that 'a dependent spouse, civil partner or cohabitant of an eligible person' may qualify. [...] the eligible person refers to the person who would, for example, be signing for credits'. The Citizens Information Board (2013) also indicates that 'periods spent on FÁS training courses, Community Employment Schemes, Job Initiative, Youthreach programmes and time in

prison can count towards the qualifying period'. According to the Department of Social Protection (2010) VTOS also offers "Taster" courses that are:

...designed to teach study skills and personal development to persons who are considering a return to full-time education. Participation on the course consists of a few hours per day for a maximum duration of 12 weeks. Persons do not receive a VTOS personal allowance, although they receive an allowance to cover travel and lunch expenses [...] Participants on "taster" courses retain eligibility for Jobseeker's Allowance/Benefit, One-Parent Family Payment or Disability Allowance, as appropriate. Participants are deemed to be available for work and the travel and lunch allowance is not assessable for Jobseeker's Allowance purposes.

VTOS courses are offered over a period of two years (Department of Social Protection, 2010, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, 2014, Citizens Information Board, 2013). However, some of the courses that are offered by VTOS are also offered by colleges of further education over a one-year period. According to the Department of Social Protection (2010), 'the courses are full-time, approximately 30 hours per week (e.g. 6 hours a day for 5 days) and last up to 2 years'. The viability of the programme partially depends on a high student retention rate. Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (2014) states:

If you are in receipt of a social welfare payment you will continue to receive that payment whilst on the course. A top up payment is available to the U25's. A copy of a long ...long birth certificate will be required for that purpose. Travel allowance is also payable for people who live more than 3 miles from the centre and a meal allowance is payable to all learners.

The prioritisation of the under-25s by paying an incentive of a top up payment is a follow-up the Momentum programme that was implemented in 2013. The Irish Government News Service (2013) states that:

...in a further measure to support young adults a minimum of 2,000 training places will be ring-fenced for under-25s at a cost of €6 million as part of a €46 million Youth Guarantee being implemented across Government Departments. These places will be provided under a follow-up to the successful Momentum programme that operated in 2013.

The Momentum programme generally targeted people that were in long-term unemployment (one year or more) and in particular targeted young adults or under-25s. Conlon (2013) asserts:

People who have been unemployed for a long time (> 1 year) are the clients for Momentum. People under 25 years of age form a particular cohort within this target. That

is because young people, in particular, are very susceptible to the damaging, scarring effects of unemployment.

Education and training providers from public, private, and voluntary and community sectors pooled resources and offered places in areas that were identified after making consultations with potential employers in specific industries.

The Department for Children and Youth Affairs offers support for childcare to encourage enrolment of those with children (The Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, 2014). The Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (2014) specifically states that 'subvention is given for each full-time, part-time and half-time childcare place per week, for 43 weeks per annum' (p. 4). These incentives given to students are important in encouraging enrolment and preventing programme drop outs.

Asylum seekers are not permitted to enrol in VTOS programmes, and further education and third level education programmes. However asylum seekers with the right to work are eligible to enrol for language and literacy courses, in VTOS programmes. The Department of Education and Skills (2001) states:

Asylum Seekers with a right to work, i.e. those who entered the country before 26 July 1999, who have been waiting at least a year for a determination on their case and are in possession of the notification of their right to work from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, are entitled to join VTOS. They must also be at least 21 years of age, and have been unemployed for at least six months (time spent on supplementary welfare or in direct provision can count for this), and have been in receipt of the relevant payment immediately before joining the programme.

The number of asylum seekers eligible to work on the grounds that they entered the country before 26 July 1999 are likely to be minute and/or approaching zero. The Citizens Information Board (2013) states that:

A person who has been refused a declaration as a refugee and who is not eligible for subsidiary protection, may be granted leave to remain in the State. A person may also withdraw from the asylum process and seek leave to remain in the State. Leave to remain is granted at the discretion of the Minister for Justice and Equality, usually on humanitarian grounds.

It follows that the majority of asylum seekers who sought refugee status before 26 July 1999 have been granted leave-to-remain, naturalised as Irish citizenship or been deported.

This subsection discussed the VTOS programme. The subsection below examines qualifications for teachers serving in the VTOS programme.

2.1.2 Qualifications for teachers serving in the VTOS programme

In order to teach on the VTOS programme, Memo V7 or 32/92 directs that one must be a fully qualified teacher. In addition, the VTOS Co-ordinator explained that historically there have been some teachers who have taught at the Centre and who did not meet that criterion.

Circular letter 45/02 regarding ‘Pay and Conditions for Community Education Facilitators’ elaborates on the qualifications stating:

...a third level qualification of at least National Certificate standard in the field of education or training, youth work, community development or social science, or a teaching qualification as specified under Memo V7 and/or Circular 32/92. Where the area includes a Gaeltacht, it will also be necessary that the Selection Board be satisfied as to the appointee’s competency in the Irish language [...] For candidates with proven employment experience of at least 5 years in adult education or training, adult literacy, youth work or community development, suitable candidates may be appointed subject to gaining the required qualification within 5 years of the date of appointment.

Circular letter 45/02 advises that ‘future entry requirements will be reviewed in the light of the outcome of a review of qualifications in the field of adult education and training which is proposed in the White Paper on Adult Education: Learning for Life’.

In 2009, the Teaching Council reviewed and published new regulations and requirements for VTOS teaching staff and those who teach in areas that lead to equivalent FETAC qualifications. The new regulations were captured in a document commonly known as *Regulation Five*. The Teaching Council used powers conferred to it by Section 31 of the Teaching Council Acts, 2001 to 2006. *Regulation Five* states:

- a) This regulation will apply to persons who apply to be entered on the register as teachers of courses or programmes leading to FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council) awards (or equivalent recognised accreditation) on the National Framework of Qualifications in recognised schools.
- b) A person who applies to be entered on the register as a teacher of post-primary curricular subjects up to Leaving Certificate examination level shall not be registered under this regulation but will be considered in accordance with Regulation 4.

c) This regulation will not apply to persons instructing or tutoring in:

- (i) Adult literacy or numeracy courses unless leading to accreditation per a) above;
- (ii) Courses of a pastime or hobby nature unless leading to accreditation per a) above;
- (iii) Self funding courses where the tutor or instructor is not being paid from State funds.

A person who wishes to teach in any of the above areas shall satisfy the Teaching Council that s/he has any of the following qualifications:

a) For those making applications prior to and including 01 April 2013, a primary degree or equivalent carrying at least 180 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits, such as may be recognised by the Teaching Council as suitable for the purpose of registration as a teacher under this regulation in accordance with the provisions set out hereunder:

b) For those making applications after 01 April 2013, a primary degree or equivalent (not less than level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications) carrying at least 180 ECTS credits, such as may be recognised by the Teaching Council as suitable for the purpose of registration as a teacher under this regulation in accordance with the provisions set out hereunder:

- (i) The degree must be obtained following a course of at least three years full time study (or its equivalent); and,
- (ii) meets such other requirements as the Teaching Council may publish from time to time.

For those making application after 01 April 2013, a Council approved qualification in post-primary (First Year to Sixth Year) or further education teacher education.

OR

c) An ordinary degree or equivalent (not less than level 7 on the National Qualifications Framework) carrying at least 180 ECTS credits; and,

(i) an appropriate additional qualification; or,

certified accreditation of prior learning based on a minimum of three years experience in a workplace or instructional setting which is relevant to the candidate's qualifications such as may be recognised by the Teaching Council as suitable for the

purpose of registration as a teacher under this regulation which meets such requirements as the Teaching Council may publish from time to time;

AND

For those making application after 01 April 2013, a Council approved teacher education qualification in Further Education.

OR

d) Until 01 April 2013, an Advanced (National Craft) Certificate at not less than Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications as determined by FETAC together with relevant approved experience in a workplace supervisory role such as may be recognised by the Teaching Council as suitable for the purpose of registration as a teacher under this regulation in accordance with the provisions set out hereunder:(i)

The Advanced

(National Craft) Certificate must be in a craft listed as an approved apprenticeship by FÁS or its equivalent;

(ii) The workplace supervisory role must be of at least a five year duration;

(iii) Such other requirements as the Teaching Council may publish from time to time.

OR

e) Any person who has achieved the qualifications previously recognised in accordance with Department of Education and Science circulars as long as the qualification was obtained (or at least the applicant had commenced the course leading to the qualification) prior to the passing of these Regulations.

Regulation Five of the Teaching Council [Registration] Regulations 2009 refer to FETAC qualifications teaching staff as ‘teacher’ and neither as ‘tutor’ nor ‘community education facilitator’. Therefore, the FETAC tutors must have the same qualifications and officially are referred to as teachers. It is just a matter of semantics that teaching staff are referred to as ‘teachers’ or ‘tutors’ and that has no significance.

Resource allocation to wholetime volunteers, temporary part-time and permanent teachers in VTOS programmes has constraints that negatively affect the number of teaching and supervising hours by individual teachers. Circular Letter Number 0036/2007 and subsections

3.1 and 3.2 outline this saying:

Permanent, temporary and part-time teachers employed in the VTOS Centres may volunteer at the commencement of the academic year for supervision and substitution duties over the course of the year.

Wholetime volunteers will be required to contract to deliver a minimum of 16 hours supervision and substitution over the course of the year. Part-time and job-sharing teachers who volunteer will be required to deliver supervision and substitution on a pro-rata basis. This will cover both the supervision and substitution requirements of the centre as determined by the centre management following a consultation process. In the event that the full allocation of hours available to the centre is not exhausted by the volunteers on the basis of the minimum commitments, the additional hours may be distributed among the volunteers, or any number thereof, on a pro-rata basis or as agreed locally, subject to a maximum allocation of 49 hours per annum, in the case of whole time teachers, not being exceeded. In addition to the maximum allocation of 49 hours per annum, a part-time teacher may commit to the difference between the annual contracted part-time teaching hours with the VEC and 735 hours.

VTOS Co-ordinators are either teaching or nonteaching depending on the students enrolled. Circular Letter 45/99 outlines the maximum teaching hours required from a Co-ordinator and these are tabulated below:

No of students	Teaching Hours per week
<20	18 hours
20-39	15 hours
40-59	10 hours
60-79	5 hours

Co-ordinators with responsibility for 80 students or more may be employed on full-time coordination duties. The reduction in teaching hours may increase or decrease annually depending on the level of enrolments in the preceding year.

No of students	Teaching hours per week
80-119	Full-time co-ordinator only
120-159	Full-time Co-ordinator + Asst Co-ordinator with 15 teaching hours
160+	Full-time co-ordinator + Asst Co-ordinator with 10 teaching hours

This subsection examined qualifications for teachers serving in the VTOS programme. The subsection that follows explores the national policy on lifelong learning.

2.1.3 National policy on literacy and lifelong learning

As stated in Chapter 1, the government responded to the IALS report by prioritising adult literacy (Department of Education and Science, 1997, 1998 and 2000; DES, 2010; Hargreaves, 2003; Kirsch, 2001; NALA, 2007; The Teaching Council, 2014) in the national policy framework and by putting it at the top of the agenda for national planning. This subsequently led in 2000 to the publication of a working paper, 'Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education', by the then Department of Education and Science. The Department of Education and Science (2000) White Paper on Adult Education is the policy document that is being used to implement adult education initiatives.

Through lifelong learning, the Irish society envisages producing a well-educated, trained and highly skilled labour force that would meet the demands of a modern, learned and competitive economy (Department of Education and Science, 2000, p. 127). Lifelong learning initiatives give the workforce a chance to up-skill and re-skill at any stage in life (p. 126). Figeľ (2008) state:

The EU has brought together its various educational training initiatives under a single umbrella, the *Lifelong Learning Programme*. With an ambitious budget of nearly €7 billion, the new programme (2007 – 2013) is made up of four sectoral programmes – *Comenius* (schools), *Erasmus* (higher education), *Leonardo da Vinci* (vocational training) and *Grundtvig* (adult education) – as well as a transversal programme which focuses on policy cooperation, languages, information and communication technology (ICT), and the *Jean Monnet Programme* to stimulate teaching, reflection and debate on the European integration process at higher educational institutions world-wide (p. 23).

Professors, professionals, teachers, pupils, students, adult learners and trainees are offered opportunities to move across national borders to share their experiences through the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP).

The increase in the provision of adult education dates back to the advent of the industrial revolution, but lifelong learning perspectives are a relatively new concept. According to Powell *et al.* (2003), 'while adult education has deep historical roots, the necessity for an individual to continue learning throughout life is a more recent development. In the early 1970s, the notion of lifelong learning became clear and universally formalised through OECD and UNESCO papers' (p. 3).

Table 2.1 shows key milestones in the evolution of the European area of lifelong learning.

Year	Key milestones	Key publications that distinguished the milestones & their characteristics
1995	Towards the learning society	The European Commission's White Paper on education and training: Teaching and learning – Towards a learning society. The publication promoted the development of lifelong learning.

1996	The European Year of Lifelong Learning	The idea for a European Year on lifelong learning was launched in the European Commission's White Paper on 'Growth, Competitiveness and Employment'. The objective was to create awareness and public debate on how education and training systems needed to adapt to meet the challenges of the 21 st century. <i>Council Conclusions on a strategy for lifelong learning, 20.12.1996 (97/C7/02)</i>
1999	The Bologna Declaration	Education ministers from 30 European countries agreed in a joint declaration to establish a European area of higher education by 2010. The aim of the process is to make the higher education systems in Europe converge towards a more transparent system by adopting a common framework based on three cycles: Bachelor, Master and Doctorate degrees. Follow-up meetings Prague 2001, Berlin 2003, Bergen 2005 and London 2007.
2000	Lisbon European Council	The EU set the <i>strategic goal for 2010: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion</i> . The Council concluded that education and training systems

		needed to adapt to the demands of the knowledge society and offer learning and training opportunities tailored to target groups at different stages of their lives.
2000	Feira European Council	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council concluded that lifelong learning was essential for the development of citizenship, social cohesion and employment and that a concerted effort should be made to identify coherent strategies and practical measures to foster access to lifelong learning. 2. The European Social Fund (ESF) earmarked €12 billion for the period (2000 – 2006). 3. Lifelong learning is the guiding principle underpinning the Community Action Programmes: Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth (2000 – 2006). 4. A communication issued from the European Commission: A Memorandum on lifelong learning. This formed the basis for a European-wide consultation process on lifelong learning.
2001	1. European Employment Strategy 2. Report on the future objectives of education and training systems 3. Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality 4. Indicators on lifelong learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A horizontal objective on lifelong learning was introduced into the employment strategy and labour market aspects of lifelong learning. 2. Ministers of Education adopted the report and agreed on a range of shared objectives to be achieved by 2010 to ensure their contribution to the Lisbon strategy. 3. This Communication from the Commission identified coherent strategies and practical measures with a view to fostering lifelong learning for all. The Communication was based on the results of the consultation on the Memorandum on Lifelong learning. 4. The Commission established a working committee to develop new indicators on lifelong learning in order to increase comparability between systems and thus facilitate the exchange of ideas and good practice. The Task Force on Measuring Lifelong Learning produced this report.

2002	<p>1. European Employment Strategy</p> <p>2. Social Partners Framework of actions</p> <p>3. The 6th Research Framework Programme</p> <p>4. Ten-year work programme</p> <p>5. Council Resolution on lifelong learning</p> <p>6. Copenhagen Declaration and the Council Resolution on the promotion of enhanced co-operation in VET</p> <p>7. Five Benchmarks for Education and Training</p>	<p>1. A guide for lifelong learning was included for Member States' employment strategies. Member States were requested to implement coherent and comprehensive strategies, set targets, and improve the quality and efficiency of education and training systems, and public and private investment.</p> <p>2. The centre EU-level social partners agreed a 'framework of actions' for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications (EU0204210F).</p> <p>3. Provided new opportunities to reinforce research in the area of lifelong learning.</p> <p>4. The Education Council and the Commission endorsed the work programme on the follow up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe, which was to be implemented through the open method of coordination. The work programme constituted the new and coherent Community strategic framework of cooperation in the fields of education and training.</p> <p>5. The Resolution supported the implementation of the Commission's 2001 Communication on lifelong learning.</p> <p>6. The Declaration and Resolution aimed to create a shared vision of how Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Europe needed to be adapted and improved, if the EU goals were to be achieved.</p> <p>7. In its Communication, the European Commission proposed 5 European benchmarks for education and training systems in Europe. Lifelong</p>
		<p>learning systems was re-affirmed as the over-arching objective for all actions in the field of education and training and one of the benchmarks set was that by 2010, <i>the EU-average level of population in lifelong learning should be at least 15% of the audit working age population (25 – 64 age group).</i></p>
2003	<p>1. R3L Initiative (April)</p> <p>2. Berlin</p>	<p>1. An initiative to support linkages between 120 learning regions to promote lifelong learning.</p> <p>2. The biennial meeting of European Ministers to progress the Bologna process</p>
2004	<p>1. Joint Interim report – Education and Training 2010</p> <p>2. The new Integrated Action Programme in the field of lifelong learning</p> <p>3. Maastricht Communiqué</p>	<p>1. The Education Council and the Commission presented the interim report of the <i>work programme on the follow-up of the objective of Education and Training systems in Europe</i> to the 2004 Spring European Council.</p> <p>2. The Commission adopted the proposal for the new programme (2007 – 2013), which aims to foster interaction, co-operation and mobility between education and training with the Community, so that they become a world quality reference.</p> <p>3. The Maastricht Communiqué updates the Copenhagen declaration, reports on progress made since November 2002, and sets new priorities and strategies for coming years.</p>

2005	<p>1. Bergen</p> <p>2. Commission's consultation on the European Qualifications Framework</p> <p>3. Joint progress report – Education and Training 2010</p> <p>4. Recommendations on key competences for lifelong learning - 2005</p>	<p>1. The biennial meeting of European Ministers to progress the Bologna process.</p> <p>2. The 6-month EU consultation was launched in July. The objective of the planned EQF is to create a European framework, which will enable qualifications systems at national and sectoral levels to relate to each other. This reference structure will be used on a voluntary basis and will facilitate the transfer and recognition of qualifications held by individual citizens.</p> <p>3. The Commission proposes the 2006 Joint Council/Commission progress report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme: <i>'Modernising education and training: A vital contribution to prosperity and social cohesion in Europe'</i>.</p> <p>4. To support the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme.</p>
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Table 2.1: key milestones in the evolution of the European area of lifelong learning

Adapted from Walters (2008, pp. 1 – 5)

Theoretical perspectives and practical implementation adult education policies still differ from country to country and from region to region (OECD, 2003; cited in Powell *et al.*, 2003,

p. 27). NALA (2007) states that 'adult literacy was the subject of a dedicated report from the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Science 'Report on adult literacy' (May 2006), and the issue remains a consistent feature of the national plans' (p. 4). ETBs' adult literacy and numeracy (Department of Education and Science, 1997, 1998 and 2000; DES, 2010; Hargreaves, 2003; Kirsch, 2001; NALA, 2007; The Teaching Council, 2014) services are

tailor-made to suit the needs and interests of individual learners. NALA (2007) points out that adult literacy approaches include 'one to one and group tuition, Family Literacy, Return to Education programmes for Community Employment participants, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), ITABE¹, and workplace education programme' (p. 5). In the past, literacy was narrowly defined to involve only reading and writing skills, but it is now thought to cover more than that (DES, 2010; Hargreaves, 2003). The Department of Education and Skills (DES) (2010) defines literacy as follows:

Literacy conventionally refers to reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening effectively in a range of contexts. In the 21st century, the definition of literacy has expanded to refer to a flexible, sustainable mastery of a set of capabilities in the use and production of traditional texts and new communications technologies using spoken language, print and multimedia (p. 9).

In addition, DES (2010) states that 'we now think of numeracy as not just an ability to use numbers but the wider ability to use mathematics to solve problems and meet the demands of day-to-day living in complex social settings' (p. 9). For this reason, numeracy is now featuring in literacy programmes more than before (DES, 2010; Hargreaves, 2003).

The national standards for initial assessment of potential participants and allocation of entry levels are not uniform because national policy dictates that individual Adult Literacy Organisers (ALOs) could use their discretion. Notwithstanding that, NALA (2007) point out that 'a common approach in terms of the ethos and principles underlying initial assessment as informal, adult friendly, and carried out by initial interview with the ALO' (p. 9). Initial assessment is partly influenced by the informed judgement of the ALO; the level of motivation of the learner and the reasons of availing for adult literacy and numeracy services; and level of literacy in terms of writing, reading, speaking, listening, numeracy, computer skills; among other things. Initial assessment also identifies what the students can do and would like to do; help in determining whether the student is suited to one-to-one tuition or group tuition, and student's availability and times of the day for attendance, entry level, and as much as possible needs and interests of the student (NALA, 2007, p. 9).

Adult literacy courses (Department of Education and Science, 1997, 1998 and 2000; DES, 2010; Hargreaves, 2003; Kirsch, 2001; NALA, 2007; The Teaching Council, 2014) are mainly assessed and accredited by the Further Education Training Awards Council (FETAC).

¹ ITABE is an acronym for Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education.

² OFSTED refers to the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

³ SLDI refers to Sisters' Leadership Development Initiative

⁴Chester Bernard (1968) point out that leadership was not limited to executive positions and might be carried out by any member of an organisation. James Thompson (1967) was among the first to argue that leadership doesn't

Participants are awarded certification ranging from FETAC Levels 1 to 3, and the specified level of indicators uses eight sub-strands to measure knowledge, skills and competences. The sub-strand on knowledge encompasses breadth and kind, on skills include range and selectivity, on competences comprise context, role, learning to learn and insight. According to NALA (2007), 'while accreditation is not a requirement of participation in adult literacy programmes, services should provide the option of appropriate accreditation to all students' (p. 15). However, accreditation is not compulsory; participants may choose to avail of accreditation or opt out. NALA (2007) also points out:

FETAC have developed processes for certification of learning that require providers to gain agreement for their quality assurance systems and validation approval for programmes. The quality assurance includes assessment policies and procedures, including the accreditation of prior or experiential learning or APEL...the validation process...requires providers to address assessment of learning on programmes submitted to FETAC (p. 11).

The Department of Education Skills (DES) ensures further accountability through compilation of annual adult literacy returns by the ETBs, in which activities are reported and provision of statistics on matters of 'participation, services and accreditation, as well as assessments of level' (NALA, 2007, p. 3). Keeping progress records of learners enrolled in adult literacy programmes initially involves the student, the tutor and an ALO. Accountability is further reinforced by the involvement of the Adult Education Officer and ETBs' reports to the DES (p. 11).

This subsection explored national policy on literacy and lifelong learning. The subsection below discusses complexities and tensions that exist in defining the terms 'adult learning' and 'adult education'.

2.1.4 Complexities and tensions in use of terms 'adult learning' and 'adult education'

The contextual use in literature of the terms 'adult learning' and 'adult education' is rather confusing. Powell *et al.* (2003) point out:

The terms 'adult learning' and 'adult education' are referred to regularly, but there appears to be no common application of the two terms. Generally, 'adult learning' is an inclusive term that refers to all types of learning activities for adults including formal, non-formal and informal, and 'adult education' is used to describe more formal types' (p. 2).

The above general definition lacks a common application of the terms ‘adult learning’ and ‘adult education’. It is also not broad and lacks flexibility, and is not significant to people in diverse education settings. Powell *et al.* (2003) propose a flexible and broad definition that captures the parameters of the adult education ‘concept in a way meaningful to people in very different settings’ (p. 39) and which could be applicable in all European countries.

The proposed definition should take into consideration that specific age requisites reduce the expediency of the definition and that instead of adulthood being characterised by age, any participant who takes part in post-compulsory education should be classified as an adult learner. Secondly, all types of learning that provide participants with additional knowledge should be incorporated under the scope of adult education. Lastly, all individuals, groups and organisations which offer learning to adults in all forms and settings should be encompassed under the definition of adult education (Powell *et al.*, 2003). Powell *et al.* (2003) propose the following working definition as a template for use across Europe:

- *Adult learning involves an organised process which enables a person to acquire new skills, competencies or attributes*
- *It is undertaken by any person who has completed compulsory basic education*
- *It includes all types of learning, such as learning with and without accreditation in formal, informal and non-formal modes*
- *It includes a variety of delivery modes, including tutor-directed, class-based and distance learning; it can be undertaken in a wide range of settings, from traditional classrooms and workshops to museums and libraries, churches, public halls, public houses and the home*
- *It can be delivered by a range of different providers including public, private and voluntary sectors (p. 39).*

The above working definition for adult education will be used for the purposes of this study. This researcher chose it because it has a common application of the terms ‘adult learning’ and ‘adult education’. It is also broad and flexible, and is significant to participants in diverse education settings.

The Report of the *Kenny Commission on Adult Education (1984)* points out that adult education ‘may be formal education which takes place in institutions, e.g., training centres, schools, colleges, institutes and universities’ (p. 9, cited in Department of Education and Science, 1998, p. 16). There are ongoing debates on what is the distinction between education and learning. Knowles and Shepherd (2005) point out that a discussion about what is learning ‘must be prefaced with an important and frequently made distinction – the one between education and learning’ (p. 10). Knowles and Shepherd (2005) define education as:

...an activity undertaken or initiated by one or more agents that is designed to effect changes in the knowledge, skill, and attitudes of individuals, groups, or communities. The term emphasizes the educator, the agent of change who presents stimuli and reinforcement for learning and designs activities to induce change (p. 10).

Knowles and Shepherd (2005) assert that 'the term *learning*, by contrast, emphasizes the person in whom the change occurs or is expected to occur' (p.10). During the learning process, new skills and knowledge are acquired, and changes in behaviour and attitudes do occur. They highlight that that the term 'learning' is shrouded with ambiguity because it has many definitions (p. 11).

The Department of Education and Science (2000) defines adult education as 'systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training'. Adult education provides a conduit for re-entry to further education, that is, receiving education and training that occurs between second level and third level education. That includes Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme, Adult Literacy and Basic Education and self-funded adult education programmes. It also includes re-entry by adults to higher education, Continuing Professional Development, Community Education and other forms of systematic and deliberate learning.

The term 'adult education' has a different contextual meaning in the United Kingdom. Jarvis (2004) points out:

The term 'adult education' carries a specific connotation in the United Kingdom, which imply that it is specifically liberal education, which has been stereotyped as a middle-class leisure time pursuit. Underlying this implication is the idea that the adult's education has been completed and, during leisure time, the adult improves or broadens existing knowledge, skills and hobbies (p. 44).

Linderman (1926) identified key theoretical perspectives about adult learners that are outlined in a summary below:

1. Adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy.
2. Adult's orientation to learning is life-centred.
3. Experience is the deepest source of adult's learning.
4. Adults have a deep need to self-directing.
5. Individual differences among people increase with age (cited in Knowles and Shepherd, 2005, p. 40).

It is helpful for teachers that are recruited to teach VTOS courses to have an understanding of theoretical frameworks that inform adult learning.

This subsection discussed complexities and tensions that exist in defining the terms ‘adult learning’ and ‘adult education’. The entire section examined policy, theory and practice in adult education and training initiatives. The section that follows explores the conceptual framework of the research study.

2.2 The Competing Values Framework

The Competing Values Framework (CVF) is the conceptual framework that informs this study. Denison and Spreitzer (1991) define the CVF as ‘a synthesis of organisational theories, and posits that most organisations can be characterised along two dimensions each representing alternative approaches to basic challenges that all organisations must resolve in order to function’ (cited in Helfrich *et al.*, 2007, p. 2). Helfrich *et al.* (2007) state:

The first set of competing values is the degree to which an organisation emphasises centralisation and control over organisational processes versus decentralisation and flexibility. The second set of competing values is the degree to which the organisation is oriented toward its own internal environment and processes versus the external environment and relationships with outside entities, such as regulators, suppliers, competitors, partners and customers (p. 2).

Cameron and Quinn (2006) assert that the CVF as a tool for diagnosing and changing organisational culture has six advantages. These are:

- It is *practical*: It captures key dimensions of culture that have been found to make a difference in organisations’ success.
- It is *timely*: The process of diagnosing and creating a strategy for change can be accomplished in a reasonable amount of time.
- It is *involving*: The steps in the process can include every member of the organisation, but they especially involve all who have a responsibility to establish direction, reinforce values, and guide fundamental change.
- It is both *quantitative* and *qualitative*: The process relies on quantitative measurement of key cultural dimensions as well as qualitative methods including stories, incidents, and symbols that represent the unmeasurable ambience of the organisation.
- It is *manageable*: The process of diagnosis and change can be undertaken and implemented by a team within the organisation – usually the management team. Outside diagnosticians, culture experts, or change consultants are not required for successful implementation.

- It is *valid*: The framework on which the process is built not only makes sense to people as they consider their own organisation but is also supported by an extensive empirical literature and underlying dimensions that have a verified scholarly foundation (pp. 19 – 20).

The CVF has its origins in the business world (Belasen and Frank, 2010; Cameron and Quinn; 2006; Zaft *et al.*, 2007). The CVF has been widely used to research organizational culture in the health services (Helfrich *et al.*, 2007), self-managed teams (SMTs) of engineering students (Zaft *et al.*, 2009), and organising structures and leadership of military units (Yardley and Neal, 2007). The concept of organisational culture was developed by University of Michigan faculty organisational researchers after identifying a relationship between cultural change, and the effectiveness and success of an organisation. That was after realising that where strategies were implemented without a change in organisational culture the strategies were not successful or effective. Cameron and Quinn (2006) assert:

This dependence of organisational improvement on culture change is due to the fact that when the values, orientations, definitions, and goals stay constant – even when procedures and strategies are altered – organisations return quickly to the status quo.

The same is true for individuals (p. 11).

However, it was not until the early 1980s that organisational researchers began to seriously consider the notion of organisational culture (Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Helfrich *et al.*, 2007). Cameron and Quinn (2006) point out:

This is one of the few areas, in fact, where organisational scholars led practising managers in identifying a crucial factor affecting organisational performance. In most instances, practice has led research, and scholars have focused mainly on documenting, explaining, and building models of organisational phenomena that were already being tried by management. Organisational culture, however, has been an area in which conceptual work and scholarship have provided guidance for managers as they have searched for ways to improve their organisation's effectiveness (p. 16).

The CVF plays an important role in the generation and management of information. Belasen and Frank (2010) state:

An important advantage of using the CVF, then, lies in the creation and maintenance of effective managerial communication. Problems involving information underload or overload, distortions, and negative filtering can be anticipated and overcome. Clarifying managerial roles and expectations can help minimise role ambiguity and offset the costs

associated with dysfunctional role conflicts. Likewise, interpersonal conflicts associated with turf issues, status, and power can be avoided in favour of developing a constructive dialogue and encouraging positive learning (p. 282).

Communication audits based on the Competing Values Framework are beneficial in drawing attention to shortcomings that lead to communication breakdown and identifying what could be done to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

The researchers did not take CVF seriously for a long time because it embraces attitudes, philosophical underpinnings, behaviours, characteristics, qualities and attributes that are often traits perceived as common sense. As already stated above, that viewpoint began to change in the early 1980s. Cameron and Quinn (2006) comment:

The reason organisational culture was ignored as an important factor in accounting for organisational performance is that it encompasses the taken-for-granted values, underlying assumptions, expectations, collective memories, and definitions present in an organisation. It represents 'how things are around here'. It reflects the prevailing ideology that people carry inside their heads (p. 16).

In other words, organisational culture is like the mortar that keeps the employees or members of an organisation together. It gives employees or members of a particular organisation a unique identity. It provides the unwritten and unspoken rules and regulations that make them adhere to certain rules and regulations with loyalty and without question. The organisational culture is the social ecosystem experienced by employees or members, which gives an organisation a stable environment. The organisational culture as a phenomenon may implicitly shape the attitudes and behaviours of employees or members, although they may not be conscious that it exists. Employees or members might only become aware of the culture of their organisation when it is challenged, a new culture is introduced or when it is expressed overtly and explicitly through a framework or model (Cameron and Quinn, 2006).

Belasen and Frank (2010) assert that 'more recently the CVF has received renewed attention from leadership, organisation, and management development scholars' (p. 282). The renewed attention seems partially necessitated by the wide appropriateness of the CVF as a diagnostic and developmental tool. That is especially the case when there are cultural variables in associations between leadership roles and development of managers.

The CVF as a diagnostic and developmental tool has been found by organisations to be an extremely useful model for organizing and understanding a wide variety of organizational and individual phenomena. It is embedded with theories of organizational effectiveness, leadership

competencies, organizational culture, organizational design, stages of life cycle development, organizational quality, leadership roles, financial strategy, information processing, and brain functioning (Belasen and Frank, 2010; Cameron and Quinn; 2006; Helfrich et al., 2007; Yardley and Neal, 2009; Zaft *et al.*, 2007). The robustness of the framework is one of its greatest strengths. In fact, the framework has been identified as one of the 40 most important frameworks in the history of business. The framework has proven to be very robust across a variety of phenomena, and it describes the core approaches to thinking, behaving, and organising associated with human activity. This researcher chose and adopted it for this study on educational leadership on the basis of the aforementioned strengths and robustness. Belasen and Frank (2010) outline:

The Competing Values Framework (CVF) highlights the contradictory nature inherent in organisational environments and the complexity of choices faced by managers when responding to competing tensions. These responses include a variety of managerial roles differentiated by situational contingencies (pp. 280 – 281).

The framework helps identify a set of guidelines that can enable leaders to diagnose and manage the interrelationships, congruencies, and contradictions among different aspects of organizations. In other words, the framework helps leaders work more comprehensively and more consistently in improving their organizations' performance and value creation. The specific leadership tools and techniques that receive emphasis within leadership are often determined by the organization's own culture, aspirations for change, competencies of the senior leadership team, or the data feedback that individuals receive from various assessments.

Zaft *et al.* (2009) state that 'the CVF clarifies leadership roles and expectations. This clarification minimises ambiguity and avoids interpersonal conflict within teams' (p. 274). The CVF has also been adopted to deal with leadership complexities that are inherent in teams during decision making. Zaft *et al.* (2009) assert that the CVF:

...provides an understanding of how a team is effective through the use of different roles and skills and adopts the need for a balanced approach to leadership. Behavioural complexity (BC) is the theoretical foundation for this framework. For a leader to be effective in a team, it is essential that the leader engage in a wide range of behaviours. A leader who is deemed to behave that way is a leader with *high behavioural complexity* (p. 274).

A leader who is unable to adapt roles to suit the prevailing environment is likely to be ineffective and said to operate at low behavioural complexity. Helfrich *et al.* (2007) hypothesises that the 'Competing Values Framework (CVF) has been widely used in health services research to assess

organisational culture as a predictor of quality improvement implementation, employee and patient satisfaction, and team functioning, among other outcomes' (p. 1).

Yardley and Neal (2007) concur with Helfrich *et al.* (2007) and assert that, on the one hand, 'the first dimension differentiates effectiveness criteria that emphasise flexibility, discretion, and dynamism from criteria that emphasise stability, order, and control' (p. 25). On the other hand, 'the second dimension differentiates criteria that emphasise internal orientation, integration and unity from criteria that emphasise an external orientation, differentiation, and rivalry' (p. 25). Yardley and Neal (2007) suggest that in the CVF 'leadership theory a greater emphasis is placed on managing culture in order to effect organisational change. Therefore to be effective, leaders must be able to understand the organisational context and effect change through changing cultures and behaviours' (p. 25). The CVF neither prescribe what culture the organisation has to adopt nor does it specifically prefer one culture over another.

There are competing theories of what cultures or combination of cultures work better under certain conditions. Belasen and Frank (2010) propose that 'the common language offered by the CVF ameliorates the separateness because it is essentially an organisational language that identifies performance criteria that are common across hierarchy' (p. 282). Helfrich *et al.*

(2007) theorise that 'these four cultures are proposed as archetypes. In reality, organisations are expected to reflect all four cultures to some degree' (p. 2). Helfrich *et al.* (2007) posit that cross-classifying the 'two values dimensions results in four archetypes, referred to as hierarchical, rational, entrepreneurial, and team cultures' (p. 2). The cultures may also exist as a combination or all four may operate at organisational level and remain relatively stable over a period of time. The two values dimensions and four archetypes are shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 below illustrates that cross-classifying organisations on two values dimensions results in the following four archetypes: (1) Internal environment with flexibility results in team culture, which is characterised by cohesion, high morale, focus on human resource development and mutual support. (2) Internal environment and control results in hierarchical culture, which put emphasis clear lines of authority over organisational processes, respect for formal hierarchy, adherence to rules, and stability and predictability. (3) External environment and flexibility results in entrepreneurial culture, which is characterised by flexibility and creativity, emphasis on acquisition of resources, rapid response to changes in the external environment, and growth and entrepreneurship. (4) External environment and control results in rational culture, which puts emphasis on clarity of tasks, planning and productivity, efficiency, and measurable outcomes. Helfrich *et al.* (2007) assert:

In the CVF, organisations with an internal focus and emphasis on control, labelled hierarchical cultures (also sometimes referred to as “bureaucratic” cultures), adopt centralised authority over organisational processes; respect formal hierarchy; and adhere to rules. They place a premium on stability and predictability (p. 2).

	Flexibility	Control
Internal	<p>Team Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Cohesion <input type="checkbox"/> Morale <input type="checkbox"/> Human resource development <input type="checkbox"/> Mutual support 	<p>Hierarchical Culture</p> <p>Clear lines of authority over</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> organizational processes Respect for formal <input type="checkbox"/> hierarchy <input type="checkbox"/> Adherence to rules <input type="checkbox"/> Stability and predictability
External	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Entrepreneurial Culture <input type="checkbox"/> Flexibility & creativity <input type="checkbox"/> Acquisition of resources <input type="checkbox"/> Responding to changes in the external environment <input type="checkbox"/> Growth and entrepreneurship 	<p>Rational Culture</p> <p>Clarity of tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and productivity <input type="checkbox"/> Efficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Measurable outcomes <input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 2.1: The competing values framework of organisational effectiveness

Source: Kalliath, T. J., Bluedorn, A. C. and Gillespie, D. F. (1999) Adapted from:

Helfrich *et al.* (2007, p. 3)

Helfrich *et al.* (2007) also state that ‘organisations with an internal focus and emphasis on flexibility, labelled team cultures, encourage broad participation by employees, emphasise teamwork and empowerment, and make human resource a priority’ (p. 2). Whereas, ‘organisations with an external focus and emphasis on flexibility, labelled entrepreneurial cultures, exhibit creativity and innovativeness; they place a premium on growth and expanding resources’ (p. 2). However, ‘organisations with an external focus and an emphasis on control, labelled rational cultures, are characterised by clarity of tasks and goals. They place premium on efficiency and measurable outcomes’ (p. 2). In other words, there is repertoire of leadership and aligned pairs of roles.

The repertoire of leadership and aligned pairs of roles are explained in the explanatory notes for Figure 2.2 below. Figure 2.2 also shows the contradictory nature inherent in organisational environments and the complexity of choices faced by managers when responding to competing tensions necessitates a variety of managerial roles differentiated by situational contingencies. Belasen and Frank (2010) assert:

The innovator and broker roles rely on creativity and communication skills to bring about change and acquire resources necessary for change management. The monitor and coordinator roles that are essential for maintaining stability and consistency to ensure that work processes function effectively. The director and producer roles provide structures and initiate actions designed to sustain the strategic goals of the organisation. The facilitator and mentor roles help facilitate group interactions, motivate individuals, and support the development of problem-solving and communication skills essential for teamwork (p. 281).

The innovator and broker roles occupy a quadrant that is directly opposite the one occupied by the monitor and coordinator roles. The quadrant occupied by director and producer roles is also directly opposite the one occupied by the facilitator and mentor roles. The opposite quadrants illustrate potential tensions and complexities when those in leadership assume different roles.

According to Belasen and Frank (2010), 'the top portion of the framework includes four roles connected through an emphasis on transformational change and flexibility' (p. 281). The four roles included in the top portion of the framework are those that a leader or manager adopts in order to exercise a degree of flexibility and/or to manage change are the facilitator, mentor, innovator and broker roles.

The four top roles are collectively referred to as *transformational roles* because they help in managing change and in helping individuals change attitudes and behaviours. In addition, Belasen and Frank (2010) say that 'the bottom portion of the framework includes roles with an emphasis on transactional goals and control' (p. 281). The four roles that make it possible to achieve transactional goals and control are the monitor, coordinator, director and producer roles.

The four bottom roles are collectively known as *transactional roles* because managers and leaders use them when making business transactions.

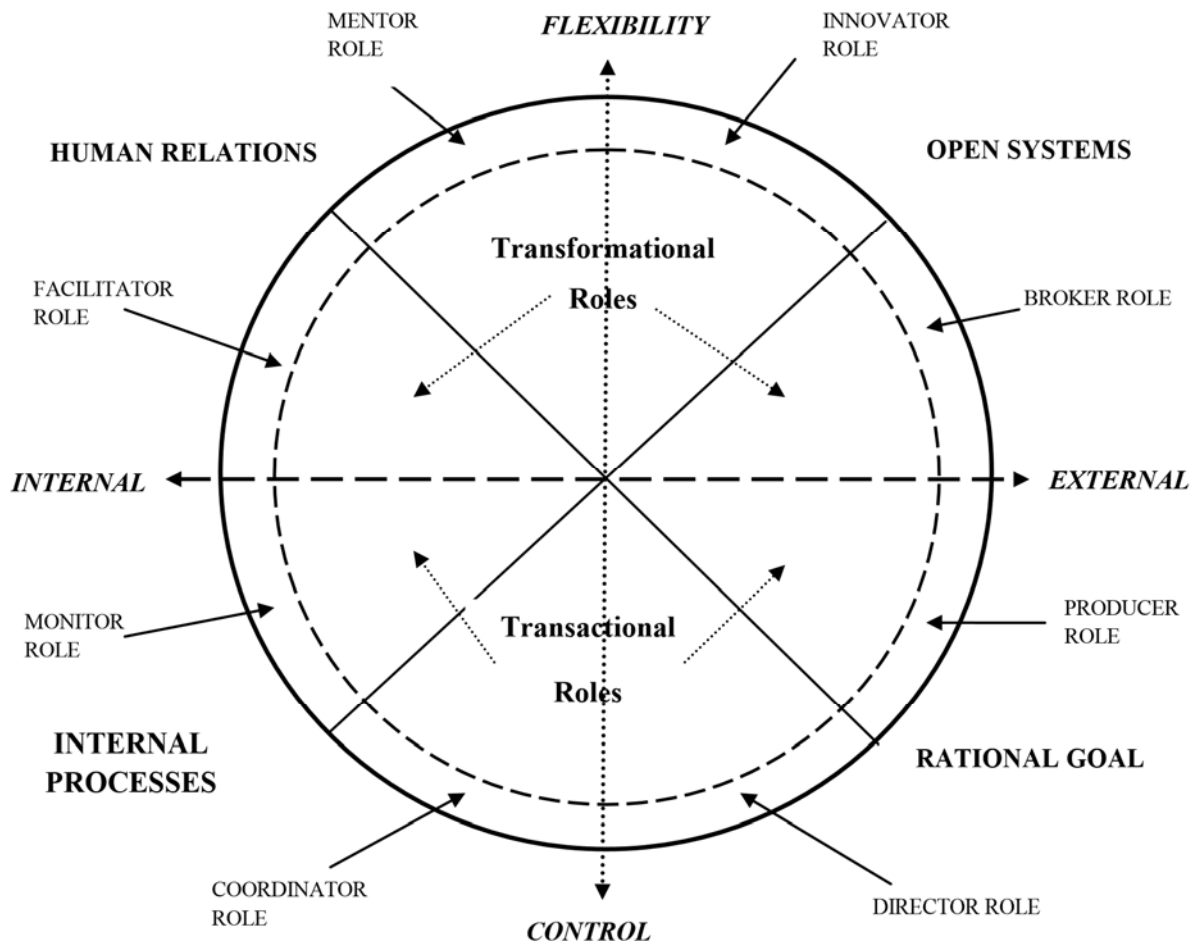


Figure 2.2: Competing Values Framework

Source: Quinn, R. E. (1988)

Adapted from: Belasen and Frank (2010, p. 281)

Armstrong (1999) states that 'transactional leaders trade money, jobs, and security for compliance'; whereas 'transformational leaders [will] motivate people to strive for higherlevel goals' (p. 183).

The transformational leadership concept evolved from transactional leadership according to Abeysekera and Jayakody (2011), as such it may be considered progression from the latter.

Although the CVF is meant to inform organisational culture and professionalism, people sometimes ignore what is right and choose to do the opposite. Cliques may sometimes exist within organisations leading to factions. People sometimes gravitate towards those similar to them either by cultural background, ethnicity, gender, age or similar educational background. Transparency and fairness during promotion and recruitment is sometimes undermined by that. As a result, although we would like the world to be ideal, this is not always the case.

Tensions and communication breakdown often occur when members of an organisation view themselves as disconnected units that identify more with different sections or departments of an organisation rather than identifying themselves with the whole organisation.

Figure 2.3 illustrates different styles and behaviours that align with specific leadership and management roles, message orientations, and what determines the success of the communication frame.

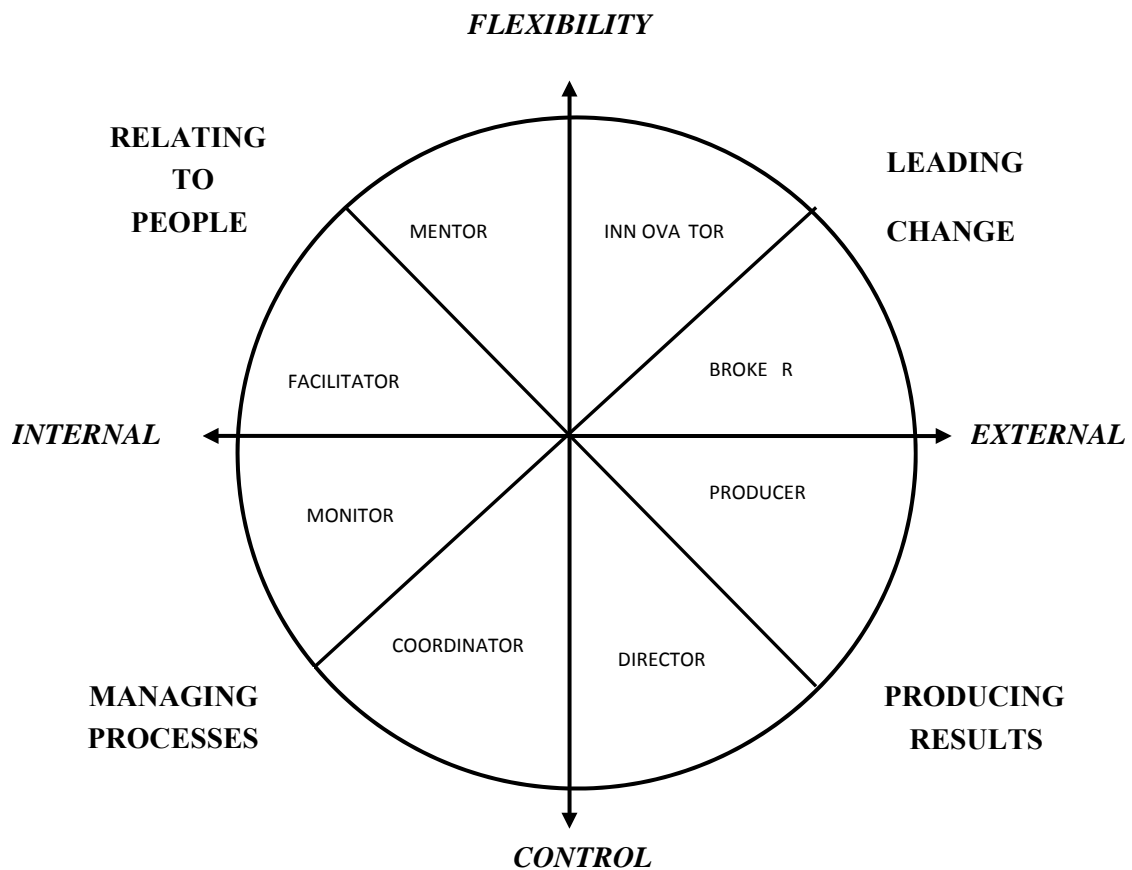


Figure 2.3: Leadership roles and profiles in the Competing Values Framework

Source: Quinn et al. (1996)

Adapted from: Zaft *et al.* (2009, p. 275)

In Figure 2.3 above, the horizontal axis in the CVF illustrates the level of *organisational focus*, which is either internal or external. The vertical axis illustrates the level of *adaptability*, which is flexibility versus control. Both axes demonstrate the competing values that are experienced in different organisational cultures. The intersecting axes form quadrants that have corresponding opposites. Zaft *et al.* (2009) assert that they at times 'interchangeably use the terms *leadership profiles* and *leadership quadrants*. The profiles/quadrants make up the

CVF and reflect the leadership roles performed by the team member' (p. 274). In addition, Zaft *et al.* (2009) restate:

The *Relating to People* quadrant emphasises a flexible structure and an internal focus. It's exact opposite is the *Producing Results* quadrant that emphasises a stable structure and an external focus. This example demonstrates the complexity that occurs for leaders. Leaders should value relationships within the organisation and make certain that the organisation is flexible to support these relationships (p. 274).

Production of results and outputs, and a stable environment are also important elements in an organisation. Belasen and Frank (2010) refers to the quadrants *Relating to People* as Relational, *Producing Results* as Promotional, *Leading Change* as Transformational, and *Managing Processes* as Hierarchical. Belasen and Frank (2010) explain:

When managers play the mentor and facilitator roles, for example, they use a relational approach to communication that places emphasis on receivers' insights and feedback. A promotional orientation fits the behaviours of the innovator displayed by the director and producer roles that rely on persuasion strategies to meet functional objectives. A transformational orientation matches the styles and behaviours of the innovator and broker roles that are geared toward selling ideas effectively and meeting future organisational and adaptation goals. Hierarchical message orientation, on the other hand, aligns with the monitor and coordinator roles, which focus on integrating individuals and groups through work processes and systems control (p. 283).

Transformational-based messages help the organisation to adapt and manage change. Belasen and Frank (2010) state that its 'success is determined by the extent to which framing of communication is insightful, mind-stretching, and visionary' (p. 283). Promotional messages are associated with the goals and objectives of the organisation in meeting its external obligations. Belasen and Frank (2010) assert that 'success is determined by the extent to which the communication is framed in a conclusive, decisive, and action-oriented manner' (p. 284). Hierarchical messages refer to rules and regulations that regulate attitudes and behaviours aimed at standardise interaction between leaders and subordinates. Belasen and Frank (2010) point out that 'success is determined by whether the communication frame seems realistic, practical, and informative' (p. 284). Relational messages have an emphasis on human development, pursuance of individual and team goals, commitment to the overall goals and objectives of the organisation, relationships between employees and shared objectives.

Belasen and Frank (2010) state that 'members seek to constantly improve relationships through constructive cycles of feedback and positive frames are discerning and perceptive of needs of

individuals and groups as important organisational stakeholders' (p. 284). Individuals who are aware and knowledgeable about the existence of complexities of choices when responding to competing tensions or frames can use that knowledge to develop themselves individually, as team members, leaders or managers.

This section examined the conceptual framework of the research study. The next section addresses definitions and evolutionary theories of leadership.

2.3 Definitions and evolutionary theories of leadership

Leadership is a fluid role that calls upon a leader to be an orator and motivator when narrating their organisation's vision, values and goals to followers and be transactional during negotiations. The same leader may be a re-framer and collaborator when dealing with creative situations such as cultural diversity, and a transformer when dealing with issues of change management. Spillane *et al.* (2001) assert that 'leadership involves the identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination, and use of social, material, and cultural resources' (p. 24). Julsuwan *et al.* (2011) state that it is acting in a manner that can 'convince...followers to work and accomplish the organization's goals' (p. 424). Lester (2007) defines leadership 'as the ability to inspire, persuade or influence others to follow a course of actions or behaviour towards a defined goal' (p. 303). However, Burns (2003) observes:

Leadership is an expanding field of study that some day may join the traditional disciplines of history, philosophy, and the social sciences in scholarly recognition. Today, however, it remains in its growing stages; it has as yet no grand, unifying theory to provide common direction to thinkers and researchers. Even the meaning of the term itself remains controversial (p. 2).

In other words, the definition is shrouded in controversy and is not concise and precise. Lester (2007) also points out that 'whether leadership is attributed to birth, environment or training is still a subject for debate but the attributes required by a leader are the same' (p. 303). Despite that, Goleman *et al.* (2002) assert that 'leaders are made, not born' (p. 100). They explain:

The crux of leadership development that works is *self-directed learning*: intentionally developing or strengthening an aspect of who you are or who you want to be, or both. This requires first getting a strong image of your *ideal self*, as well as an accurate picture of your *real self* – who you are now. Such self-directed learning is most effective and sustainable when you understand the process of change – and the steps to achieve it – as you go through it (p. 109).

Table 2.2 shows a list of qualities and attributes that Lester (2007) proposes for a good leader. They are listed in alphabetical order to dispel the myth that certain qualities and attributes are more important than others.

<i>Qualities</i>	<i>Attributes</i>
Adaptability	Ability to change to new environment or client's need
Attitude	Positive can-do outlook, optimism despite setbacks
Charisma	Presence and power to attract attention and influence people
Cognitive ability	Ability to weigh up options, give clear instructions
Commitment	Will to succeed and achieve set goals
Common sense	Ability not to be hoodwinked by irrational suggestions or solutions
Creativity	Able to do some innovative or lateral thinking
Drive	Energy, willpower and determination to push forward
Fairness	Fair and considerate attitude to human needs and staff problems
Flexibility	Willingness to modify ideas and procedures to new circumstance
Honesty	Trustworthy, reliable, will not tolerate cover ups
Integrity	Ability to make sound moral judgements, approachable, principled
Intelligence	Clear thinking and ability to understand conflicting arguments
Open-mindedness	Open to new ideas and suggestions even if unconventional
Prudence	Ability to weigh up and take risks without being reckless
Self confidence	Self confidence
Technical knowledge	Understanding of technical needs of the project and deliverables

Table 2.2: List of qualities and attributes of a good leader Adapted from: Lester (2007, p. 303).

Desirable leadership qualities and attributes that are found in good leaders are good communication, attentive listening, effectiveness, open-mindedness, and participative decision-making (Lester, 2007). The leader who is an inspiration to team members has capabilities to clearly explain activity goals and objectives and their 'importance to the organization' (p. 304). In addition, the leader cultivates an environment in which contributions, debates and new ideas are appreciated and encouraged.

According to Lester (2007), good leaders embrace equality and diversity and allocate roles and tasks in accordance with 'the skills, abilities and personal characteristics of each member irrespective of race, creed, colour, sex or orientation' (p. 304). The ability of a good leader to resolve conflicts in a timely, fair, empathic and amicable manner helps the leader to gain the confidence of subordinates and team members.

Lester (2007) posits that leadership has managerial dimensions, but 'is not the same as management' (p. 303). He also theorises that 'leadership is about motivating, influencing, and setting examples to teams and individuals, while management is concerned with the administrative and organizational facets of a project or company' (p. 303). In brief, leaders lead people while managers manage activities. Therefore, leadership is concerned with enabling people to achieve their best while management is concerned with achieving activities within the set constraints.

Armstrong (1999) proposes that 'leadership is the process of inspiring individuals to give of their best to achieve a desired result. It is about getting people to move in the right direction, gaining commitment, and motivating them to achieve their goals' (p. 182). Therefore, the key aspects of leadership are inspiration, influence, and direction, commitment and motivation.

Thomas (2008) points out that 'leadership is a fundamental social, organisational and political phenomenon. In recent years in education theory, 'leadership' has superseded 'management' and 'administration' as the perceived predominant activity of headmasters' (p. 12). Findings in a study carried out by Wakahiu and Salvaterra (2012) reflect that 'leadership skills are needed to enhance managerial competencies and organization performance' (p. 164). Inputs by senior management or key stakeholders have a direct or indirect influence on the successful implementation and delivery of aims and objectives of an organisation. Examples of inputs include resource allocation, clear goals/objectives, realistic schedule, clear communication channels, risk management, cost management, planning and control, among others.

Armstrong (1999) says that leaders adopt different leadership styles that are discussed in dualities below. The first duality is the *charismatic* versus *non-charismatic* leadership style.

He points out:

Charismatic leaders rely on their personality, their inspirational qualities and their 'aura'. They are often visionary leaders who are achievement orientated, calculated risk takers and good communicators. Non-charismatic leaders rely mainly on their know-how (authority goes to the person who knows), their quiet confidence and their cool, analytical approach to dealing with problems (p. 183).

The second duality is the *autocratic* versus *democratic* leadership style. He states that 'autocratic leaders impose their decisions, using their position to force people to do as they are told.

Democratic leaders encourage people to participate and involve themselves in decision-taking' (p.

183). The third duality is the *enabler* versus *controller* leadership style. 'Enablers inspire people with their vision of the future and empower them to accomplish team goals. Controllers manipulate people to obtain their compliance' (p. 183). The fourth and final duality is the *transactional* versus

transformational leadership style. 'Transactional leaders trade money, jobs, and security for compliance. Transformational leaders motivate people to strive for higher-level goals' (p. 183). Armstrong (1999) further argues that 'there is no such thing as an ideal leadership style. It all depends [on] the factors affecting the degree to which a style is appropriate, the type of organisation, the nature of the task, the characteristics of the group and, importantly, the personality of the leader' (pp. 183 – 184). In brief, the leadership style adopted by a leader is usually influenced by the context in which a leader operates.

Burns (2003) asserts that leadership is:

...not only a descriptive term but a prescriptive one, embracing a moral, even a passionate, dimension. ...We don't call for *good* leadership – we expect, or at least hope, that it will be good. "Bad" leadership implies *no* leadership. ...there is nothing neutral about leadership; it is valued as a moral necessity' (p. 2).

The moral obligations of leadership and 'its actions and achievements are measured by the supreme public values that themselves are the profoundest expressions of human wants: liberty and equality, justice and opportunity' (Burns, 2003, p. 2). In the opinion of this researcher, the moral obligations cannot be achieved without adopting democratic principles.

The concepts of sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership are more modern and can be used in managing and adapting to change, something that is most likely to appeal to organisations. According to Hargreaves and Fink (2006), theoretical perspectives of sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership are intertwined and can be used in management and adapting to change. It is because of the aforementioned reasons that this researcher chose to investigate the three leadership theories in one study. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) assert that 'sustainable leadership acts urgently, learns from the past and from diversity, is resilient under pressure, waits patiently for results, and does not burn people out. Sustainable leadership is just and moral leadership that benefits all of us, now and in the future' (p. 20). In other words, sustainable leadership *matters* to all of us, *spreads* across the structures of an organisation and *lasts* over time.

One of the principles of 'sustainable leadership...is *breadth*; it is leadership that spreads, that is a distributed and shared responsibility that is taken as well as given' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 95). On the one hand, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) affirm that 'sustainable leadership is distributed leadership' (p. 111). On the other hand, they point out that 'not all distributed leadership is sustainable leadership. It depends on how the leadership is distributed and for what purpose' (p. 111). Genuine distribution of leadership is characterised by greater involvement in

decision-making, tight collective and collaborative processes, clear vision and accountability, and multiple sources of leadership.

In the education system, transformational leadership appears to help organisations to achieve substantive change or change of higher order. Leithwood *et al.* (1999) point out:

Transformational leadership achieves these ends through the pursuit of common goals, empowerment of people in the organisation, development and maintenance of a collaborative culture, promoting processes of teacher development, and engaging people in collaborative problem-solving strategies (cited in Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 99).

Findings by Leithwood *et al.* (1999) show that transformational leadership has some influence and significance on distributed leadership (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, pp. 99 - 101). For example, characteristics that are found in both transformational and distributed leadership are an act of collective emotional and intellectual leadership. They also both promote a collaborative culture in professional development of staff members and in approaches when solving problems.

This subsection discussed the fluid role of leadership, addressed definitions of leadership, and discussed whether people are born with leadership attributes and qualities or whether attributes and qualities can be nurtured. Theories of leadership have evolved over the years from those that were merely premised on the qualities and behaviours of a leader to those that are more people-centred. The subsection that follows explores how theories of leadership have evolved since the 1920s.

2.3.1 Evolution of theories of leadership

Reviewed literature reflects that there has been a huge interest in leadership theories for many years from both business practitioners and academics (Yardley and Neal, 2007). Yardley and Neal (2007) give an account on how leadership theories have evolved over the years. An examination of the evolution of leadership theories shows that sustainable, transformational and distributed are a refinement of leadership theories that existed before them. A summary of the evolution of leadership theories is in Appendix A.

Bernard (1926) posited that it was the internal qualities of the individual that made them leader, that is, an individual is born to be a leader. Alderfer (1969), Maslow (1943) and Murray (1938) hypothesized that individuals were motivated by needs, which ranged from basic survival needs to higher order social needs. This was the time when Maslow presented a paper in 1943 titled 'A theory of human motivation', and those motivation theories later became known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The theorists that came later (around 1957) were interested in examining attitudes and behaviours as a way of understanding what leaders did. The work on

attitudes and behaviours was the first to identify connections between the leadership theory and environmental context.

Halpin and Winer (1957) and Hemphill and Coons (1957) examined behaviours in an attempt to analyse what successful leaders actually did.

Adams (1968), Locke (1959) and Vroom (1964) developed the expectancy theory, goal setting theory and equity theory respectively. All the three theorists demonstrated the concept that a leader in develops an environmental context/situation as a way of motivating followers to achieve their objectives.

Blake *et al.* (1964) theorised the interaction of the leader's behaviour, individual traits and the situation or context. Blake *et al.* (1964) also showed that leaders exhibited task- or peoplecentred activities. Herzberg (1964) concurred with Alderfer (1969), Maslow (1943) and Murray (1938) that individuals are driven by the satisfaction of needs.

Fielder (1967) hypothesized that context created circumstances that suited specific leadership styles. House and Fall (cited in Fall, 1974) developed the path-goal theory, which espoused that leaders help develop their followers' behaviours in order to achieve specific goals. Graen (1976) further developed the 'path-goal theory' to the 'dyad linked theory', which examined the broader context through relations between the leader and the follower.

Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) proposed new theories of leadership based on the requirements for managing change, motivational theory and a concept of transactional versus transformational leadership was developed. Transactional leadership is a more traditional view of nudging followers through a transaction form of reward which is often most effective at satisfying lower order needs (Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership aims to motivate individuals to satisfy higher order needs and fully engages them within the change process, often involving culture and organizational change (Bass, 1985).

Schein (1985) identified the relationship between organisational culture and leadership. Saal and Knight (1988) linked leadership theory with environmental context and furthering the notion that leadership could be taught. The work of Saal and Knight (1988) broadened the interest of managers' understanding of task and people-centred approaches. They did that by developing varying leadership approaches to suit different environmental contexts/situations.

Fisher (1993) hypothesised that leaders needed to be more integrated in the team. This transformed the role of a leader from command and control to that of a facilitator and coach managing human relations in the team. The popularity of the concept of team development and empowerment led to the emergence of the notion of self-directed teams.

George and Wellins, and Wilson (cited in Fisher, 1993) theorised that no matter how advanced the team is there is still a need for leadership to enable the team to be successful. As the concept of team development and empowerment became more popular, the idea of selfdirected teams began to emerge. These are defined as a group of employees who have day-to-day responsibility for managing themselves and the work they do with minimum of direct supervision.

Drath and Palus (1994) took transformational leadership further describing leadership as being part of a community of ‘people united in a common enterprise who share a history and thus certain values, beliefs, ways of talking, and ways of doing things’ (cited in Yardley and Neal, 2007, p. 22).

Brown (1995) promoted behaviours of challenging ideas and promoting risk taking in teamwork.

Kolb (1995) suggested that leaders must avoid compromising the team’s objectives. Kozlowski *et al.*

(1996) proposed that team behaviours needed to include;

‘developing shared knowledge among members, providing information, mentoring, instructing others, facilitation of group process, monitoring performance, promoting open communication, providing goals and alternative resources.

Cameron and Quinn (1999) proposed the Competing Values Framework and expanded the focus on culture; categorizing organizational cultures and suggested optimum leadership styles for each.

When the management of change became a critical requirement in organizational development, greater interest was taken in the leadership of change and the subsequent management of culture.

Adair (2003) further developed Blake *et al.*’s (1964) theoretical perspectives in the notion that leaders need to recognise three aspects, namely task, team and individual needs.

This subsection explored how theories of leadership have evolved since the 1920s. The entire section addressed definitions and evolutionary theories of leadership. The section that follows examines theories and practice in sustainable leadership.

2.4 Theories and practice of sustainable leadership

Theoretical perspectives of sustainable leadership in educational administration were introduced by UNESCO in 2005 at the beginning of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (Hargreaves, 2005b). There are several authors (Davies, 2006; Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves, 2005; and Hargreaves and Fink, 2006) who have written about sustainable leadership in education. Thomas (2008) discusses the work of researchers that have contributed towards developing the emerging concept of sustainable educational leadership. Table 2.3 below summarises literature written on the emerging concept of sustainability in educational leadership.

Fullan (2005) Leadership and Sustainability	Hargreaves (2005) Sustainable Leadership
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<p>8 Elements of sustainability</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public service with a moral purpose 2. Commitment to changing context at all levels 3. Lateral capacity building through networks 4. Intelligent accountability and vertical relationships (encompassing both capacity building and accountability) 5. Deep learning 6. Dual commitment to short term and long term results 7. Cyclical energizing 8. The long lever of leadership 	<p>10 principles of sustainable leadership</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It matters: it creates and preserves sustaining learning 2. It lasts: it secures enduring success over time 3. It spreads: it sustains the leadership of others 4. It is socially just 5. It is resourceful: it develops rather than depletes human and material resources 6. It develops environmental diversity and capacity 7. It is activist: it engages assertivity with its environment 8. It is vigilant: it monitors the environment to check it is staying healthy and not beginning to decline 9. It respects and builds on the past in its quest to create better future 10. It is patient: it defers gratification instead of seeking instant results
<p style="text-align: center;">Davies B. (2006) “Leading the strategically Focused School”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Hill (2006) “Leadership that lasts”</p>
<p>9 factors of strategically focused schools</p>	<p>10 principles for sustainable leadership</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a culture of sustainability 2. Balance the short term and the long term 3. Develop strategic measures for success 4. Be morally driven 5. Focus on learning 6. Pay attention to strategic processes 7. Pay attention to strategic approaches 8. Be part of networked systems 9. Develop sustainable strategic leadership across the school 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Believe in the power and purposes of learning 2. Want the best for all the young people in their area 3. Command authority but use that authority wisely 4. Share and foster leadership 5. Build and sustain a learning community 6. Practice intelligent accountability 7. Balance short and long term goals 8. Renew themselves 9. Work closely with governors 10. Communicate clearly and consistently

Table 2.3 The emerging concept of sustainability in educational leadership

Adapted from: Thomas (2008, p. 29)

The configuration of recent explorations of literature written about sustainability gives a clear picture and enhances understanding about the similarities and differences of the approaches espoused by the various advocates of sustainable leadership. According to Wakahiu and Salvaterra (2012), ‘sustainable leadership is a concept that encourages shared responsibility to encourage human and financial resource improvement. It is self-sustaining because leaders recognize the need for change and community involvement to ensure growth’ (Wakahiu and Salvaterra, p. 161). It is a new concept in educational leadership whose origins can be traced to the declaration of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in 2005 by UNESCO. Before the introduction of sustainable education in 2005, learning constituted of four pillars and these were learning to know, to do, to be and to live together (UNESCO, 1996, cited in Hargreaves, 2003). The fifth pillar that was added in 2005 was learning to live sustainably.

There are some commonalities and differences among the approaches that are advocated by the researchers. The most significant common feature is that there is a high moral ground to embrace

sustainability. It encourages deeper learning that lasts, sharing responsibilities when using financial and other resources, and developing people to become leaders. The most outstanding difference is the unit of analysis. Thomas (2008) identifies that:

Fullan (2005) takes the education system as a whole as his unit of analysis and claims his eight strategies can be applied to any public service or corporate institution, while Davies (2006) demonstrates how sustainability is an important component in the nine factors needed to develop a strategically focused school. Both Hargreaves (2005) and Hill (2006) isolate principles to guide sustainable leadership itself and so their unit of analysis is the individual leader (p. 28).

Another common feature is that all four researchers promote collaborative approaches rather than competitive and results-oriented approaches in their models. This creates complexities and tensions in schools that are used to a culture of competing against one another for regional and national rankings that are determined by the outcome of results in national examinations. Thomas (2008) also points out that 'although obvious, it still needs to be stated that these elements, factors or principles of sustainability are not exhaustive or exclusive; it is very likely that others exist' (p. 28). This study mainly concentrated on Hargreaves because he explicitly outlines the principles and action that should guide sustainable leadership.

However, this researcher's concern about Hargreaves and Fink's (2006) approach is that their unit of analysis and focus is on the individual leader, which means they do not link leadership theory with environmental context/situation. As already discussed on subsection (2.3.1) about the evolution of theories of leadership, modern theories of leadership promote a unit of analysis and focus that investigates the interaction of leadership with environment rather than treating leaders as independent units of analysis. The internal environment includes the task, the team and individuals, and the external environment encompasses the social, political and economic systems.

Ideally, leadership is expected to be creative, transformative and to introduce positive change and innovation in an organisation, in the lives of workers and service users. It is also desirable for changes not to be temporary, but be durable or sustainable. Fullan (2004) states that 'sustainability is the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose' (Hargreaves, 2005b, p. 7). Hargreaves and Fink (2003) assert:

Sustainable leadership matters, spreads and lasts. It is a shared responsibility that does not unduly deplete human or financial resources, and that cares for and avoids exerting negative damage on the surrounding educational and community environment.

Sustainable leadership has an activist engagement with the forces that affect it, and builds an educational environment of organizational diversity that promotes cross-

fertilization of good ideas and successful practices in communities of shared learning and development (p. 3).

Seven principles that characterise sustainable leadership are depth, endurance, breadth, justice, diversity, resourcefulness and conservation (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003). Wakahiu and Salvaterra (2012) posit sustainable leadership 'seeks to promote development and change for the better' (p. 152). They concluded that 'sustainable leadership is imperative for development to occur and to ensure progress and improvement of personnel, and an increase in women participation in the decision-making process for future existence of organisations' (p. 164). In contrast, Abrahamson (2004) points out that *unsustainable* leadership is characterised by repetitive change syndrome, which involves initiative overload and change related chaos. Abrahamson (2004) points out:

Initiative overload [is] 'the tendency...to launch more change initiatives than anyone could ever reasonably handle'; [and] change-related chaos: 'the continuous state of upheaval that results when so many waves of initiatives have washed through the organisation that hardly anyone knows which change they're implementing or why', and no-one remains to keep the organizational memory of how things get done (p. 3, cited in Hargreaves, 2004, p. 288).

In "unsustainable" leadership, targets are imposed rather than negotiated, leaders aim for short-term rather than long-term achievements. Hargreaves (2005) asserts that sustainable leadership is supported by Professional Learning Communities, also known as Communities of Continuous Inquiry and Improvement (Hord, 1997). In Professional Learning Communities, diverse people with a shared commitment and common goals come together and work towards collaborative decision making. One of the distinctive traits of Professional Learning Communities is that leadership is stretched over the structures of the school. Leadership is not only concentrated on formal leaders, but spreads to informal leaders, that is, class teachers, student teachers, parents, guardians, students, assistants, non-teaching staff, and temporary or *ad hoc* structures such as committees and inspirational committees.

The distributed leadership continuum can take many forms. It could be by progressive delegation, guided, emergent and assertive distribution (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, pp. 116 - 135). Other features of Professional Learning Communities and distributed leadership include a vision of student-centred community 'focused on learning, teaching, and caring, based on strong relationships, mutual respect, the importance of family, and achieving balanced personal and professional lives' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 124). In brief, where Professional Learning Communities work well, leadership is distributed and transformational, and embodied with creativity, assertiveness, active listening, activism, democracy and spontaneity.

Conversely, Hargreaves (2005) points out that unsustainable or traditional leadership is embedded with Performance Training Sects (PTSs). PTSs are obsessed with *high-stakes testing*. Professional Learning Communities (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Hord, 1997; Wenger, 2012) focus first on learning, then achievement, and finally testing. However, Performance Training Sects give top priority to testing, followed by achievement and finally learning. A good example is that some key stakeholders complain that preparation for Leaving Certificate examinations is primarily focused on amassing points in order to enrol for courses offered by third level institutions. Table 2.4 below compares characteristics of Professional Learning Communities and Performance Training Sects.

<i>Professional Learning Communities</i>	<i>Performance Training Sects</i>
Transform knowledge	Transfer knowledge
Shared inquiry	Imposed requirements
Evidence informed	Results driven
Situated certainty	False certainty
Local solutions	Standardised scripts
Joint responsibility	Deference to authority
Continuous learning	Intensive training
Communities of practice	Sects of performance

Table 2.4: Professional Learning Communities versus Performance Training Sects

Adapted from: Hargreaves (2005, p. 52)

The term ‘sustainability’ has its origins in ecology and conservation of natural resources.

‘Sustainability is usually associated with ecology and conserving natural resources’ (Thomas, 2008, p. 27).

Table 2.5 below illustrates how the term ‘sustainability’ evolved up to the time it was adopted as a concept in education.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Development of the term “sustainability”</i>
1980	Term first coined by Lester Brown, founder of the World Watch Institute, the first research institute devoted to the analysis of global environmental issues
1987	Sustainable development defined by Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development
1992	Agenda 21, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio De Janeiro systematically addressed sustainable development
2002	United Nations Johannesburg Summit – developed practical goals for sustainable development
2005	Beginning of UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

Table 2.5: Timeline of developing the term ‘sustainability’

Adapted from: Hargreaves (2003, p. 3)

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2002) also states various conferences have been organised by United Nations since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The conference ‘helped educators around the world realise that education must be reoriented to once again reflect such a vision of sustainability, one that links economic well-being with cultural traditions and respect for Earth and its resources’ (p. 3). The key UN conferences with themes of sustainable development and that were held in the 1990s include those on ‘human rights in Vienna (1993), population and development in Cairo (1994), small island developing states in Barbados (1994), social development in Copenhagen (1995), women in Beijing (1995), food security in Rome (1996), and human settlements in Istanbul (1996)’ (p. 7). All these conferences emphasised the importance of education in facilitating the realisation of the goals of sustainable development.

UNESCO (2002) also states that education for sustainable development ‘is an emerging but dynamic concept that encompasses a new vision of education that seeks to empower people of all ages to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future’ (p. 7). It is apparent that in order to achieve sustainable development goals, education systems around the globe need to be led by professionals that embrace theories, practices and principles of sustainable leadership. Therefore, visions, theories, practices and principles of sustainable development and those of sustainable leadership are closely linked or complement each other.

Furthermore, UNESCO (2002) points out:

Sustainable development requires active and knowledgeable citizens and caring and informed decision makers capable of making the right choices about the complex and interrelated economic, social and environmental issues human society is facing. To achieve this requires the broader process of social change known as social learning, or what the OECD calls ‘enhancing societal capacity for the environment’ (p. 7).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (2002) asserts that:

This involves not only specific education and training programmes but also the use of policy and legislation as opportunities for teaching and encouraging new forms of personal, community and corporate behaviour. Social learning also involves reflection – often stimulated by religious leaders and the media - on the appropriateness of the mental models and assumptions that have traditionally guided thinking and behaviour (p. 7).

Tormey and Serrano (2009) state that as part of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005 – 2015) initiative, ‘a world-wide network of RCEs has been established to deliver education for sustainable development (ESD) to a regional/local community’. The Regional Centre of Expertise – Ireland is one such network. Tormey and Serrano (2009) asserts that RCE – Ireland ‘aims to promote and support activities and research that result in effective integration of education for sustainable development (ESD) principles and practices into formal, informal and non-formal education in Ireland’. RCE – Ireland is a research and action body that is composed of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), statutory bodies and institutions of higher education.

This subsection examined how the emerging concept of sustainability has become ingrained in leadership. The subsection also defined sustainable leadership, Professional Learning Communities and Performance Training Sects. Lastly, the subsection explored the timeline in developing the term ‘sustainability’ up to the beginning of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005 – 2015). The subsection that follows discusses the seven principles of sustainable leadership.

2.4.1 Principles of sustainable leadership

Hargreaves and Fink (2003) state that ‘sustainable educational leadership and improvement preserves and develops deep learning for all that spreads and lasts, in ways that do not harm to and indeed create positive benefit for others around us, now and in the future’ (cited in Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 17). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) argue that:

...well designed sustainable leadership puts people first and is personalised to their needs. Technical systems such as reporting or student administration processes, attendance systems, and special education tracking procedures have to be user-friendly. Data management systems that can collate and disaggregate information about student performance...have to be widely and easily accessible for the right reasons, in the right way, at the right time (p. 264).

In other words, user-friendly technologies should take into cognisance the ‘human factor’ and be ecological, that is, be designed to work in an effective and harmonious manner with a diverse population of users in a way that suits their local environment. What is desirable is that technology adapts and adjusts to human needs than vice-versa. Sophisticated technology may result in the human and natural world failing to cope with it or to (re)solve problems it creates. This is referred to as the Homer-Dixon’s ‘ingenuity gap’. Thomas Homer-Dixon (2000) carried out an eight-year groundbreaking study of a world becoming too complex and too fast-paced to manage because of issues pertaining to international financial crises, global climate change, antibiotic resistant

diseases, and terrorism and information glut. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) state that technology that is beyond our human capacity and control include 'nuclear generators and water treatment plants and equally important soft technologies like complicated work schedules and instruction manuals' (p. 263). The Chernobyl nuclear disaster and preventable deaths in hospitals that happen due to long work shifts and prescription of wrong medication are examples of an ingenuity gap.

Advocates of sustainable leadership agree that it has a moral basis. According to Thomas (2008), 'there is agreement that sustainability has a strong moral basis, places considerable importance on deeper learning and invests in people as leaders' (p. 28). Burns (2003) concurs with Thomas (2008) and states that he believes that 'leadership is not only a descriptive term but a prescriptive one, embracing a moral, even a passionate, dimension...I contend that there is nothing neutral about leadership; it is valued as a moral necessity' (p. 2). It is worrying that some leaders have knowingly worked against this prescribed moral compass and in some cases went unpunished.

Sustainability encourages pooling of resources as opposed to competing for finite resources.

Thomas (2008) points out that 'collaboration between schools is promoted as a worthwhile and essential concept and this may be in tension with the competitive element inherent in an accountability climate of test results and OFSTED¹ inspections' (p. 28). Thomas (2008) also asserts that there are tensions and complexities in that 'investing in people is seen as an essential requirement in creating strategic and sustainable primary schools' (p. 37). However, 'sustaining people and building capacity is a huge task and takes time' (p. 36). The organisation's motto should be: 'Preserve the best! Learn from the rest!' (Hargreaves, 2005b, p. 52). It takes a lot of financial resources to train and equip personnel with requisite knowledge, skills and competences and knowledge. Therefore, there is a need to retain qualified and experienced personnel as it may not be easy to replace after they have left the organisation. The three teachers that participated in the study all had more than 10 years of teaching experience in the VTOS programme. In Ireland, the State Examinations Commission (SEC) experienced an embarrassing litany of 13 mistakes found in the Leaving and Junior Certificate 2013 national examinations papers. The mistakes were partly attributed to the exodus of experienced staff. Donnelly (2014) points out:

It follows a review of the 2013 blunders, which also took on board the effect of the retirement of a large number of staff – the loss of whom stripped huge expertise from the system. In the 12-month run-up to last June, SEC staff numbers were cut by 15pc, which led to an increased workload for exam and assessment managers, compounded by the fact that 30 pc were new recruits.

¹ OFSTED refers to the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

Staff members acquire invaluable skills in the course of their careers through in-service training, continuing professional development training, and networking at local, regional, national and international level. Wakahiu and Salvaterra (2012) state that 'networking is essential for an organisation to learn from others. Sustainability is ensured in the eagerness and determination of the trainees to network and consult each other on ways to solve problems in their organizations and communities' (p. 159). In addition, the findings of Wakahiu and Salvaterra's (2012) study show:

The participants in SLDI² value mentoring as a technique designed to ensure stability and sustainability. They endeavoured not only to produce good results and increase productivity but also to empower their mentees and co-workers to practise good leadership skills they saw modelled by mentors (p. 160).

Findings by Wakahiu and Salvaterra's (2012) research on sustainability and transformation indicate:

Measurable social and economic gains were reported that created indelible marks on the trainees and their communities. By enabling the trainees to become more confident in pursuing grant funding to address the needs of their people, these women were able to establish their own niche as people who have a capacity to transform their society (p. 161).

This researcher discusses below seven principles of sustainable leadership that are posited by Hargreaves and Fink (2003, pp. 3 - 10). The first principle predicates that 'sustainable leadership creates and preserves sustaining learning' (p. 3). It is premised in that 'sustainability is to develop something that is itself sustaining. To sustain means to nourish. Sustaining learning is therefore learning that matters, that lasts and engages students intellectually, socially and emotionally' (p. 3). It follows that in education, sustainable learning does not encourage rote learning, competition and a results orientated approach, but is student-centred and aims to develop the learner as a whole. Hargreaves (2005) argues:

Short-term targets push most schools to focus on testing before learning; they put priority on learning that is easily measured; they narrow learning to the old basics, sacrificing breadth as well as depth, and turning a sense of urgency into a state of fear and panic, they short-circuit teacher learning and replace it with paint-by-numbers teacher training (p. 12).

The second principle is based on the notion that 'sustainable leadership secures success over time' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 4). Successful leaders sometimes fail at the last hurdle, and that last

² SLDI refers to Sisters' Leadership Development Initiative

hurdle is succession. In addition, Hargreaves and Fink (2003) point out that what fails them 'is the challenge of letting go, moving on, and planning for one's obsolescence' (p. 4). No matter how good or charismatic a leader could be, the indisputable fact is that all leaders are mortal. The difference is that works and deeds of sustainable leaders are not like veneer linings but run deep and wide, and continue to reflect in the qualities and attributes of their successors long after their predecessors have departed. Hargreaves (2005b) points out that good succession plans:

- are prepared long before leaders' anticipated departure or even from the outset of their appointment
- give other people proper time to prepare
- are incorporated in all school improvement plans
- are the responsibility of many, rather than the prerogative of lone leaders who tend to want to clone themselves
- are based on a clear diagnosis of the school's existing stage of development and future needs for improvement
- are transparently linked to clearly defined leadership standards and competencies that are needed for the next phase of improvement (p. 24).

There is a smooth transition of succession in sustainable leadership. Conversely, succession in charismatic leadership is problematic because they 'are followed by lesser successors who cannot maintain the momentum of improvement' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003, p. 4). Sustainable leadership transcends the individual and gains influence from the hierarchy of predecessors and successors who would have previously worked for the organisation. Therefore, in order for sustainable leadership to be successful it needs to be ingrained in the culture of the organisation.

Hargreaves and Fink's (2003) third principle of sustainable leadership posits that 'sustainable leadership sustains the leadership of others' (p. 6). Succession goes beyond grooming successors. Spillane *et al.* (2001) point out that in an educational institution that embraces principles of distributed leadership, 'enacting leadership tasks is often distributed across multiple leaders in a school, including principals, assistant principals, curriculum specialists, reading or Title I teachers, and classroom teachers' (p. 25). As a result, when addressing the succession project, both formal (principals and assistant principals) and informal leaders (classroom teachers and non-teaching staff) should be targeted.

The fourth principle is of the premise that 'sustainable leadership addresses issues of social justice' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003, p. 7). In other words, sustainable leadership is valued and prescriptive in embracing a moral dimension. Hargreaves and Fink (2003) reflect that:

Sustainable leadership benefits all students and schools – not just a few at the expense of the rest. Sustainable leadership is sensitive to how lighthouse, magnet or charter schools and their leaders can leave others in the shadows, and how privileged communities can be tempted to skim the cream off the local leadership pool (p. 7).

Hargreaves and Fink (2003) point out that ‘sustainable leadership is therefore not only about maintaining improvement in one’s own school. It is about being responsible to the schools and students that one’s own actions affect in the wider environment’ (p. 7). Policies that embrace social justice do not create a steep brain drain from disadvantaged to advantaged schools or deliberately resource certain schools more than others. Hargreaves (2005) argues:

Target-driven forms of competitive accountability create disincentives for neighbouring schools to share their learning and expertise. The desperate search for heroic stories of exemplary success also encourages systems to exalt highly improving schools at the expense of their neighbours, awarding them preferential interest, resources and support (p. 13).

Social justice perspectives encourage a holistic co-existence among neighbouring schools and students enrolled in those schools.

The fifth principle of sustainable leadership is predicated on the fact that ‘sustainable leadership develops rather than depletes human and material resources’ (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003, p. 8). Sustainable leadership offers an environment that indiscriminately nurtures and grooms positional and non-formal leaders. It offers continuing professional development training to leaders and potential leaders with the aim of equipping them with knowledge and skills that help them to effectively and efficiently deal with issues that they encounter in the workplace. Hargreaves and Fink (2003) show that:

Sustainable leadership provides intrinsic rewards and extrinsic incentives that attract and retain the best and brightest of the leadership pool; and it provides time and opportunity for leaders to network, learn from and support each other, as well as coach and mentor successors. Sustainable leadership is thrifty without being cheap. It carefully husbands its resources in developing the talents of all its educators rather than lavishing rewards on selecting and rotating a few already-proven stars (p. 8).

Sustainable leadership may offer training courses on conflict resolution, stress management, and health and safety issues to members of staff. ‘Sustainable leadership systems know how to take care of their leaders and how to get leaders to take care of themselves’ (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003,

p. 8). Leaders and members of staff who do not know how to take care of themselves are most likely to suffer from work-related stress, depression and burn-out.

Organisations that proactively look after their employees' safety, health and welfare retain their employees, in contrast, organisations that do not value their employees' wellbeing have high staff turnover.

Hargreaves and Fink's (2003) sixth principle of sustainable leadership claims that 'sustainable leadership develops environmental diversity and capacity' (p. 9). Research has shown that successful teams are not necessarily composed of like-minded people, but are constituted of diverse, creative and intelligent team members that have common objectives. 'Imposed, short-term targets turn the deserved focus on deep standards into a damaging fixation with standardised testing. Standardisation destroys and denies the diversity among students and teachers, that is, the source of their strength' (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 13). Sustainability encourages people to adapt and to use their diverse competences and skills to thrive in their complex environment. Hargreaves (2005) also argues:

Acceleration and standardisation of imposed change and its targets reduces teachers' time for working together and for learning from one another slowly and sustainably, as real learning communities. Distributed leadership turns into downloaded delegation along with artificial additives of stilted learning teams (p 13).

Sustainable leadership perspectives dictate that adopting and implementing "one-glove-fits-all" policies and approaches cause regression.

The seventh principle of sustainable leadership is based on the notion that 'sustainable leadership undertakes activist engagement with the environment' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003, p. 9).

Sustainability recognises that leadership and other human activity neither exist independently nor in isolation of the environment. Spillane *et al.* (2001) states that 'actors develop common understandings and draw on cultural, social, and historical norms in order to think and act' (p. 23). In other words, sustainable leadership 'influences the environment that influences it' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003, p. 10). Short-term targets do not promote linking with the past so that we can learn from it. Hargreaves (2005) explains:

Short-term targets force us to think and work in the present and future tense. Their creative destruction makes it hard for us to take the time to acknowledge, learn from and recombine elements from the past, then move beyond them. Imposed short-term targets turn us into innocent orphans who have been left no legacy and are cast into a world of repetitive and relentless change (p. 13).

Hargreaves (2005b) points out that the past is conserved through:

- Retreats that renew the vision
- Audits of the organization's memories of analogous change
- Asset inventories of existing experiences and knowledge
- Organisational abandonment meetings
- Appointments made mid-term to cultivate learning of the culture
- Storytelling to pass on wisdom
- Mentoring that runs in both directions
- Good written records
- Creation of blended professional cultures
- Creative recombination, not repetitive change (p. 55)

The seven principles of sustainable leadership help us to understand what sustainability looks like. However, it is important to be practical and understand how sustainability can be achieved.

This subsection explored the seven principles of sustainable leadership. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) outline five action principles that facilitate putting sustainability into practice. The five action principles are activism, vigilance, patience, transparency and design. The subsection that follows discusses the action principle of activism.

2.4.2 The action principle of activism

The first action principle theorises that '*sustainable leadership is activist; it engages assertively with its environment*' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 257). School leaders sometimes assume the role of community activists in the face of adverse policies or an environment that negatively affects the operation of their schools. They may write articles or appear in the media highlighting injustices related to inequalities, discrimination, racism, prejudice, and exclusion, among others. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) assert:

Activist leadership influences the environment by activating personal and professional networks, forging strategic alliances with the community, influencing the media by writing articles for newspapers, appearing on radio and television programs, and protesting openly against misconceived policies. Activist leaders are assertive leaders (p. 257).

The activist dimension in sustainable leadership is needed most when the environment is least conducive to freedom of expression. An activist leader has the courage to stand up against the political leadership or her/his superiors when s/he realised that the future of his followers or subordinates are under threat.

This subsection discussed the action principle of activism. The next subsection explores the action principle of vigilance.

2.4.3 The action principle of vigilance

The second action principle posits that '*sustainable leadership is vigilant; it monitors to check that it is staying healthy and not beginning to decline*' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 257).

They theorise that 'school and school systems can...become toxic environments of wasted and seemingly disposable human potential. Sometimes the evidence is there for all to see – in crime, disorder, absenteeism, lack of learning, or loss of hope' (p. 258). However, the effects on the educational environment may not be quite obvious. In such situations, the environment can be monitored by carrying out research on teachers and/or students to determine their behaviours and attitudes, satisfaction and engagement, learning styles, attendance, retention, morale, motivation, and tracking test scores and achievement results, among other things.

They also state that:

...continuing to collect standardised test scores done through a *sample* rather than a *census* will...reduce the negative instructional impact on schools as well as the overall cost to the system. Sustainable leaders are vigilant leaders. They are hungry for data that warn them of the early signs of danger and that provide support and stepping stones on the path to improvement and success (p. 259).

It is also pertinent for research findings to be used not only to highlight and market successes to the public, but to also highlight failures that may help to inform the organisation about areas that need improvement. In addition, if schools in a certain geographical location are held collectively accountable, that might encourage them to work collectively than to compete against one another.

This subsection discussed the action principle of vigilance. The subsection that follows examines the action principle of patience.

2.4.4 The action principle of patience

The third action principle postulates that '*sustainable leadership is patient; it defers gratification instead of seeking instant results*' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 259). To reinforce the above action principle, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) claim that 'sustainable leadership is patient and preserving. It

invests urgently in improvement but does not expect or insists on instant success' (p. 259). In other words, this is in line with the notion that educational achievement is generally viewed 'as a product of delayed gratification, of willingness to study hard and endure financial hardship, to resist the momentary temptations and distractions of adolescence in order to secure greater rewards in years to come' (p. 259). They claim that sustainable leadership resist wanton waste and cravings that characterise the disposable society that we now live in. Sustainable leadership 'is driven by an urgent need for immediate action but also by the ability to defer gratification for results in order to fulfil the moral purpose of authentic, lasting, and widespread success' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 260). In contrast, unsustainable leadership does not value patience and permanence and is obsessed with instant gratification, unwillingness to study hard and unpreparedness to bear financial hardships, failure to resist momentary temptations, and distractions of adolescence and the environment in which we live.

Recognition of indigenous knowledge (IK) is a key principle of community education and development and complements modern education initiatives in facilitating education for sustainable development. IK is also known as local knowledge, traditional knowledge or traditional environmental knowledge (Barca and Arenas, 2010, p. 6). Barca and Arenas (2010) assert:

IK is connected to the locality and to daily living. IK is rooted in a particular time and place, and is created by people who live in that community. The knowledge they generate has the hallmark of the place, and it reflects the integral relationship between humans and the physical place they inhabit (p. 7).

IK treats Mother Nature with great respect and appreciation, a notion that led to the origins of sustainability and research on the relationship of human activity and environmental issues. Barca and Arenas (2010) state '*IK assumes a spiritual connection between humans and nature, and it views nature as a supernatural being and living phenomenon.* IK views nature as a mother that is both protector and nurturer, and that needs to be cared for in return' (p. 8). IK is not accorded broad epistemological recognition as a complement of modern education approaches because of misconceptions that have been peddled as facts. Barca and Arenas (2010) argue the mistaken beliefs are:

1. Knowledge can be clearly dichotomised into indigenous versus Western worldviews. These worldviews not only represent distinct and even opposite epistemologies but are also irreconcilable.
2. Indigenous knowledge is biocentric and promotes an ethics for responsibility for all creation. It always promotes the protection and sharing of land as an integral part of the web of life.

3. Indigenous knowledge is unchanging and immutable. When members of an indigenous group adopt 'foreign' ideas or practices they become corrupted (p. 6).

These misplaced beliefs have acted as impediments to programmes aimed at transmitting, validating, and preserving 'indigenous values, philosophies, practices and languages' (p. 6). As a result, it has been problematic to design an educational curriculum that concurrently supports both the subordinate indigenous knowledge and the dominant modern one. If it was not for the mistaken beliefs, IK could be playing a key role in initiation and implementation of Community (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Hord, 1997; Wenger, 2012) development projects, the establishment and running of Professional Learning Communities and implementation of education for sustainable development initiatives.

This subsection discussed the action principle of patience. The subsection below examines the action principle of transparency.

2.4.5 The action principle of transparency

The fourth action principle proposes that '*sustainable leadership is transparent; it is always open to scrutiny and inspection*' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 260). Despite numerous legislation, communiqués and training, public and private institutions continue to act in a manner that is not transparent and accountable, paying lip service to community involvement and transparency and in some cases doing the ultimate minimum to satisfy the law.

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) point out that 'the new millennium marked a collapse of trust in an opaque and unaccountable world of business and finance that served itself at the expense of its clients and that duped the public into believing that economic progress had no limit and that the party would never end' (p. 260). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) point out that 'an organisation lacks transparency when it withholds sensitive data, hides its errors, communicates in impenetrable language, and presents only positive information about itself' (p. 261). On the other hand, a transparent and accountable organisation 'reaches out to communities. It invites direct engagement; two-way, jargon-free communication; and meaningful participation by students, parents, and communities in the life of the school.

Sustainable leadership is honest and forthright about failures as well as successes' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 262). In brief, in sustainable leadership aspiration to greater integrity is synonymous with 'no fear of increased transparency. Sustainable leadership wants to be seen in its true colours, not viewed through rose-coloured glasses' (p. 262). Sustainable leadership strives to eliminate dubious deals and seeks to avoid ploys of spinning and "cooking" of figures and information in order to mislead clients and the public.

This subsection discussed the action principle of transparency. The subsection that follows examines the action principle of design.

2.4.6 The action principle of design

The fifth action principle hypothesises that *'sustainable leadership is designer-made; it creates systems that are personalised for people's use and that are compatible with human capacity'* (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 262). Most aspects of the designer leadership action principle have already been cited above during a discussion about the *human factor* and the *ingenuity gap*. According to Hargreaves and Fink (2006), 'all systems in nature are emergent and are the product of evolutionary adaptation. As humans, we are capable of designing even more complex structures than those of nature because of our abilities in language and conceptualisation' (p. 262). However, our endeavours sometimes disappoint, especially when we impose technology that tries 'to master rather than ecological or even designer models that work more effectively and harmoniously with diverse people and their local environments' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, pp. 262 – 263). The fifth action principle stresses a moral obligation to design machines and work schedules that are user-friendly and that do not deplete resources in our immediate environment. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) assert that 'external accountability mechanisms should use a sample, not a census; should administer tests flexibly at a time of year that is appropriate for the child; should involve high degrees of internal self-review alongside external judgement' (p. 264). The systems should be responsive to human needs by being flexible, personalised and easily accessible rather than abstract, mechanical and standardised.

This subsection discussed the action principle of design. The whole entire section (2.4) examined theories and practice in sustainable leadership. The next section examines theories and practice in transformational leadership.

2.5 Theories and practice of transformational leadership

Transactional leadership is a predecessor of transformative leadership approaches, and both have been targeted for research in the last thirty years (Burns, 2003). According to Hargreaves and Fink (2006), 'the idea of transformational leadership has its origins in Max Weber's concept of charismatic authority, in which leaders receive legitimacy from the mythical, ineffable properties of their individual personality and their ability to motivate others to follow them' (p. 102). Anderson (2006) points out that 'transformational leadership is often contrasted with transactional leadership, which is primarily based on exchanges of rewards for compliance. Transactional leadership plays on the self-interest of the employees' (p. 21) or followers. Furthermore, Anderson (2006) points out:

The ability of the leader to articulate an attractive vision for the possible future is a core element of transformational leadership. ...A transformational leader defines the need for change, presents his vision, and mobilizes commitment. This kind of leadership typically produces followers that show a strong personal identification with their leader (p. 21).

Burns (2003) asserts that 'transforming leaders define public values that embrace the supreme and enduring principles of a people. These values are the shaping ideas behind constitutions and laws and their interpretation' (p. 29). According to Dantley (2003), when transformational leadership is grounded in a critical theoretical framework, it 'emanates from a context that demystifies the systemic realities of silencing and marginalization of those voices, which are peripheral to schools' hegemonic constructions' (p. 15). Critical transformative leadership embraces approaches of praxis of resistance, critical examination of accepted knowledge, cocreation of knowledge by student and teacher, radical approach, and is interrogative in its engagement of the various constituents of schooling and it critiques. How are the verbs 'transform' and 'change' interconnected? Burns (2003) remarks:

To change is to substitute one thing for another, to give and take, to exchange places, to pass from one place to another. ...But to transform something cuts much more profoundly. It is to cause a metamorphosis in form of structure, a change into another substance, a radical change in outward form or inner character, as when a frog is transformed into a prince or carriage maker into an auto factory (p. 24).

The argument raised by Burns (2003) about the contrast between the verbs 'change' and 'transform' appears self-defeating and defeats the whole purpose that has been espoused by other transformational researchers. In his book, Burns (2003) uses the two verbs interchangeably and in a different context to the one explained above. Burns (2003) states that creative artists and writers 'and many other creative people produced transforming work' (p. 153). This is synonymous to stating that creativity is one of the characteristics of a transformational leader. In addition, Burns (2003) comments:

Even more mysterious than the impact of institutions on creative individuals – and for our purposes, more important – is the reverse impact of creative persons on society. At its simplest, creative leadership begins when a person imagines a state of affairs not presently existing. This initial creative insight or spark is elaborated into a broader vision of change, possible ways of accomplishing it are conceived, and – in a fateful act of leadership – the vision is communicated to others. Because most ideas of significant change make some person followers and others opponents, conflict arises. It is such

conflicts that supply powerful motivation for transforming leadership and followership, fusing them into a dynamic for in pursuit of change (p. 153).

There is evidence that transformational leadership theories were developed as a way of adapting to change or managing change. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) developed new theories of leadership that were based on the requirement for managing change and motivational theory and a concept of transactional versus transformational leadership developed. Norcross *et al.* (2011) asserts that it is paramount to note that each process that facilitates behavioural change is broad and 'encompasses multiple techniques, methods, and relationship stances traditionally associated with disparate theoretical orientations. The processes of change represent an intermediate level of abstraction between metatheoretical assumptions and specific techniques spawned by those theories' (p. 144). According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership aims to motivate individuals to satisfy higher order needs and fully engages them within the change process, often involving culture and organizational change (cited in Yardley and Neal, 2007).

The transformational leadership concept evolved from transactional leadership. Abeysekera and Jayakody (2011) state that 'relationship marketing...emerged after the concept of transactional marketing and on the other hand transformational leadership emerged after the concept of transactional leadership' (p. 147). Armstrong's (1999) concurs with Abeysekera and Jayakody (2011) that there is a relationship between the concepts of transformational leadership and that of transactional leadership. Armstrong (1999) states that 'transactional leaders trade money, jobs, and security for compliance. Transformational leaders motivate people to strive for higher-level goals' (p. 183). Hargreaves (2004) points out:

Change and emotion are inseparable. Each implicates the other. Both involve movement. Change is defined as 'movement from one state to another', while emotion comes from the Latin *emovere*, meaning 'to arouse or stir up'. There is no human change without emotion and there is no emotion that does not embody a momentary or momentous process of change (p. 287).

Transformational leadership theorises that both leaders and subordinates may raise their performance levels if they work collectively. Julsuwan *et al.* (2011) comment:

Transformational leadership is a new paradigm in which the leaders try to influence the followers to realize the significance of performance. The leaders do it by upgrading their followers' needs or persuading them to put the organization as their priority rather than their self-interests. These influences encourage the followers to trust and respect the

leaders, and it also motivates the followers to put their expectations on performance at higher level than usual (p. 424).

Self-efficacy and self-confidence are improved if the organisation embarks on continuing and professional development initiatives. Continuing and professional development courses enhance leaders' and followers' 'knowledge, skills, expertise in management, good vision including moral, ethic, understanding and ability to adapt to change' (Julsuwan *et al.*, 2011, p. 424). Although transformational leadership is about creating something new, just and more inclusive, the process involves adaptation from the old to the new way of doing things.

Hargreaves (2004) states that 'there is no human change without emotion or there is no emotion that does not embody a momentary and momentous process of change. Adapting to change is not a smooth process' (p. 287). This is the case even if it's positive change. For example, addition of a new member of the family and getting a new better paying job is not a smooth transition even though both are positive changes.

Transformational leadership is considered appropriate in management of change. Hartley (2009) argues that 'routine, by definition, is difficult to disrupt. No more so is this the case than in education whose organisational structures and pedagogical processes have been remarkably resistant to change' (p. 139). People do not like to change for the sake of it. They need to make informed decisions. It is therefore necessary to educate those that are affected by change on why change is happening. Training could also be offered in conflict, stress management and change management in order to facilitate a smooth transition.

Most authors on management and leadership use the terms change management and management of change interchangeably. However, Lester (2007) state:

Change management must not be confused with *management of change*, which is the art of changing the culture of systems of an organization and managing the human reactions. Such a change can have far-reaching repercussions on the lives and attitudes of all members of the organization, from the board level to the operatives on the shop floor (p. 86).

There is a need to professionally and proactively handle change management order to minimise psychological impacts that may cause stress and resistance of members. Management focuses on the people side and bringing people through the transition of change within any implementation initiative. Management of Change (MOC) is very important because it focuses on the integrity of the asset and asset configuration changes; it is also called Configuration Management.

The conceptualisation of the meaning of change is not straightforward in education but is often contrasted 'between unwanted external change, on the one hand, and desired and approved of internal or self-initiated change, on the other' (Hargreaves, 2004, pp. 291 – 292).

Practitioners consider the former to be negative, mandated and influenced by politics, while the latter is considered to be positive and desirable. In contrast, Lester (2007) states that change management refers to managing inevitable deviations in terms of time, cost or quality that might occur when implementing a project. Lester (2007) argues that 'for this reason it is important that all changes are recorded, evaluated and managed to ensure that the effects are appreciated by the originator of the change, and the party carrying out the change is suitably reimbursed where the change is a genuine extra to the original specification or brief' (p. 84). Similarly, implementation of policies and programmes in an organisation may be affected by changes that were not anticipated in the conception and planning stages.

Transformational leadership empowers followers. Armstrong (1999) defines empowerment as a 'process of giving people more scope or 'power' to exercise control over, and take responsibility for, their work. It means getting people to use their judgement in the interests of the organisation and its customers' (p. 124). In addition, Armstrong (1999) states that 'empowerment provides greater 'space' for individuals to use their abilities by enabling and encouraging them to take decisions close to the point of contact' (p. 124). As a result, empowerment approaches improve organisational effectiveness on the basis 'that people who are nearest to the problem are best able to judge its solution, provided they have a framework within which to make their decisions' (Armstrong, 1999, pp. 124 - 125). Handy (1994) distinguishes empowerment from subsidiarity and argues that 'empowerment implies that someone on high is giving away power. Subsidiarity on the other hand, implies that the power belongs, in the first place, lower down or further out. You take it away as a last resort' (cited in Armstrong, 1999, p. 125). The concept of empowerment works where individual employees or members of an organisation show a level of *competence* and can execute tasks with minimal supervision, there is *trust* in addition to the competence of employees or members, and *teamwork* rather individual action is adopted in solving problems.

In transformational leadership approaches, conflict can be viewed as a positive development when empowering followers. Burns (2003) points out that 'tension can develop in this process...leaders can come into conflict with followers' rising sense of efficacy and purpose. Followers might outstrip leaders. They might become leaders themselves. That is what makes transforming leadership participatory and democratic' (p. 26). On the other hand, leadership and ethics academic Joanne Ciulla states that:

[We should be wary] of “bogus empowerment”, when leaders ignore “the moral commitment of empowerment”, instead using the forms and language of empowerment to exploit followers more efficiently. Some leaders might lack the “moral courage” to alter “the power relationship that they have with their followers”. And when people “are told that they are being empowered, but they know they are not”, the failure to deliver breeds cynicism about leadership and the collapse of followership (cited in Burns, 2003, p. 184).

Burns (2003) also asserts that a political science scholar, Richard Couto investigated differences among community and voluntary organisations that were engaged in promoting integration and collaboration among groups of factions at grassroots level. Burns (2003) comments that:

He contrasted “psycho-political” empowerment that boosts people’s self-esteem and mastery of their own lives, and promotes democratic participation in actions for a common benefit, with “psycho-symbolic empowerment” that may gratify people’s self-esteem but leaves them otherwise as they were – politically powerless (p. 184)

The process in transformational leadership in which a leader empowers followers and the followers reciprocate by empowering the leader is known as mutual empowerment. Burns (2003) points out that ‘mutual empowerment means exactly that: the empowering of one makes possible the other’s empowerment’ (p. 27). In mutual leadership, empowerment is a two-way process, that is, *centripetal* and *centrifugal*. Centripetal empowerment is from the centre to the periphery or from the leader to the followers. However, centrifugal empowerment is from the periphery to the centre or from the followers to the leader. In contrast, charismatic leaders do not empower their followers. The power remains in the centre and does not reach the periphery. That creates succession problems when the leader is no longer fit for leadership or when s/he dies. That is partly because followers would be disempowered and/or not knowledgeable about leadership issues. Burns (2003) points out that:

...a transformational leader is hypothesized to rise one step ahead of followers...but continued progress depends on their ability to stay closely attuned to the evolving wants, needs, and expectations of followers – in short, to learn from and be led by followers. And requires a commitment to a process in which the leaders and followers *together* pursue selfactualization (p 143).

It seems the leader needs to empower followers with real or psycho-political empowerment in order for the followers to actively participate in mutual empowerment. During the leadership and followership triumphal march towards realisation of self-actualisation, a multidirectional process of

picking up cues takes place. According to Dantley (2003), 'the essence of transformative leadership clearly assumes that leadership involves relationship, influence, and some notions of virtue or rectitude' (p. 3). Failure by the leader and followers to have a common purpose and mutual support might result in the leadership and followership flowing in different wavelengths resulting in a discord and lack of coordination.

According to Burns (2003), the leadership-follower paradox hypothesises that:

...the boundary between leaders and followers blurs ultimately disappears if, instead of identifying individual actors simply as leaders or simply as followers, we see the whole process as a *system* in which the functions of leadership is palpable and central but the actors move in and out of leader and follower roles. At this crucial point we are no longer seeing individual leaders; rather we see *leadership* as the basic process of social change, of causation in a community, an organization, a nation – perhaps even the globe (p. 185).

Theories of causation have a great influence in leadership scholarship. 'For example, understanding...leadership involves the identification and analysis of many short-term or *micro* tasks. ...it is through the execution of these tasks that we can begin to analyze the *how* as distinct from the *what* of school leadership' (Spillane *et al.*, 2001, p. 24). Accordingly, leadership has something to do with critical reflection and reflexivity. A leader or potential leader also needs to be self-retrospective and intrinsically question why and how certain things in the leadership spectrum happen in the way they do.

Results of Timperley's (2005) study of distributed leadership reflect that transformation 'could not be understood if leadership traits, behaviours, tasks, or artefacts had been analysed separately. The change involved a complex interplay among all these aspects, resulting in different leadership activities situated in a particular context' (p.416). The interplay among all aspects, that is, leadership traits, behaviours, tasks, and artefacts, is an important unit of analysis.

Owing to a large volume of global migration and an increase in social transformation in the 21st century, leadership perspectives are beginning to adopt critical theory perspectives.

Dantley (2003) states:

Transformative leadership grounded in critical theory demands that educational leaders critically assess the asymmetrical relations of power in the organizational context and deconstruct, through a critical hermeneutic, those practices and cultural artefacts that engender an anti-democratic discourse in organisations such as schools (p. 15).

Inequality usually manifests itself in the trinity of race, gender and class which 'serve as signifiers that draw the attention of transformative leaders' (Dantley, 2003, p. 15). In order to reduce inequalities and hegemonic reproduction in public institutions, transformative leaders are expected 'to propose an agenda of organizational reconstruction centred on practices of democracy and a politics of liberation and hope' (p. 15). However, it is pertinent to note that transformational leadership just like a reformist movement might serve as a conduit for an elitist, suppressive, oppressive and discriminatory agenda. According to Armstrong *et al.* (2010), one of the challenges facing education as a democratic project is that:

...of developing a democratic practice based on a critical questioning of the contested social and political interests that inform educational policy and practice. To be critical is to take risks but entails asking questions about whose interests are served by particular ways of conceptualizing educational value and practice. But questioning what the powerful would have us believe must be at the heart of the aspirations of a democratic society (p. 23).

Among the critical questions that a transformative leader may ask are the following: Why is it that knowledge that is constructed by the dominant class is considered legitimate while that constructed by subordinate classes is not recognised as such? Why it is that scientific knowledge and not other forms of knowledge is considered to be associated with the dominant class? Whose interests does education serve? Is education a political project or not? Why is it that discourses of inclusive education and special education continue to be highly contested terrains in most educational systems around the world? Why is it that some educational institutions use selection tests as a prerequisite for enrolment while others do not? Is it meritocracy or social, cultural, economic and political capital that significantly influences achievement in educational institutions?

Dantley (2003) argues that 'transformative educational leadership offers, by the implication in its name, a substantive change in the very definition and implementation of traditional school leadership' (p. 3). Therefore, according to Dantley (2003) transformative leadership seems an appropriate model for educational leadership.

Larson (2000) states that 'critical scholars engage practising professionals and other interested parties in processes that put issues of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation in schools at the centre of inquiry' (p. 310). Transformational leaders with a critical theoretical framework 'clearly understand the inherent praxis of reconstruction following deconstruction of the social creations schools have traditionally forged' (Dantley, 2003, p. 16). Deconstruction of traditional structures needs leaders with moral bravery because those who benefit from the status quo usually offer stiff resistance. According to Dantley (2003), a normative mindset does exist in society that:

...tacitly legitimates dual systems in school districts, one for the affluent and one for the poor, one that proficiently educates whites and one which under-educates people of colour, one that celebrates maleness and denigrates femaleness, one that reifies conformity while deligitimating difference (p. 15).

While Dantley (2003) draws his experience from the American context of the education system, issues of race, gender and class also affect the Irish education system. Unfortunately, and probably due to social norms, conformity and compliance those who are negatively treated or discriminated against sometimes humbly comply.

Armstrong *et al.* (2010) state that 'an organisational approach to schooling sees schools as organisations that have the potential to instigate and implement change becoming more inclusive (p. 32). Additionally, Armstrong *et al.* (2010) point out that:

...participants in the process of becoming more inclusive need to address issues at different levels of the school system. They need to see how staff and students are organized; resources and support systems are utilised; curriculum is developed, presented and assessed; attitudes of the school communities influence understanding, interactions and opportunities for collaboration; and how change can be initiated and what kind of professional development is needed (p. 34).

In other words, educational institutions are considered as appropriate sites in which social integration could occur, but it is not always the case. There is a link between social integration and employment. Findings of a study carried out by O'Connell and McGinnity (2008) in Ireland indicate that there was a 'high rate of unemployment among the Black respondents that are participating in the labour market' (p. 44). In addition, O'Connell and McGinnity (2008) assert 'Asian respondents and members of the 'Other' ethnic group are less likely to secure the top occupations and somewhat more likely to report discrimination' (p. 46) In other words, Blacks, Asians and 'Other' ethnic groups are over-represented in over-qualified categories.

An over-qualified category refers to getting employment using a qualification that is beyond that which is a prerequisite for minimum qualifications. It is significant to highlight that some black people that come from former English colonies are fluent English speakers. The outcomes of a study carried out by Khattab *et al.* (2012) on men in England and Wales show that 'individuals' occupational and education attainment is influenced by their ethnicity, religion and colour in the UK and elsewhere' (p. 296). The findings of the same study also indicate that 'Christian Black-African men are extremely over-represented within the severely and moderately over-qualified categories compared to other groups, and particularly to Christian White-British' (p. 303). Black-Africans experience penalties in the labour markets because of their colour (Khattab *et al.* (2012).

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) point out that other features of Professional Learning Communities and distributed leadership include a vision of student-centred community ‘focused on learning, teaching, and caring, based on strong relationships, mutual respect, the importance of family, and achieving balanced personal and professional lives’ (p. 124). However, it is important to note that Dantley (2003) points out that ‘democracy may be equitably defined but it is unfairly meted out based on race, gender, and class in our schools’ (p. 15). Transformative leaders could dismantle inequalities ‘through acts of reconstruction, redefining, reform or radical reconstruction’ (p.15). Transforming the education system has positive ripple effects on the work of practising professionals. Larson (2000) compares:

Unlike sociology, history or psychology, education is not a discipline. It is a professional school. Professors working in the professional schools draw on the disciplines to inform professional practice. Professional schools exist to prepare teachers and administrators and to provide ongoing development for practising professionals (p. 309).

Other professional schools are medicine and social work. All professional schools vary from disciplines because the scholars of the former have a professional mandate to inform and enhance the practice of the latter. It is therefore helpful that professional schools mirror theoretical and methodological practices that inform disciplines or fields that they support through professional development.

Table 2.6 below illustrates the components that Julsuwan *et al.* (2011) say are necessary in developing transformational leadership of supporting-line administrators at public higher education institutions.

<i>The main components</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Attributes of the leadership</i>
1.Understanding change	To have knowledge and understand the transformational leadership, to realize the importance of change, to have good attitude towards change, and to understand procedure of change in the organisation	1.Creation of understanding towards changes in the organization 2.Building good attitude towards changes in the organization 3.Promote and support changes in the organization
2.Idealized influence	To create and communicate vision, to have moral and ethic, to have self-esteem, and to have emotional quotient	1.Creation of communication of vision 2.Development of moral and ethic 3.Self-esteem 4.Emotional quotient
3.Inspirational motivation	To have inspirational motivation, to have motivation and good conscious in working	1.Inspirational motivation 2.Development of value and good conscious in working
4. Intellectual stimulation	To have creativity and integrated thinking	1.Creative thinking 2.Integrated thinking
5.Relationships	To consider personal differences and to have skills in communication	1.Consideration of personal differences 2.Skills in communication 3.Techniques in delegating and coaching

Table 2.6: Developing transformational leadership in education institutions Adapted from: Julsuwan *et al.* (2011, p. 426)

Table (2.6) illustrates that according to the Julsuwan *et al.* (2011) study, the five main components in developing transformational leadership of support-line administrators at public higher education institutions are: 1) understanding change, 2) idealized influence, 3) inspirational motivation, 4) intellectual stimulation, and 5) relationships.

First, understanding change is connected to cultivation and nurturing of knowledge; understanding the concept and a good attitude towards change in order for followers to realize the urgency and necessity for change. This leads to acceptance, buy-in and individuals to share the change vision, owning and championing the change.

Second, idealised influence is associated with trust, reliability, and faith of leaders in order to create respect for leaders. Leaders should behave as role models according to good morals and ethics, and create and communicate an explicit vision, perform wilfully, value themselves, display trust and pride, have an emotional quotient, and be able to manage their emotions.

Third, inspirational motivation enables leaders to motivate followers, to inspirationally work, embed good value and develop good consciousness, and to convince them to perform and prioritize mutual benefit than self-benefit, standardize and set up goals at higher level.

Fourth, intellectual stimulation makes leaders to be capable of encouraging followers to use creativity and solve problems by new methods, apply positive and integrated thinking.

Fifth, good relationships enable leaders to create relationships between people with individual considerations and individual differences. Cultivation of good relationships makes it possible for leaders to care for followers individually, communicate in two ways, and assign and train. Leaders should build relationships with various individuals and groups of individuals. Upgrading relationships between people benefit to building relationships based on other topics. Effective leaders must motivate the followers to build sustainable relationships between individuals and be friendly (p.427 – 428).

This subsection examined what different researchers say about different aspects of transformational leadership. The following subsection explores Burns (1978) and (2003) theoretical perspectives of transformational leadership.

2.5.1 *The Burns' theoretical perspectives in transformational leadership*

In 1978, political scientist James MacGregor Burns published his book titled *Leadership*.

Burns' first publication was followed by another book in 2003 titled *Transforming Leadership*.

According to Burns (2003), transformational leadership takes place when:

Leaders take the initiative in mobilising people for participation in the process of change, encouraging a sense of collective identity and collective efficacy, which in turn brings stronger feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy, described by Bernard Bass as an enhanced 'sense of 'meaningfulness' in their work and lives'. By pursuing transformational change, people can transform themselves (pp. 25 – 26).

Collaboration helps the leader and followers to inspire, empower and motivate one another and pursue higher order social needs. The leader uses his influence to inspire, empower and motivate followers, and followers reciprocate that. It is paramount to highlight that Burns (2003) states that pursuing transformational change transforms people. In other words, both change and transformation are embodied in transformational leadership.

The dynamics of transformative leadership are such that objectives of the leader and followers merge and become indivisible. Burns (2003) remarks:

With such a dynamic and mutually empowering interaction between leader and follower, a crucial change occurs. The process is so complex and multidimensional, so fluid and transforming, that persons initially labelled 'leaders' and 'followers' come to succeed each other, merge with each other, and substitute for each other. Leader and follower roles become ephemeral, even indistinct (p. 185).

Leaders play a key role in the leader-follower interaction. Burns (2003) states that it is during the 'leader-follower interaction, in which the leader offers initiatives that followers pick up, amplify, reshape and direct back onto the leader' (p. 27). In addition, he says 'the leader's self-actualising qualities are turned outward. He emphatically comprehends the wants of followers and responds to them as legitimate needs, articulating them as values. He helps followers transform them into hopes and aspirations, and finally into demands' (p. 143).

Burns (1978) hypothesised that leaders 'rise one step ahead of followers in this political hierarchy, but continued progress depends on their ability to stay closely attuned to evolving wants, needs, and expectations of followers – in short, to learn from and be led by followers' (cited in Burns,

2003, p. 143). Burns (1978 and 2003) points on the leader-follower relationship have attracted criticism from critics. The critiques are dealt with in the subsection below.

This subsection examined Burns (1978) and (2003) theoretical perspectives of transformational leadership. The subsection below critiques Burns' theoretical perspectives of transformational leadership.

2.5.2 Critiquing Burns' theoretical perspectives in transformational leadership

This researcher believes that most of the criticisms towards Burns are directed to his 1978 publication, titled the *Leadership*, which earned him the title of 'creator of the idea of transformative leadership' (Dantley, 2003, p. 4). That is because some of the issues that are raised by his critics appear to have been addressed in his 2003 publication, *Transforming Leadership*. In critiquing Burns, Rost (1991) says:

The creator of the idea of transformative leadership does not explore what he calls transformation by active people. Rost argues that leadership and followership when defined as the activity of only active people engenders transformation in organisation. He offers that passive people are rarely transformed by ordinary human process (cited in Dantley, 2003, p. 4).

In contrast, Burns (2003) asserts that passive people may be transformed to be active participants by 'encouraging a sense of collective identity and collective efficacy, which in turn brings stronger feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy' (p. 25). Mixing passive and underprivileged participants with proactive and privileged participants also helps to build collective identity and efficacy.

Accordingly, education institutions that target under-privileged participants sometimes offer personal development courses to give participants some grounding before participating in the main courses. Personal development courses aim at developing inter-personal and intrapersonal skills. Such an approach helps to raise participants' levels of self-esteem and selfconfidence and to adjust to college life. Findings of a study carried out by Altuntas and Akyil (2011) show that:

...emotional intelligence level of male nursing students positively affects the leadership behaviours. These findings demonstrate that students will have better leadership behaviours if they improve their emotional intelligence levels. Male nursing students who are aware of other's emotions, could emphasize, control both their and other's emotions are expected to be better leaders (p. 2102)

Emotions are pertinent in understanding human behaviour, but in the past empirical research prioritised wisdom. Altuntas and Akyil (2011) point out that 'emotions have important roles in

understanding human nature, and interpreting thoughts, and behaviours. Emotions have been neglected in the science world for a long period of time and wisdom have been given importance and identified with intelligence' (p. 2097). Modern education approaches are of the premise that students with learning disabilities benefit more in an inclusive education system than in a special schooling system (Armstrong *et al.*, 2011).

Dantley (2003) points out that 'from a theoretical perspective, there seems to be a patriarchal underpinning to Burns' conception of transformative leadership' (p. 4). Dantley (2003) further argues that 'this apocryphal notion of a leader's superiority is further promoted when Burns assumes that leaders take the major part or play a major role in maintaining and articulating the relationship with the followers' (p. 4). In contrast to what Dantley (2003) depicts as the patriarchal nature of Burns' transformational leader, Burns (1978) refers to the relationship between leader and follower as that of *leading by being led*. In addition, Burns (2003) points out that mutual and dynamic empowerment gives rise to a process that is 'complex and multidimensional, so fluid and transforming, that persons initially labelled "leaders" or "followers" come to succeed each other, merge with each other, substitute for each other.

Leader and follower roles become ephemeral, transient, and even indistinct' (p. 185).

Moreover, Burns (2003) states that the role of a transformative leader is to take the 'initiative in mobilizing people for participation in the process of change, encouraging a sense of collective identity and collective efficacy, which in turn brings stronger feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy' (p. 25). It is natural to have a shaper or initiator of a project and that does not seem to amount to patriarchy and superiority.

Nonetheless, Rost (1991) insists that people must engage energetically as precedence to transformative leadership. He asserts:

Transformation is about influence in relationships based on persuasion, not coercion. A definition that states that leadership is a multidirectional relationship of people who use persuasion to make an impact is a paradigm that articulates what transformation is all about. People, groups, and organizations that are persuaded to change may be transformed; those that are coerced to change are rarely transformed (p. 124, cited from Dantley, 2003, p.4).

Burns (2003) agrees with Rost (1991) stating that 'a dynamic and mutually empowering interaction between leader and follower...occurs...The process is so multidimensional...fluid and transforming' (p. 185). Moreover, people need energy to be meaningfully involved in any form of activity. In the natural sciences, the generation of energy is associated with the movement of molecules or atoms,

and for that movement to take place the molecules and atoms must have some form energy. As a result, active participants are synonymous with energetic participants.

Dantley (2003) argues that 'Burns and Rost both fail...to take the ideas of transformative leadership to a level where radical change can take place' (p. 4). However, Burns (2003) points out that for transformative change to be real 'quantitative changes are not enough; they must be qualitative too. All this does not mean total change, which is impossible in human life. It does mean alterations so comprehensive and pervasive, and perhaps accelerated, that new cultures and value systems take places of the old' (pp. 24 – 25). There is no harmony in total change. Total change manifests itself in chaos and anarchy. Hence, a desirable approach is one that merges the old cultures and value systems with the new. This is the approach that was adopted by the African National Congress of South Africa under the leadership of Nelson Mandela when South Africa dismantled apartheid in 1994. It helped to bring together diverse ethnic groups that used to live in a polarised environment during the apartheid era. Dantley (2003) argues:

Three structural ingredients seem to be missing in the framing of this transformative leadership discourse...especially where the notion of self-articulation is concerned. One is an obeisance to prophet spirituality...Another missing piece in conventional notions of transformative leadership is the disclosed impact of reflection on the transformative leaders...And the final piece that appears to be sonorously silent in the discourse is a spiritfilled resistance that proposes a project or praxis for self and institutional change. It seems to me that we cannot fathom the implications of transformative leadership without first grappling with these three essential constituents (pp. 4 – 5).

Conversely, Burns (2003) points out that 'all of us, in our own way, are theorists of causation.

We try to figure out why certain things happen and other things don't – we generalise them' (p.14). Interrogating oneself that way happens when reflection is at play. Additionally, Burns (2003) asserts that the leader 'empathetically comprehends the wants of followers and responds to them as legitimate needs, articulating them as values. He helps followers transform them into hopes and aspirations, and then into more purposeful expectations, and finally demands' (p. 143). It seems such transformation only happens when both leaders and followers reflect on their actions.

Dantley (2003) also argues that what 'appears to be sonorously silent in the discourse is a spirit-filled resistance that proposes a project or praxis for self and institutional change' (p. 5).

Conversely, Burns (2003) asserts that 'institutional constraints under some circumstances develop into institutional supports in others' (p. 153) and emphasises the importance of collective efficacy in creating self-efficacy in individual members.

Dantley's (2003) final critique on Burns (1978) is that there 'is an obeisance to a prophetic spirituality' (p. 5). The researcher agrees that combative spirituality seems not to be addressed by Burns (2003). Dantley (2003) suggests 'that notions of transformative leadership can be broadened through infusion of two radical perspectives, namely critical theory and prophetic, African American spirituality to produce a new construct termed 'critical spirituality'' (p. 5).

The essence of 'African American spirituality is an integral part of black life in the USA. It is the mechanism through which African Americans have shaped their consciousness and understanding of themselves as well as who they are in relationship to others' (p. 6). The way in which African Americans transform, transcend and interpret life is informed by spirituality.

This subsection critiqued Burns' theoretical perspectives in transformational leadership. The entire section examined theories and practice in transformational leadership. The section that follows addresses theories and practice in distributed leadership.

2.6 Theories and practice in distributed leadership

In modern and complex societies, leadership cannot be entrusted to a few heroic individuals. Instead, it has to be a shared and spread enterprise or a distributed responsibility. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) argue that 'for the most part, the heroic leadership paradigm is a flawed and fading one' (p. 96). Distributed leadership is 'emerging as the new orthodoxy' (Hartley, 2009, p. 141) mode of governance that seems to be on a crusade to replace the heroic leader.

Timperley (2005) points out that 'distributed leadership is a relatively new theoretical concept' (p. 418) and 'it is only since the mid-1990s that the idea of *distributed leadership* has been the focus of serious consideration in the research literature' (p. 396). However, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) state that 'the basic idea of distributed leadership has, in different guises, been a central part of organisational theory and the field of educational administration since the 1960s'³ (p. 97). Since its introduction notions of distributed leadership have been explicitly expressed in teamwork within the medical profession.

Education professionals appear lured towards distributed leadership probably because of the successes it has had within medical practice. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) argue that 'those who embrace or promote distributed leadership have historically done so for reasons of theoretical preference or ideological inclination, more than out of respect for evidence about the impact of distributed leadership on performance or success' (p. 97). However, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) state that 'educational leadership, including distributed leadership, must be judged by evidence of

³ Chester Bernard (1968) point out that leadership was not limited to executive positions and might be carried out by any member of an organisation. James Thompson (1967) was among the first to argue that leadership doesn't just exert influence in a downward direction but flows throughout an organisation, spanning levels and circulating up and down hierarchies (cited in Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 97).

its impact on student learning and of its overall sustainability' (p. 98). Hartley (2009) points out that:

... in governance and public policy there is presently an emergence of structural isomorphism, the public sector is being encouraged to adopt some of the structural forms of the private sector, with alliances, distributions, synergies, hybrids and networks all to the fore. Former departments dissipate into ephemeral configurations, their members seeking safe harbour for their out-moded professional identities. In education, these structural forms can be seen in policy initiatives such as extended schools, workforce reform and interagency working (pp. 139 – 140).

In addition to structural adjustment programmes in public policy that are usually dictated to governments by international multilateral organisations, there is 'a further policy trend, one that is being advocated strongly by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in England, namely distributed leadership' (Hartley, 2009, p. 140). Hartley (2009) points out that 'education policy in England increasingly sets much store by advocating the permeation of organizational and professional boundaries. Inter-agency working, workforce remodelling and distributed leadership are examples' (p. 148). Distributed leadership has also gained recognition in the United States. 'Both in the US and in UK distributed leadership has come to the fore' (p. 148). Some of the reasons that have led to distributed leadership gaining currency are:

It has considerable appeal: it resonates with a democratic notion of distributing power; it accords with a similar trend in the "new work order" of the knowledge economy; it has the endorsement of government who regard it as a pragmatic solution to easing the job-overload of head teachers, or as a way of attracting teachers to management positions which are becoming increasingly shunned by them; and it has an affinity with a general cultural trend towards the weakening of all classifications' (Hartley, 2009, p. 148).

In addition, Hartley (2009) states that 'distributed leadership is also regarded as being a way of dealing with new government policies which require greater partnerships and collaborations among hitherto discrete professional cultures' (p. 142). Distributed leadership has something to contribute to the restructuring of the labour force. Practically, the concept could make significant contributions to the schools of leadership and management that have become more complex and need more human resources. In other words, distributed leadership seems to provide the answer to providing a large pool of future leaders and managers.

Theoretical perspectives and definitional issues of distributed leadership still need to be explored further than what has been done so far. Hartley (2009) points out that 'drawing on the work of Spillane, it will be argued that socio-culturally-informed distributed leadership research in

education reveals some inconsistencies among its theoretical position, empirical endeavours and modernist agenda' (p. 140). Timperley (2005) concurs and points out that 'there is general agreement that further empirical work is needed' (p. 398) and that 'because the term means different things to different people' (p. 396) causes conceptual problems and definitional issues. However, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) outline:

Large-scale studies of educational leadership effects provide clear indications that some element of shared, collaborative, or distributed leadership is strongly associated with effective leadership in schools. The work shows that the effects of principals' leadership are largely indirect. Principals improve student learning by influencing adults who affect that learning more directly. And adults seem to achieve more if they are involved in shaping the processes and practices for which they are responsible⁴ (p. 101).

Spillane is one of the principal advocates of distributed leadership. Spillane *et al.* (2001) point out:

We are specifically concerned with developing a distributed leadership framework for thinking about leadership as a practice as it relates to the transformation of teaching and learning. By taking leadership practice in a school as the unit of analysis, rather than an individual leader...distributed theory of leadership focuses on how leadership practice is distributed among both positional and informal leaders (p. 24).

In accordance with the insight cited above, distributed leadership promotes transformation of leadership perspectives in that it advocates for empowerment of subordinates or followers. It is predicated in that leaders, followers and the environment interact.

Spillane and colleagues emphasise the role played by the environment, an element that they claim is not emphasised in transformational and other forms of leadership. They assert that 'school leadership is best understood as a distributed practice, *stretched over* the school's social and situational contexts. ...social context is an integral component, not just a container, for intelligent activity' (p. 23). Spillane *et al.*'s position suggests that it is paramount to take into consideration how natural and artificial environments influence cognition. Distributed leadership approaches emphasise focusing on the detail without losing sight of the big picture.

They make the following claims:

⁴ 'While the origins of transformational leadership can be traced to dramatic demonstrations of ultimately hierarchical authority among charismatic leaders, Leithood and his colleagues argue that in education, many transformational school principals create powerful cultures of change by avoiding the limelight and leading quietly from behind. In their case, charismatic or not, it is still the principal who, quietly or dramatically, inspires and motivates others to follow and also to lead. It is the principal who manages and even manipulates other's emotions so that their leadership will, within the principal's parameters, eventually come out' (cited in Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 102).

Our distributed perspective on leadership is grounded in activity rather than in position or role. Hence, we begin with a consideration of the *tasks* around which school leaders organize their practice, considering both the large-scale organizational tasks (*macro functions*) as well as the day-to-day work (*micro tasks*) that are essential for understanding of school leadership practice (p. 24).

For an organisation to deliver its vision or mission statement, it is pertinent for both positional and informal leaders to be aware that macro functions and micro tasks collectively contribute to the common good. Spillane *et al.* (2001) point out that ‘the collective properties of the group of leaders working together to enact a particular task...lead to the evolution of a leadership practice that is potentially more than the sum of each individual’s practice’ (p. 25). Therefore, instead of concentrating on what each individual knows, distributed leadership approaches shift the focus to what leaders collectively know (Hargreaves and Fink 2006; Hartley, 2009; Spillane, 2005; Spillane *et al.*, 2001; Timperley, 2005). The notion is based on the fact that if leadership skills and knowledge base is collectively owned in an organisational setting, then there is a possibility of distributing that knowledge base and skills to other individual leaders who lack them so that they can also independently perform those particular tasks. In brief, knowledge and expertise that an individual owns is as good as being owned by the group or team. That portrays that the knowledge and expertise base of an organisation is analysed, assessed and evaluated at group level rather than at individual level.

This subsection explored theoretical perspectives and practice of distributed leadership. The subsection that follows discusses issues to do with complexities and tensions that are associated with conceptualisation of distributed leadership.

2.6.1 Complexities and tensions associated with distributed leadership

Although there are differences in the manner in which different theorists of distributed leadership conceptualise and define the concept, there are certain areas in which there are commonalities.

Firstly, Timperley (2005) comments:

One point on which different authors appear to agree is that distributed leadership is not the same as dividing task responsibilities among individuals who perform defined and separate organisational roles, but rather it comprises dynamic interactions between multiple leaders and followers. Tasks and responsibilities are distributed across traditionally defined organisational roles (p. 396).

Secondly, Timperley (2005) asserts that there is 'agreement...that distributed leadership is particularly important in relation to the instructional aspects of leadership' (p. 397). Training and development of instructional leadership roles seems to improve instructional understanding throughout the organisational structures. Moreover, instructional leadership seem to have a positive impact in delivering quality programmes and projects on schedule compared to the input of other organisational functions.

Timperley (2005) points out that 'varying descriptions of distributed leadership show more divergence than similarity' (p. 397). Both distributed and transformative leadership involve harnessing human resources and execution of tasks by improving the instruction medium. 'The issue is whether one is a sub-set of the other, and if so which is a sub-set of which' (Timperley, 2005, p. 397). While authors like Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) consider distributed leadership to be a component of transformation leadership, Spillane *et al.* (2001) states that distributed leadership either 'supports a transformational perspective on leadership' (p. 24) or may not support it. Timperley (2005) takes 'a position similar to Spillane *et al.* in assuming that leadership in schools is almost inevitably distributed, and the issues to be considered are *how* are the leadership activities distributed, and the ways in which this distribution is differentially *effective* (p. 397). The differences in approaches taken by different proponents of distributed leadership perspectives depend on whether the author takes a descriptive or normative stance. Spillane *et al.* (2001) argue that 'an in-depth analysis of the practice of school leaders is necessary to render an account of *how* school leadership works and *why* they do it, our understanding of leadership is incomplete...it is insufficient to simply observe school leadership in action and generate thick descriptions of the observed practice' (p. 23). It therefore follows that Spillane takes a predominantly descriptive position.

Timperley (2005) remarks:

Gronn (2003) also adopts an essentially descriptive approach in which he begins to develop a taxonomy of distributed leadership. This taxonomy is based primarily on relationships, such as, co- or collective performance; and structure, such as the number of members in the form, and how such qualities may influence intuitive or institutionalized action (p. 24, cited in Timperley, 2005, p. 397).

According to Spillane *et al.* (2001), distributed leadership theories are premised in that informal and formal 'leaders' collective knowledge enables an understanding of leadership practice that would not be possible if either leader were considered alone' (p. 25). Hartley (2009) points out that 'policy documents are now replete with the prefixes *inter-*, *co-*, and *multi-*' (p. 141). Compartmentalised or "egg-carton" organisational arrangements isolate members of staff and they do not benefit from

the pool of knowledge and expertise that already exist within the organisation (Spillane *et al.*, 2001).

Spencer (2004) concurs with Hartley (2009) and states that terms 'like 'networks', 'alliances', 'communities', 'partnerships' and 'teams' are helping to shape the language of connectedness. But words are only the beginning. Those who take on new leadership roles will have to learn to walk the talk or their credibility will be short-lived' (p. 7). In contrast, Spencer (2004) points out that words such as 'such as 'divisions', 'departments', 'sections', 'levels' and 'units'(p. 6) that are viewed to promote disunity rather than unity are now on the decline.

Theorists with a normative inclination are interested in the leadership being distributed among a larger number of leaders although they seem not to trouble themselves on how the distribution has to occur. Timperley (2005) argues that 'these authors are less concerned about developing taxonomies than identifying whether more leadership positions have been created, and, if so, how different leadership functions are distributed across them' (p. 398). Timperley (2005) further argues that 'distributing leadership over more people is a risky business and may result in the greater distribution of incompetence' (p. 417). Instead, Timperley (2005) suggests *'increasing the distribution of leadership is only desirable if the quality of the leadership activities contributes to assisting teachers to provide more effective instruction to their students, and it is on these qualities that we should focus'* (p. 417). This causes tension and complexities because most advocates of distributed leadership approaches with a normative leaning are simply interested in collective effort involving all workers that occupy different positions in the hierarchy of the organisation.

The qualities of leadership cannot be separated from the environment in which they are performed, that is, leadership has an influence on the environment and vice versa. Spillane *et al.* (2001) state 'leaders do not work directly on the world; their actions in and on the world are mediated by artefacts, tools, and structures of various sorts' (p. 26). Timperley (2005) reinforces this stating 'the way followers interpret the situation and respond to the leader influences how leaders think and act' (p. 417). The reciprocal processes lead to varying outcomes depending on the way they could be taking place. Similarly, Timperley (2005) states that 'the way in which artefacts are constructed and presented to followers also serves to shape different social interactions and outcomes, yet artefacts are rarely identified as a constitutive and influential component of leadership activity' (p. 417). Artefacts include materials such as stationery, teaching aids, circular letters and memos; and structures such as buildings, curriculum, timetables and IT facilities; and symbols, such as social, political and religious regalia, and language.

Timperley (2005) also proposes that the methodological issues on how leadership practice is distributed need further investigation. Timperley (2005) asserts:

If the *extent* of distribution is the focus, then survey reports are an adequate measure. However, if *quality* of activity and its consequences are of interest, it is difficult to develop an adequate understanding of that activity without observing it directly in order to understand the situation as it unfolds from the perspective of theories-in-use (p. 417).

Observing meetings and other leadership activities in the workplace enriches the picture and generates rich knowledge. Spillane *et al.* (2001) assert 'investigation of leadership practice must involve both observing practice as it unfolds and asking practitioners about the observed practice' (p. 24). It is important to note that 'teacher leaders with high acceptability among their colleagues are not necessarily those with expertise. Conversely, the micro-politics within a school can reduce the acceptability of those with expertise' (Timperley, 2005, p. 418). Therefore, instead of assuming that distribution of leadership roles simply leads to a positive impact on instructional capacity, further research is needed to address the underlying issues on school leadership acceptability.

This subsection discussed complexities and tensions that are associated with conceptualisation of distributed leadership. The subsection that follows examines the socio-cultural theory and how power manifests itself in distributed leadership.

2.6.2 Socio-cultural theory and power

James P. Spillane draws on Giddens' structuration theory and distributed cognition and activity theories. Spillane *et al.* (2004) state:

Thus, because of the mutuality of the individual and environment, human activity is *distributed* in the interactive web of actors and artefacts, and *situation* is the appropriate unit of analysis for studying practice. Because cognition is distributed situationally in the physical environment, that is, through the material and cultural artefacts in an environment, it is also distributed *socially*, through other people in collaborative efforts to complete complex tasks (p. 4, cited in Hartley, 2009, p. 142).

Hartley (2009) states that the above contextual explanation of Spillane *et al.*'s theoretical perspective 'places them clearly within the socio-cultural approach. However, these three strands – activity theory, distributed cognition and structuration theory are little discussed in detail' (p. 142). In other words, there is no detailed discussion on how activity theory varies from distributed cognition. In *socio-cultural theory*, the structure, context and situation are fused or conflated. The activity is considered to be a system formed by the structure, context and situation. According to Spillane *et al.* (2001), 'the interdependence of the individual and the environment shows how human activity as *distributed* in the interactive web of actors, artefacts, and the situation is the appropriate unit of analysis of study' (p. 23). Critics argue that Spillane *et al.* treat actors in the activity as discrete from the context and situation.

Hartley (2009) points out that ‘much of the theory in distributed leadership draws upon the socio-cultural tradition: that is, it draws not only upon activity theory and distributed cognition, but also upon structuration theory’ (p. 148). Hartley (2009) points out that there are no detailed discussions about how they vary, that is, ‘the distinctions among them have been little discussed within the distributed leadership community’ (p. 148). The structuration theory concept was adopted from Giddens and it postulates that ‘human societies are always in the process of structuration. They are reconstructed at every moment by the very ‘building blocks’ that compose it – human beings like you and me’ (Giddens, 2006, p. 8). Giddens (2006) further points:

‘Structure’ and action are necessarily related to one another. Societies, communities or groups only have ‘structure’ in so far as people behave in regular and fairly predictable ways. On the other hand, ‘action’ is only possibly because each of us, as an individual, possesses an enormous amount of socially structured knowledge (p. 108).

If we consider, for example, a shared language, it has rules that are observed by all those who share it. That is the reason why it was possible, for example, for British Examination Boards to set examinations that were undertaken by students living in colonies. If the basic structures of the English Language differed in every country, it would have been difficult for the coloniser and colonies to celebrate their shared cultural ties. The structures of a language are reviewed from time to time using socially structured knowledge, which is synonymous to a process of structuration.

There are dual aspects to Spillane *et al.*'s (2001) ‘model of distributed leadership: the *leaderplus* aspect, and the *practice aspect*’ (Hartley, 2009, p. 142). In the leader-plus aspect, Spillane *et al.* (2001) state that ‘both positional and informal leaders’ (p. 24) are presumed to play a leadership role. For that reason, both are considered as a unit of analysis of distributed leadership practice. Spillane *et al.* (2001) state that their ‘distributed leadership perspective on leadership is grounded in activity rather than in position or role...we begin with a consideration of *tasks* around which school leaders organise their practice’ (p. 24). An approach in contrast to the aforementioned would be synonymous to adhering to what

Spillane *et al.* (2001) refer to as ‘theories of practice that are found in formal accounts, official policies, and job descriptions are often abstracted from day-to-day practice’ (p. 24) and ignoring *theories in use*.

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) articulate that Spillane’s *leadership-plus* theoretical perspectives refer to the allocation of additional tasks and roles to teaching staff. Notwithstanding that, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) state that Spillane argues that ‘this leadership-plus approach to distributed leadership is a limited one, he says, because it overlooks the less glamorous and more mundane daily leadership work that teachers undertake on their own initiative to keep the school

running smoothly' (p. 109). That might include business phone calls that teachers make using their private mobile phones, advice more experienced staff give to the less experienced, and a few odd hours that teachers do while trying to help weaker students. Work that is done on individuals' initiative is usually taken for granted, not acknowledged nor rewarded by authorities. Therefore, distributed leadership goes beyond leadership-plus.

According to Spillane *et al.* (2001), there is an emphasis on giving 'an account of *how*...and *why* they do it' (p. 23) and not *what*, is the *practice aspect* of distributed leadership. They state:

We outline the distributed framework...beginning with brief review of theoretical underpinnings...distributed cognition and activity theory...we develop our distributed theory of leadership around four ideas: leadership tasks and functions, task enactment, and situational distribution of task enactment (p. 23).

The practice aspect of leadership addresses issues of unit of analysis, although it is not clear how they treat the association between agency and structure. There is an unresolved issue in social theory of whether there is a 'relationship between individual agency and structure' (Hartley, 2009, p. 143). Distributed leadership literature highlights the importance of shared vision and common goals among the positional and informal leaders. However, Hartley (2009) argues that 'much of the distributed leadership literature is silent on the matter of power' (p. 146). Hartley (2009) points out:

We are left to infer from Spillane that macro-structural aspects, as well as individual properties, somehow become instantiated harmoniously within the situation. The argument here is that if socio-culturally-informed research in distributed leadership focuses only on the practice aspect – on the interaction – then we need to know the relative weight assigned to individual psychologies, to institutional structures, and to wider macro-structural conditions (p. 146).

There is a lot of focus on organizational structure and very little if any on the influence of institutional structures, macro-social structures (social, political, cultural and economic) and power relations. The question is: how would they sway the outcomes if there is an inter-play between individual agency and structure? Secondly, whose interests are served by a particular way in which power is distributed? Hartley (2009) asserts:

This is a particularly important concern to address in relation to distributed leadership theory, for – by definition – distributed leadership implies progressive possibilities. It implies democratic empowerment, but this would require leaders to be elected, not

appointed; and it would imply empowerment to decide both means and ends of education (pp. 146 – 7).

Although the English education system has incorporated inter-agency approaches, remodelling of the workforce and distributed leadership, ‘but there are limits to the obvious *super*-vision of these tasks’ (Hartley, 2009, p. 147). Spillane’s theoretical assumptions of distributed leadership involve a multidimensional dispersion of the locus of control, gives an ambient regulatory appearance and an emergence of co-power. Hartley (2009) further argues that ‘distributed leadership in this sense is redolent of the quality-circle and organizational empowerment movements’ (p. 147). It seems it is because of its resonance with quality and empowerment that has resulted in the concept gaining wider acceptance by governments and civil society.

This subsection examined the socio-cultural theory and how power manifests itself in distributed leadership. The subsection also discussed the contentious issue of the relationship between agency and structure. Ongoing debates on theoretical perspectives of distributed are expected because the notion is still in its infancy and revolving. The subsection that follows examines the unit of analysis premised on the socio-cultural theory by comparing it with the macro-social theory.

2.6.3 *The socio-cultural theory versus macro-social theory*

The socio-cultural theory focuses on the structure and context/situation as a single fused or conflated unit of analysis. Hartley (2009) points out that:

Within distributed leadership studies informed by socio-cultural theory, the terms ‘structure’, ‘context’ and ‘situation’ are defined and operationalised in a particular manner. Take structure: for macro-social theorists, structures refer to wider patterned regularities – economic, social, cultural, legal and political – which are analytically distinct from formal *organisational* structures. Taken together, these patterns would be regarded as the external ‘context’ of an organisation. But – as already noted – in the socio-cultural theory there is no context ‘out there’, so to say. The context is the activity system. Take ‘situation’: For Spillane, elements of the ‘situation’ are tools, routines, resources: in other words, *organisational* properties’ (p. 145).

Spillane (2005) interprets the tools, routines and resources as follows:

Leaders typically have interaction with others. They also have interaction with aspects of the situation including a variety of tools, routines, and structures. Tools include everything from student assessment data to protocols for evaluating teachers. The five-week assessment described here is an example of a routine. Structures include routines

such as grade-level meetings and the scheduling of teachers' prep periods. From a distributed perspective, these routines, tools, and structures define leadership practice; the situation both enables and constrains leadership practice (p. 147).

The working definition of distributed leadership that is mediated by socio-cultural theory is in sharp contrast to that proposed by Spillane. The latter treats structure, context and situation as separate entities and not as an activity system. Spillane (2005) also asserts that 'aspects of the situation define and are defined by leadership practice in interaction with leaders and followers. Structures, routines, and tools are the means through which people act. Yet, these same structures, routines, and tools are created and remade through leadership practice' (pp. 147 – 148). On the one hand, the situation mediates, defines and enhances the leadership practice of those who are engaged in an activity. On the other hand, the structures which are constructed and reconstructed by leaders and followers and to a certain extent inform and shape their interaction.

The relationship between action and structure is a highly contested terrain. The investigative question comes in the form: is there a relationship between action and structure, if yes, does agency and structure exist ontologically as discrete (separate) or conflated entities? Giddens' (2006) structuration theory does not assign an 'independent ontological status either to agency or to structure. Structuration theorists 'elide' the two. They 'conflate' them' (Hartley, 2009, p. 144). The terms 'fuse', 'elide', 'conflate' or 'instantiate' mean that agency or structure do not exist as independent units, that is, they are brought together to form an activity system, which is considered as the unit of analysis. That is what is in line with the socio-cultural theoretical perspective. Eliding, instantiating, conflating or fusing the units of analysis leads to a system, conflationism or inseparability (Giddens, 2006; Hartley, 2009). In that state, neither the 'properties' of individual units nor of the wider structural conditions are assigned discrete status; they are instantiated in practice. However, Hartley (2009) states that the above explanation is a theoretical standpoint that has not yet been substantiated by empirical research.

The socio-cultural theoretical stance hypothesises that only the process comprises the unit of analysis, and the leaders, followers and environment do not have a discrete status, but are instantiated. Hartley (2009) predicates that 'it is only the process which has ontological status: it is the practice, the event, the leadership activity which comprises the unit of analysis. Situated action is an *irreducible* unit of analysis. Individual and structure are only 'instantiated' as practice' (p. 144). According to socio-cultural perspectives, structure only gains an ontological status (become real) when acted upon or instantiated by humans to *change from abstract to something concrete or tangible*. Furthermore, Hartley (2009) points out that 'here therefore is a conflation – an inseparability – of structure and agency. The causal power of each is

not an issue. Within a social situation, the relative power of structure or of individual agency cannot be discerned' (p. 144). We instantiate an object or give it an ontological status, by thinking about it or bringing it into memory. Ontological status philosophically refers to what is real. Hartley (2009) argues:

Although Spillane's theoretical position logically implies the inseparability of the individual and macro-social patterns, the empirical method has not wholly reflected this because the individual still retains ontological status, as in the *leader-plus aspect*, and in the separate "leader" and "follower" roles within the *practice aspect*. If practice is paramount, then why impose an *a priori* distinction between "leader" and "follower" in advance of the empirical research? (p. 147).

Spillane *et al.* (2001) point out that 'approaching an analysis of school leadership practice through these leadership functions rather than the work of formal or informal leaders is essential when one adopts a distributed leadership perspective' (p. 24). However, Spillane *et al.* (2001) ignore how the skills and behaviours of individual members of staff affect the outcomes. Hartley (2009) states:

It may be that by allowing for an elasticity of fit between his framework and his empirical methods, Spillane may wish to avoid a schism within the distributed leadership *genre*. Another interpretation might be to say that we are simply witnessing an example of a Kuhnian paradigmatic tension: that between cognitive psychology and socio-cultural theory. ...The second point which has been made is that power is under-theorized, and there is an implicitly functionalist tenor to Spillane's approach (p. 147).

There have been some research studies that claim to be in the area of distributed leadership while concentrating on a singular positional leader (Hartley, 2009). On the other hand, a socio-cultural theory stance would study leadership practice regardless of whether research participants held formal or informal leadership positions (Hartley, 2009).

This subsection examined the socio-cultural theory by making comparisons with the macrosocial theory as units of analysis. This study was aligned to the socio-cultural theoretical perspective. The next subsection critiques theoretical perspectives of distributed leadership.

2.6.4 Critiquing theoretical perspectives in distributed leadership

There is evidence that the majority of researchers that have no leanings towards distributed leadership only consider the person of principal or the principal's office as the unit of inquiry and analysis when they carry out research on educational leadership (Hartley 2009, Spillane *et al.* 2001). They fail to investigate other structures that play an informal role in distributed leadership. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) argue that 'the research still ultimately equates leadership with

principalship. Leadership starts in the principal's office. The principal does the distribution of leadership or creates the culture in which distribution emerges' (p. 101). Spillane *et al.* (2001) concur with Hargreaves and Fink (2006) and point out that an appropriate unit of inquiry and analysis should include an interdependence of individual actors and the environment. In brief, it should show how human activity is interactively distributed in a web that consists of different actors, artefacts and the situation.

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) also argue that 'distributed leadership may not always be good leadership that advances worthwhile causes' (p. 102). Therefore, distributed leadership is at times synonymous with bad leadership. There is a possibility that the distribution may be done in a manner that it deliberately conceals some incongruities and flaws. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) point out:

Overall patterns of distributed leadership and its effects in large-scale samples may hide significant variations and discrepancies in which distributed leadership is less useful. If teachers are not well qualified and their knowledge base is weak, for instance, distributed leadership produces only pooled ignorance and prejudice rather than shared knowledge and professionalism (p. 102).

If the transition is not professionally managed, distribution of leadership can cause conflict and chaos particularly when divided staff tries to resist a new leader when they are handed over to her/him by a predecessor. If the organisation is dysfunctional and there is widespread disorder, it is desirable for an existing or new leader to use a firm hand to first address issues before implementing distributive decision making. From what has been discussed above, it is clear that 'distributed leadership can be effective or ineffective; it can be used for good purposes and bad ones; and it can emerge from the school community or be imposed or orchestrated by the principal. Distributed leadership is not automatically sustainable leadership' (p. 103). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) state that the key questions to be addressed if distributed leadership is to embrace the principle of breadth in sustainable leadership and spread across organisational structures are:

- Who distributes leadership?
- Where and when is it best for leadership to be distributed?
- How is leadership distributed? (p. 103)

The worst case scenario is when there is anarchic distribution of decision making. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) point out that 'the line between autocracy and anarchy is a thin one. Autocracies foment resentment and rebellion. Lacking government, anarchies give rise to lawlessness and disorder' (p. 135). Anarchy equates to distribution by neglect. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) point out

that ‘the shift from autocracy to anarchy can be frighteningly fast’ (p. 136). In addition, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) assert that ‘senior leaders who are never present, who can’t maintain clarity or unity of purpose, who are weak or afraid, or who want only to be liked – all create a leadership vacuum that others are more eager to fill’ (p. 135). Anarchy may take over if assertive leadership is allowed to go a step too far. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) argue:

The spectre of anarchy reminds us that assertive distributed leadership does not mean absence of or abrogation of senior leadership. Improvement doesn’t arise by accident; and democracy and justice achieved by capitulating to the crowd. Anarchy isn’t the answer for distributed leadership, but it is a consequence of ignoring the responsibilities of such leadership (p. 136).

It is obvious from the discussion in the above paragraph that distribution of decision making should not amount to neglect nor be substituted for anarchy.

This subsection critiqued theoretical perspectives of distributed leadership. The entire section addressed theories and practice in distributed leadership.

Issues of power, ethnicity and gender play an important role in the exercise of leadership. The sections that follow make a social analysis of power, ethnicity and gender in the exercise of leadership. The section that follows discusses the conceptual analysis of how power manifests itself in leadership.

2.7 Conceptual analysis of power in leadership

The conceptual analysis of power and empowerment is hugely contested and its historical roots can be traced back to Max Weber. According to Giddens (2006), ‘the meaning, nature and distribution of power are central issues for political sociologists’ (p. 845). Gerth and Mills (1948) state that Max Weber formally and generally defines power as ‘the chance of a man or a number of men to realise their own will in a command action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action’ (cited in Giddens, 2006, p. 845). Giddens (2006) asserts that ‘to Weber, power is about getting your own way, even when others don’t want you to’ (p. 845). There are many other sociologists that have built on what was put forward by Weber and have proposed theoretical perspectives that distinguish between forms of power that are based on authority in comparison to those based on coercion. Sociologists Steven Lukes and Michel Foucault offer alternative but radical views of power that are far removed from Weber’s more general and formal definition.

Power is elusive, less visible, and not tangible, has no unit of measure, cannot be stored for future use during emergencies, and its loss cannot be compensated by material factors and means.

Although power cannot be stored and reserved in case of crisis, instruments of force or violence can be stored and unleashed as and when necessary (Arendt, 1958). Arendt (1958) states that:

The word itself, its Greek equivalent of *dynamis*, like the Latin *potentia* with its various modern derivatives or the German *Macht* (which derives from *mögen* and *möglich*, not from *machen*), indicates its “potential” character. Power is always, as we would say, a power potential and not an unchangeable, measurable, and reliable entity like force or strength (p. 200).

Power is the invisible glue that keeps the public realm together and forms the potential space that characterise the existence of actors and speakers. Power exists as long as actors and speakers come together and ceases to exist when they disperse. However, Lukes (1974) argues that ‘cases of co-operative activity, where individuals or groups significantly affect one another in the absence of a conflict of interests between them, will be identifiable, as cases of ‘influence’ but not of ‘power’ (p. 31). Lukes’ (1974) conceptual analysis of power proposes three different views. These are the one-dimensional, the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional views. Power is more complex than what is generally believed and is inherent with conflict rather than consensual (Lukes, 1974).

Arendt asserts that:

Power is actualised only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities (p. 200).

Because power can only be actualised and not materialised, few well-organised leaders can rule over very vast and populous country without encountering a revolt from their followers. On the other hand, when the leader’s actions do not match promises, followers tend to revolt regardless of the instruments of power or force that are at the leader’s disposal. Arendt (1958) points out that:

For power, like action, is boundless; it has no physical limitation in human nature, in the bodily existence of man, like strength. Its only limitation is the existence of other people, but this limitation is not accidental, because human power corresponds to the condition of plurality to begin with. For the same reason, power can be divided without decreasing it, and the interplay of powers with their checks and balances is even liable to generate more power, so long, at least, as the interplay is alive and has not resulted in a stalemate (p. 201).

Although the presence of other strengths facilitates checks and balances, unlike power, strength is indivisible and the interaction of plurality diminishes and definitely limits the strength of individual actors. Arendt (1958) asserts that 'for power, like action, is boundless; it has no physical limitation in human race, in the bodily existence of man, like strength' (p. 201). However, both power and strength are finite. The reason why power cannot be owned like strength or unleashed or activated like force is because it does not exist in more than its potentiality.

Sociologists have put forward a number of arguments pertaining to the methodological, political and theoretical issues about power.

This subsection examined the historical roots of conceptualisation of power and definition, nature and distribution of power has remained a central issue within the realm of political sociologists. The subsection also posited that Weber was the first political sociologist to offer a formal and general definition of power. In addition, the section discussed that Steven Lukes and Michel Foucault followed in the footsteps of Weber and offered alternative and radical perspectives of defining power. This subsection also explored radical sociologists' conceptualisations of power. It showed that conceptualisation of power was more complex than how it was generally perceived and that it was inherent with conflict rather than consensus. Furthermore, the subsection discussed that power was understood to exist when individuals and/or groups come together to discuss an issue, and when they dispersed it ceased to exist. As a result, power is the cement that keeps the public domain together. Lastly, the subsection that follows examines Lukes (1974) one-, two- and three-dimensional views of power. The subsection that follows discusses the one-dimensional view of power.

2.7.1 One-dimensional view of power

The one-dimensional view 'is often called the 'pluralist' view of power' (Lukes, 1974, p. 11), and he argues that it may be misleading for its advocates to assume that power is distributed in a pluralistic manner. Lukes (1974) points out that the one-dimensional 'view of power involves a focus on *behaviour* in the making of *decisions on issues* over which there is an observable *conflict* of (subjective) *interests*, seen as express policy preferences, revealed by political participation' (p. 15). Taylor (2003) states that:

...pluralists argue that there is no pre-determined dominant group. They argue that power is likely to be spread among the many rather than the few, and to be bargained for competitively rather than being inherent in existing structures (Clegg, 1989, p. 9)...pluralists would see power as being defined by the outcome of decision-making processes (achievement) (p. 87).

It seems the pluralists ignore that some negotiators have social, political and cultural capital that tends give them leverage and influence the outcomes of negotiations. Furthermore, Taylor (2003) points out that:

A pluralist analysis assumes, to quote Keith Popple (1995, pp. 40 – 1), that ‘it is possible to achieve change through rational discourse, the fostering of collective values and moral persuasion’. Although power is seen as a finite good for which different interests compete, it therefore has the potential to be more widely distributed. Since, in a pluralist analysis, those who are powerful in one arena are not necessarily powerful in another; all groups have a chance of being heard at some point (p. 87).

Advocates of the one-dimensional view of power argue that there is no predetermined dominant group in decision-making and in the control of political processes. Lukes (1994) gives a summary of the one-dimensional view of power, and points out that it ‘focuses on (a) behaviour, (b) decision-making, (c) (key) issues, (d) observable (overt) conflict, and (e) (subjective) interests, seen as policy preferences revealed by political participation’ (p. 25). This subsection has discussed the one-dimensional view of power. The subsection that follows examines the two-dimensional view of power.

2.7.2 Two-dimensional view of power

The views of the critics of the one-dimensional view of power are conceptualised by Lukes (1974) as the two-dimensional view of power. Taylor (2003) points out that ‘Marxism, elite domination, patriarchy and structural feminism are examples – argues that power is held by certain groups or forces in society. The power of these forces – capital, privileged groups, men – is perpetuated through wealth, cultural conditioning and education’ (p. 87). Bachrach and Baratz (1970) state that:

Of course power is exercised when *A* participates in the making of decisions that affect *B*. Power is also exercised when *A* devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to *A*. To the extent that *A* succeeds in doing this, *B* is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to *A*’s set of preferences (p. 7, cited in Luke, 1974, p. 16).

This researcher assumes that in this particular case *A* represents the dominant group and *B* represents the subordinate group. The central argument of the critics of the one-dimensional view of power is based on critique of focus on behaviour. Lukes (1974) asserts that:

The central thrust of Bachrach and Baratz's critique of the pluralists' one-dimensional view of power is, up to a point, *anti-behavioural*: that is, they claim that it 'unduly emphasises the importance of initiating, deciding, and vetoing' and, as a result, takes 'no account of the fact that power may be, and often is, exercised by confining the scope of decision-making to relatively "safe" issues' (p. 6, cited in Lukes, 1974, p. 18).

Critics of the one-dimensional view further argue that the concept ignores that failure to take a decision is as good as taking a decision. In other words, the outcomes of nondecisions and non-events can be observed and have implications. However, failure to take decisions is not always done deliberately, consciously or overtly and is not issue-specific. Bachrach and Baratz (1970) argue that such unawares 'does not mean, however, that the dominant group will refrain from making nondecisions that protect or promote their dominance. Simply supporting the established political process tends to have this effect' (p. 50). In addition, Bachrach and Baratz (1970) point out that:

[A decision is] a choice among alternative modes of action (p. 39). [A nondecision is] a decision that results in suppression or thwarting of a latent or manifest challenge to the values or interests of the decision maker (p. 44). [Thus, nondecision-making is a] means by which demands for change in the existing allocation of benefits and privileges in the community can be suffocated before they are even voiced; or kept covert; or killed before they gain access to the relevant decision-making arena; or, failing all these things, maimed or destroyed in the decision-implementing stage of the policy process (p. 44, cited in Lukes, 1974, pp. 18 – 19).

It is therefore important for authorities to give citizens a chance to identify political issues using platforms that are outside the established political process. Instead of cherry-picking certain issues that qualify for decision-making, Bachrach and Baratz (1970) assert that 'it is crucially important to identify *potential issues* which nondecision-making prevents from being actual' (Lukes, 1974, p. 19). Issues that are perceived to be important or key become actual when they are attended to and issues that are left out of the decision-making process remain in a potential form. According to Bachrach and Baratz (1970), a key or important issue is:

one that involves a genuine challenge to the resources of power or authority of those who currently dominate the process by which policy outputs in the system are determined', that is, 'a demand for enduring transformation in both the manner in which values are allocated in the policy...and the value allocation itself' (pp. 47 – 8, cited in Lukes, 1974, p. 19).

Despite the fact that there are differences between advocates and critics of pluralist power, one conspicuous common feature is that they both emphasise the existence of actual and observable covert or overt conflict. Lukes (1974) asserts that:

...the two-dimensional view of power involves a *qualified critique* of the *behavioural focus* of the first view (I say qualified because it is still assumed that nondecision-making is a form of decision-making) and it allows for consideration of the ways in which *decisions* are prevented from being taken on *potential issues* over which there is an observable *conflict* of (subjective) *interests*, seen as embodied in express policy preferences and sub-political grievances (p. 20).

It is evident from discussions in the preceding paragraphs that the two-dimensional view of power is a significant improvement over the one-dimensional view or the pluralist approach. Lukes (1994) summarises the two-dimensional view and states that it is a qualified critique of behavioural focus that focuses on '(a) decision-making and nondecision-making, (b) issues and potential issues, (c) observable (overt or covert) conflict, and (d) (subjective) interests, seen as policy preferences or grievances' (p. 25). Nonetheless, Lukes (1974) argues that the two-dimensional view of power has some inadequacies in three areas. Critique of the inadequacies of the two-dimensional view of power is conceptualised by Lukes (1974) as the three-dimensional view of power. The subsection that follows discusses the threedimensional view of power.

2.7.3 *The three-dimensional view of power*

The three-dimensional view of power seeks to build on, reduce and plug gaps on the weaknesses of the two-dimensional view. Luke (1994) argues that the two-dimensional view has the following inadequacies:

- In the first place, its critique of behaviourism is too qualified, or, to put it in another way, it is still too committed to behaviourism – that is, to the study of overt, 'actual behaviour', of which 'concrete decisions' in situations of conflict are seen as paradigmatic (p. 21).
- The second reason why the insistence on actual and observable conflict will not do is simply that it is highly unsatisfactory to suppose that power is only exercised in situations of such conflict. To put the matter sharply, *A* may exercise power over *B* by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants (p. 23).
- The third count on which the two-dimensional view of power is inadequate is closely linked to the second: namely, its insistence that nondecision-making power only exists where there are grievances which are denied entry into the political process in the form

of issues. If the observer can uncover no grievances, then he must assume there is as a 'genuine' consensus on the prevailing allocation of values. To put this in another way, it is here assumed that if men feel no grievances, then they have no interests that are harmed by the use of power. But this is also highly unsatisfactory (p. 24).

On the first count, Lukes (1974) points out that control over political processes and decisionmaking is not achieved through decisions. Lukes (1974) argues that:

In trying to assimilate all cases of exclusion of potential issues from the political agenda to the paradigm of a decision, it gives a misleading picture of the ways in which individuals and, above all, groups and institutions succeed in excluding potential issues from the political process (p. 21).

Decisions are consciously and intentionally arrived at when individuals are given choices and alternatives (Lukes, 1974). On the other hand, biases of a political system can be unconsciously and unintentionally rallied, reconstructed and fortified in ways that are neither deliberately chosen nor the anticipated outcomes of the dominant group's preferences.

On the second count, Lukes (1974) points out that the two-dimensional view of power is inadequate because it is not exclusively the use of power that can make the other person do what you want them to do. Luke (1974) argues that:

Indeed, is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have – that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires? ...thought control takes many less total and more mundane forms, through the control of information, through the mass media and through the process of socialisation (p. 23).

On the third count, Lukes (1974) points out that the reasons why the two-dimensional view of power is inadequate is because it does not clearly define a 'grievance' and because the use of power cannot prevent people from having grievances. Lukes (1974) argues that:

In the first place, what, in any case, is a grievance – an articulated demand, based on political knowledge, an undirected complaint arising out of everyday experience, a vague feeling of unease or sense of deprivation? Second, and more important, it is not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing social order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and

unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial? To assume that the absence of grievances equals genuine consensus is simply to rule out the possibility of false or manipulated consensus by definitional fiat (p. 24).

The three-dimensional view considers the one- and two-dimensional view as too individualistic and involves a thorough and an ongoing critique of focus on behaviour. It also brings to the fore many ways which result in potential issues being excluded from political processes because of interplay of social forces, individual choices and institutionalisation.

Lukes (1974) asserts that:

This, moreover, can occur in the absence of actual, observable conflict, which may have been successfully averted – though there remains here an implicit reference to potential conflict. This potential, however, may never in fact be actualised. What one may have here is a *latent conflict*, which consists in a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the *real interests* of those they exclude (pp. 24 – 25).

The main feature of the three-dimensional view of power is that it is a critique of the behavioural focus, which is embodied in the first two views. Lukes (1974) summarises the three-dimensional view of power as a critique of the behavioural focus with a primary ‘focus on (a) decision-making and control over political agenda (not necessarily through decisions), (b) issues and potential issues, (c) observable (overt or covert) and latent conflict, and (d) subjective and real interests’ (p. 25).

Power, violence or external coercion is sometimes mistaken with authority. Arendt (2006) points out that:

Since authority always demands obedience, it is commonly mistaken for some form of power or violence. Yet authority precludes the use of external means of coercion; where force is used, authority itself has failed. Authority, on the other hand, is incompatible with persuasion, which presupposes equality and works through a process of argumentation. Where arguments are used, authority is left in abeyance. Against the egalitarian order of persuasion stands the authoritarian order, which is always hierarchical (pp. 92 – 93).

Violence and force are incompatible with power. According to Arendt (1970), violence is instrumental, a means to an end, but ‘never will be legitimate’ (p. 52). Power, ‘far from being the means to an end, is actually the very condition enabling a group of people to think and act in terms of the means-end category’ (p. 51, cited in Lukes, 1974, p. 29). Arendt (1958) points out that:

Violence, curiously enough, can destroy power more easily than it can destroy strength, and while a tyranny is always characterised by the impotence of its subjects, who have lost their human capacity to act and speak together, it is not necessarily characterised by

weakness and sterility; on the contrary, the crafts and arts may flourish under these conditions if the ruler is “benevolent” enough to leave his subjects alone in their isolation (p. 203).

Violence and power are direct opposites and violence thrives where power is under threat.

Arendt (1970) states that ‘out of the barrel of a gun grows the most effective command, resulting in the most instant and perfect obedience. What cannot grow out of it is power’ (p.

53). ‘Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent’

(p. 56, cited in Lukes, 1974, p. 30). In contrast, strength can match up with violence but ‘can actually be ruined only by power and is therefore always in danger from the combined force of many’ (Arendt, 1958, p. 203). Furthermore, Arendt (1958) states that:

Strength, on the other hand, nature’s gift to the individual which cannot be shared with others, can cope with violence more successfully than with power – either heroically, by consenting to fight and die, or stoically, by accepting suffering and challenging all affliction through self-sufficiency and withdrawal from the world; in either case, the integrity of the individual and his strength remain intact (p. 203).

Authority entails obedience in which men enjoy their freedom without, for instance, relying on protection from bodyguards. In other words, the despot’s power to coerce slaves and that of the tyrant’s to coerce subjects impedes not only on the freedom of the slaves and the subjects respectively but also on the freedom of the despot and the tyrant. This may result in the despot and tyrant enlisting the services of bodyguards to protect them from the people.

Arendt (2006) states that:

Wherever he [despot] ruled there was only one relation, that between master and slaves. And the master, according to Greek common opinion (which was blissfully unaware of the Hegelian dialects), was not free when he moved among slaves; his freedom consisted in his ability to leave the sphere of the household altogether and to move among his equals, free men. Hence, neither the despot nor the tyrant, the one moving among slaves, the other among subjects, could be called a free man (p. 105).

We witness in modern societies that the majority of leaders in body politic do not command obedience from their followers that affords the former to retain their freedom.

This subsection has discussed that the three-dimensional view is a critique of the twodimensional view, and that the former seeks to improve the latter. The subsection also the section discussed that that the critique mainly targets the behavioural focus that is inherent in the first two

dimensions. In addition, the subsection, discussed that authority requires obedience and that it is incompatible with persuasion. Furthermore, the subsection also discussed that power, violence or external coercion is sometimes mistaken with authority. The subsection also discussed that violence and force are incompatible with power, and that force and violence flourishes where there is no power. Lastly, the subsection discussed that leaders who have got authority enjoy freedom and do not need to be protected from their followers or subordinates.

The entire section discussed the conceptual analysis of how power manifests itself in the exercise of leadership. The section that follows examines the conceptual analysis of how ethnicity manifests itself in leadership.

2.8 Conceptual analysis of ethnicity in leadership

Stakeholders in the adult education sector in Ireland have become more culturally diverse and therefore there is a need to analyse how ethnicity perpetuates itself in educational leadership. Conceptual analysis of how ethnicity can be understood in the way in which African Americans have constructed and reconstructed their understanding of the self and the other owing to their experiences of oppression and repression for centuries. The determination and spirit to survive led to what has become known in the social discourse as the African American prophetic spirituality. Dantley (2003) proposes an 'infusion of two radical perspectives, namely critical theory and prophetic African American spirituality to produce a new construct termed 'critical spirituality'. According to Dantley (2003), Cornel West (1988) took the idea of spirituality to another level by introducing into the discourse what he called a *prophetic spirituality*. Dantley (2003) points out that 'his conception of prophetic spirituality is a nuanced construction that blends the idea of criticality perceiving one's situationality in its unpolished context, the 'as is', while transcending one's political and social realities to project different and in fact better 'not yet'(pp. 7 – 8). Prophetic spirituality is predicated in awareness to criticality, history and universal consciousness. Dantley (2003) points out that:

West (1999) offers helpful insight in his definition of a prophetic tradition. He maintains that such a prophetic sensitivity yields a vigilant disposition in uncovering prevailing forms of individual and institutional evil. It maintains an unceasing suspicion of ossified and petrified forms of dogmatism and projects a strong propensity to resist various types of cynicism and nihilism. The pragmatic character of the spiritual phenomenon is critical by nature, offers opportunities for reflection and transcendence, but demands an agenda of aggressive activism to bring about substantive systemic change' (p. 8).

Prophetic spirituality helps an educational leader to embrace a vision that facilitates transformation (Dantley, 2003). Dantley (2003) points out that prophetic spirituality enables a leader 'to critically

engage the present, propose an agenda or a project for transformation, and envision a better future' (p. 8). According to Dantley (2003), West (1988) premises the experiences of African Americans within the scope of prophetic spirituality and insists that the prophetic modes of thought constitute of prolonged struggles against personal hopelessness and socio-economic exclusion. Dantley (2003) asserts that:

From this mind set emanate communities of hope. Communities of hope composed of those whom Freire (1970) called the oppressed are coalescing to bring democratic practice to a marginalising and silencing institution. The community of hope not only shares a discourse of critique but also aggressively develops a discourse of possibility. In fact, these communities of hope actualise the Greek language's notion of hope, which is desire with expectation. The hope is not merely ephemeral construction without a pragmatic agenda; rather hope literally becomes praxis, that is, reflection in action. Therefore these communities of hope become the vehicle through which West's ideas of prophetic spirituality and prophetic discourse take place. Those in a community of hope engage in critical reflection concerning their situationality as well as construct an agenda for change.

This is informed activism at its best (p. 9).

It therefore follows that if educational leaders can adopt West's tenets of prophetic spirituality they could transform educational institutions into communities of hope. The school leadership would open ways for staff members and students as part of a community of hope to openly and critically question hegemony and orthodoxy that might be present in the structures of the education institution. The communities of hope provide a medium that facilitates notions of combative spirituality and the prophetic discourse to unravel. Dantley (2003) states that 'schools that are open to these prophetic practices would be challenged to maintain these protracted struggles in order not to become domesticated or absorbed by the powers that have established the culture of dominance, but rather to serve as sites for democratic practice' (Dantley, 2003, p. 9). Prophetic spirituality has helped African Americans to 'build a *communitas* or a community of healing, nurturance, and resistance. The spirit that motivates this prophetic behaviour is the source of strength and the call to revolution that undergirds

African Americans' sense of tenuous well-being' (Dantley, 2003, p. 9). In addition, Dantley (2003) points out that 'West (1988) locates the whole concept of spirituality in what he terms three prophetic practices. These are a deep-seated moralism, an inescapable opportunism, and an aggressive pessimism' (p. 9). Deep-seated moralism, inescapable opportunism and an aggressive pessimism are respectively referred to as the first, second and third planks of prophetic practice.

This subsection examined how some African Americans conceived the African American prophetic spirituality after experiencing discrimination for centuries. The subsection also explored Dantley (2003) infusion of critical theory and African American spirituality to form a new construct that he calls critical spirituality. In addition, the subsection discussed that a leader who embraces ethos of African spirituality becomes transformational and challenges issues of discrimination. Finally, the subsection posited that the concept of spirituality has three prophetic practices, namely deep-seated moralism, an inescapable opportunism, and an aggressive pessimism, which are referred to as the first, second and third planks of prophetic practice. The subsection that follows theorises deep-seated moralism.

2.8.1 The deep-seated moralism

Deep-seated moralism is the first plank of the prophetic spirituality discourse. Dantley (2003) states that by deep-seated moralism what is meant is that 'African Americans judge the practice of persons and institutions in society by a rather strict coding of what is right or wrong' (p. 10). Further, Dantley (2003) points out that a leader with deep-seated moralism is transformative in nature and displays a 'commitment to deconstructing the systematic realities in schools in order to discover those latent and influential forms and structures that endorse and perpetuate asymmetrical relations of power. This actually becomes a transformative leader's project of rebellion' (p. 10). The transformative leader does not only expose inequality, but combatively confronts it and sets on a mission to dismantle all forms discrimination within the education institution. Dantley (2003) asserts that discrimination usually perpetuates itself in the form of 'abuse of power, the marginalisation of difference, and the propagation of cultural forms that continue to maintain race, class, and gender differentials in schools' (p. 10). Surface (2009) points out that:

Socio-cultural consciousness is the awareness that a person's worldview is not universal but profoundly influenced by life experiences mediated by race, ethnicity, gender and social class. Leaders who lack socio-cultural consciousness will unconsciously and inevitably rely on their own personal experiences to make sense of students' lives which often leads to misinterpretation and miscommunication (p. 195).

Lack of socio-cultural consciousness might lead teachers and those in leadership to stereotype students and such behaviour has negative effects to students of colour and those who generally come from marginalised backgrounds. According to Dantley (2003), 'there is a common assumption that African American families do not seem to care about education' (p. 10). Surface (2009) states that 'evidence also suggests many teachers and leaders see students from socially subordinated groups through a deficient perspective' (p. 195). In contrast, a study

carried out by Ooka Pang (1988) showed that 'in comparison with their White American peers, Asian American students report more support and encouragement from their parents' (p. 172), although the latter's families may 'not have the socioeconomic wherewithal to substantially improve their lives' (Dantley, 2003, p. 10). Therefore, transformative leaders with a deep-seated moralism agenda might help to improve the image in which members of minority groups and their families are wrongly stereotyped. In addition, since marginalised communities have shown positive signs towards education, there is a possibility of reducing reproduction of poverty in those communities. Transformative 'school administrators should facilitate a learning environment where exigencies of capitalism and exploitation of others for one's personal upward social and economic mobility are actively resisted' (Dantley, 2003, p. 10). The majority of students who enrol on the adult education sector have low educational achievement and may be poorly resourced. Dantley (2003) posits that:

The issue for a transformative leader grounded in a deep-seated moralism becomes one of proposing organizational structures that are fair and just, as well as establishing policies and procedures that recognize and demystify asymmetrical power relations. This means that transformative leaders unravel the hierarchical organizational structures that propagate power differentials and unjust bureaucratic relations because such social constructions often breed immoral and dehumanising results. Voices are summarily silenced, certain people are relegated to the periphery and those with legitimated power remain in positions of dominance. Leaving the voice of the 'other' silent or even muted is unrighteous and unethical (pp. 10 – 11).

The spiritual dimension of leadership gives us limitless energy to reach out to others and to be pastoral care givers in ways that promote relationships and peace. Spencer (2004) points out that:

[The spiritual dimension of leadership] puts us in touch with a source of infinite energy that is benevolent and leads us to contribute in ways that promote greater levels of peace and harmony for all. We find ourselves seeing through the eyes of compassion, and opening our hearts to others, irrespective of their apparent origin. We see oneness of everything and take accountability for our part of the whole (p. 193).

When we are conscious of the spiritual dimension we de-emphasise individual interest by 'actively connecting to Spirit through prayer and meditation keeps us mindful of this energy and the power it has to nourish our lives' (Spencer, 2004, p. 193). People who are spiritual do not necessarily believe in a religion, but believe in the existence of a Spirit or Being higher than self.

Some educational theorists have argued that teaching does not involve power politics.

Johnston (1999) argues that he believes 'very firmly that in essence teaching is not primarily about power or politics' (p. 561) and that in his 'own view...fundamentally teaching is about the moral relation between teacher and student' (p. 561). Johnston (1999) seems to have been eluded by the fact that the notion of teaching and learning is meant to impart knowledge to an individual who at some point would be weaned off from the teacher and be expected to function independently as an active citizen. Although there is an element of moral relationship between teacher and student, critical theorists assert that the most important element of teaching is to produce a unique political being that would interact meaningfully with other political beings in society. In other words, by nature all human beings are born political.

Social institutions including education have a socialisation influence that determines how politically active we later become as adults. In line with the term 'vita activa', Arendt (1958) proposes 'to designate three fundamental human activities: labour, work, and action' (p. 7) in the ascending order of their importance and sophistication. We labour in order to get basics or biological needs of life such as food, clothes, shelter, to reproduce and fend for our offspring so that our species could multiply. Therefore, the human condition of labour is natural. We work in order to meet higher needs that include buying luxuries items. In other words, work is unnatural and provides us with "artificial" world of things, distinctly different from natural surroundings' (p. 7). Action or praxis is of highest order and more prestigious than labour and work. Arendt's (1958) way of conceptualising labour, work and action has connections with the way of life in Rome and Athens during the feudal stages. Action in the form of living a full political life was a preserve of men who were free and did not need to labour and work.

There have been debates in recent years about the distinction between vocational and nonvocational education and training. Powell *et al.* (2003) point out that:

Much debate has arisen about the distinction between vocational and non-vocational learning. On the one hand, it appears that the old distinction between education and training, which saw the former as the gaining of intellectual knowledge and the latter as acquiring of job-related skills, is being increasingly discarded in favour of the term 'learning' (p. 21).

Although the use of the terms 'vocational' and 'non-vocational' is declining, there is still a tendency for members of the elite group to make non-accredited courses a leisure pursuit rather than to acquire work-related skills. Smith and Spurling (1999) 'suggest that there is substantial evidence of the growing popularity of accredited courses as a means of reinforcing the aims of adult continuing education and lending it greater status' (cited in Powell *et al.*, 2003, p. 22). Powell *et al.* (2003) assert that 'this is because assessment and accreditation are said to provide evidence of learner

achievements and provide learner progression routes' (p. 22). European governments have responded to this high demand for qualifications by setting up national qualifications frameworks as an incentive for adults to learn. Arendt (1958) points out that:

...the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world. While all aspects of human condition are somehow related to politics, this plurality is specifically *the* condition – not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam* – of all political life' (p. 7).

The interaction of humans in the public realm, plurality and participation in civic life is partly influenced by the nature and level of education that we would have received and achieved. There is a link between participatory democracy and the level of education of citizens. There are countries where citizens do not receive critical education that prepare them to be participatory citizens. Naidoo (2005) states that in such countries 'national elections are deeply flawed before the first ballot is cast. Adults who have been educationally deprived are more vulnerable to electoral manipulation' (p. 12). Therefore, educators have a moral obligation to groom critical and politically active citizens.

This subsection explored that deep-seated moralism is the first plank of the prophetic spirituality discourse. The subsection also discussed that members of minority groups and their families are wrongly stereotyped. In addition, the subsection discussed that transformative leaders with a deep-seated moralism agenda might help to improve the image in which members of minority groups and their families are wrongly stereotyped. Furthermore, the subsection posited that the spiritual dimension of leadership gives us limitless energy to reach out to others and to be pastoral care givers in ways that promote relationships and peace. This subsection also hypothesised that three fundamental human activities are labour, work and action, and that we are born with characteristics of being active political beings, but that those characteristics change because of socialisation by social institutions. Finally, the subsection proposed that there is a link between participatory democracy and the level of education of citizens. The subsection that follows posits inescapable opportunism, which is also known as the second plank of prophetic practice.

2.8.2 *An inescapable opportunism*

The inescapable opportunism is also known as the second plank of the prophetic discourse challenges unequal access to educational resources and skewed power relations that force marginalised groups to scramble for crumbs. Dantley (2003) points out that 'West offers that the needs of African Americans are parallel to those of most Americans. These include comfortable living conditions, quality education, adequate health care and a certain autonomy in pursuing their

personal destinies' (p. 11). Access to the aforementioned amenities is necessary in order to realise the American dream. Dantley (2003) argues that:

These inevitably lead to the ironic necessity for those who are in marginalised positions of our society to use opportunistic practices, even those they have come to disdain, for their survival or to achieve even a minimum of the American dream. It is the discriminatory system of delivery that in West's mind necessitates this sense of inescapable opportunism.

Essentially, West's construction of the inescapable opportunism discloses both a racial and class monolith that has been intentionally constructed to maintain the socio-economic status quo (p. 11).

Educational leaders who embrace the ideas of inescapable opportunism usually encourage the inclusion of critical theory in the learning process and curricula that is designed after making broad consultations with stake holders. Dantley (2003) points out that:

School leaders who identify with notions of inescapable opportunism will also facilitate an environment where the learning community, through forms of critical pedagogy and informed curricula, will deconstruct as well as construct ways by which all have a more equitable opportunity to achieve personal needs while at the same time preserving a passion for democratic practice in the process. African American spirituality engenders a critical discernment as well as an impetus to see morally just practices implemented in the pursuit of meeting life's needs (p. 11).

Educational leaders who support the notions of inescapable opportunism also view the learning process as an opportunity impart knowledge of deconstruction to members of the Professional Learning Community (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Hord, 1997; Wenger, 2012).

Dantley (2003) states that:

School leaders who subscribe to West's (1998) notions of escapable opportunism see the learning process as a way to teach the rudiments of deconstruction through critical exploration, inquiry, dialogue, and problem-posing pedagogy. They understand the inherent games that exist in the economic and cultural system. They therefore facilitate learning experiences in the community that lead participants in learning how to recognise these systemic, exploitative functions in a historical as well as contemporary perspective and then design an agenda to advance radical changes in the socio-economic system (p. 12).

Leaders who embrace ideas of inescapable opportunism view the curriculum and pedagogy areas where critical exploration, inquiry, dialogue, and problem-posing pedagogy are engaged. In addition, Dantley (2003) asserts that:

They reward the asking of penetrating questions in the learning community which are designed to demystify hegemonic forms, conditions and rituals embedded in the society's economic and social structures that appear to be monolithic in nature. The inescapable opportunism answers learning community participants' needs to see how the educative process becomes a vehicle for the exercise of their unique capacities and personal potentialities. Teleological issues are engaged in schools where leaders understand West's inescapable opportunism. Greater questions regarding the future and one's active participation in its construction come from this prophetic discourse (p. 12).

The whole notion of inescapable opportunism is supported by the idea that humans have sufficient capabilities to transform incapacitating socio-economic conditions. According to Wood (2000), 'given humanity's ontoformative powers, we have no stake in establishing a priori limitations on the possibilities for individual and collective development' (p. 34, cited in Dantley, 2003, p. 12). We need educational leaders who support the idea of human beings' predisposition toward a living system, that is, the ability of life to recreate itself, and Wood's (2000) notion of humanity's capabilities to establish a sense of being. If educational leaders have a deep understanding of the aforementioned, then they would wholeheartedly 'support the belief that participants in the learning community can clearly understand the mechanisms of the socio-economic system, how they marginalise and silence, as well as construct, the essential strategies necessary to respond to these systemic iniquities' (p. 12). The role of such leaders is to enlighten the learning community in order to realise that it has the potential and capabilities to dismantle hegemonic practices and replace them with democratic institutions and a more equal society.

Hegemony does not always manifest itself through overt coercion because victims of oppression sometimes unknowingly participate in their own oppression. McLaren (1988) states that hegemony 'is a struggle in which the powerful win the consent of those who are oppressed, with the oppressed unknowingly participating in their own oppression' (p. 203). Freire (1972) points out that 'the dominant elites utilize the banking concept to encourage passivity in the oppressed, corresponding with the latter's 'submerged' state of consciousness and take advantage of that passivity to 'fill' that consciousness with slogans which create even more fear of freedom' (p. 67). Distribution of power and access to resources streamline communities into classes and class relationships.

The term 'class' defines the political, economic and social organisation that is assigned to groups of people. McLaren (1988) states that:

Class refers to the economic, social, and political relationships that govern life in a given social order. Class relationships reflect the constraints and limitations individuals and groups experience in the areas of income level, occupation, place of residence, and other indicators of status and social rank. Relations of a class are those associated with surplus labour, who produces it, and who is a recipient of it. Surplus labour is that labour undertaken by workers beyond which is necessary (p. 198).

Class relations are also associated with the allocation and distribution of power in the structures of an organisation. The two main classes that are easily identifiable in a capitalist global economy are the transnational capitalist class and the working class (McLaren, 1988). The relationship between the two classes is embedded with latent and sometimes overt conflict.

Freire (1972) asserts that human beings 'are aware of themselves and thus of the world – because they are conscious beings – exist in a dialectical relationship between the determination of limits and their freedom' (p. 71). We therefore need leaders who understand that they have a significant role to play and that are aware that they are in privileged positions that make it possible for them to dismantle the hegemonic socio-economic and political structures that have for years undergirded the capitalist socio-economic systems. There is a more urgent need to do that in the twenty-first century than it was the case before because migration and immigration has made global citizens more culturally diverse.

This subsection discussed inescapable opportunism which is also known as the second plank of the prophetic discourse, challenges unequal access to educational resources and skewed power relations. The subsection also hypothesised that educational leaders who embrace the ideas of inescapable opportunism usually encourage the inclusion of critical theory and informed curricula in the learning process. In addition, the subsection theorised that educational leaders who embrace the ideas of escapable opportunism also view the learning process as an opportunity to impart knowledge of deconstruction to members of the Professional Learning Communities (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Hord, 1997; Wenger, 2012). Furthermore, this subsection posited that leaders that embrace ideas of inescapable opportunism view the curriculum and pedagogy areas where critical exploration, inquiry, dialogue and problem-posing pedagogy are engaged. Lastly, the subsection discussed that hegemony does not always manifest itself through overt coercion because sometimes the victims unknowingly participate in their own oppression. The subsection below examines profound pessimism.

2.8.3 *A profound pessimism*

The third plank of the prophetic spirituality discourse is profound pessimism. Although it may seem contradictory to associate deep-rooted pessimism with a prophetic practice, 'however, West (1988) argues that African Americans use the exigencies of the American cultural dynamic as a source of motivation as opposed to banal resignation' (Dantley, 2003, p. 13). This idea seems to concur with Burns (2003)'s assertion that 'institutional constraints under some circumstances develop into institutional supports in others' (p. 153). West (1988) argues that:

The odds seem so overwhelming, the incorporate strategies of the status quo so effective – and the racism so deeply entrenched in American life. Yet most prophetic practices among black Americans have given this pessimism an aggressiveness such that it becomes sobering rather than disabling, a stumbling block rather than a dead end, a challenge to meet rather than a conclusion to accept (p. 42, cited in Dantley, 2003, p. 13).

Institutional discrimination is deeply entrenched in the life of African Americans and other oppressed and struggling peoples around the world. Dantley (2003) says that 'it is this seeming antonymous relationship between joy and hopelessness that marks the prophetic spirituality that has maintained the engagement of African Americans with the protracted struggle to reform and reconstruct our society' (p. 13). Institutional discrimination leads to the emergence of subcultures. McLaren (1988) argues that:

Subcultures are involved in contesting the cultural "space" or openings in the dominant culture. The dominant culture is never able to secure total control over subordinate cultural groups...subcultures are more often *negotiated* than truly *oppositional*. Subcultures do offer a symbolic critique of the social order and are frequently organized around relations of class, gender, style, and race. Despite the often ferocious exploitation of the subcultural resistance of various youth subcultures by bourgeois institutions (school, workplace, justice system, consumer industries), subcultures are usually able to keep alive the struggle over how meanings are produced, defined, and legitimated; consequently, they do represent various degrees of struggle against lived subjugation. Many subcultural movements reflect a crisis within dominant society, rather than a unified mobilization against it. They defang the symbolic potency of the ruling class catechism found in the dominant corporate media apparatus and the cultural institutions controlled by conglomerate ownership and economies of grand scale (pp. 201- 202).

There are a number of subcultural groups that have emerged in Britain and United States. McLaren (1988) states that subcultural groups include the 'working-class youth, teddy boys, skinheads, punks, rude boys and Rastafarians' (p. 201). In addition, McLaren (1988) says that in America they

include 'motorcycle clubs such as Hell's Angels, ethnic street gangs and middle-class suburban gangs...As John Muncie (1981) points out, this is because they operate primarily in the arena of leisure that is exceedingly vulnerable to commercial and ideological incorporation' (p. 201).

Furthermore, McLaren (1988) points out that:

...the hippie movement in the 1960s represented, in part, an exercise of petit bourgeois socialism by middle-class radicals who were nurtured both by idealist principles and by a search for spiritual and lifestyle comfort. This often served to draw critical attention away from the structural inequalities of the capitalist society. As Muncie argues, subcultures constitute "a crisis within dominant culture rather than a conspiracy against dominant culture" (p. 202).

African Americans encounter dualities of pessimism and aggressiveness in their daily lives, and they respond tackle that pessimism with aggressiveness. According to Dantley (2003), 'it is this seeming antonymous relationship between joy and hopeless that marks the prophetic spirituality that has maintained the engagement of African Americans with the protracted struggle to reform and reconstruct our society' (p. 13). Critical transformative leaders in the twenty-first century that 'subscribe to West's (1988) profound pessimism are comfortable existing in dualities. They are fully cognisant of the present but somehow foresee the present as a temporary condition' (Dantley, 2003, p. 13). Furthermore, Dantley (2003) points out that triumphing over the present for the betterment of the future 'is a challenge willingly faced by transformative leaders. These leaders have the moral courage to embrace the unrighteous, immoral organizations that are rampant in schools while at the same time inspiring the learning community to create an agenda for change and reconstruction' (p. 13). Reflective thinking is paramount if school leaders are to unpack inequalities and discriminatory access to resources that is embedded in the educational systems. Starratt (2001) points out that John Dewey 'proposed that a generalised methodology of science offered a model for constructing knowledge in the social sphere' (p. 339). John Dewey generalised methodology of reflective thought proceeded through five steps. Starratt (2001) asserts that those steps are:

(1) a felt or perceived difficulty or problem; (2) the clarification of what the difficulty appeared to be; (3) a search for possible solutions to the difficulty; (4) a reasoned projection of possible consequences of each solution; and (5) the choice of a solution and an assessment of its actual consequences, leading to the acceptance of the solution or its rejection (p. 339).

It is believed that dialogue that requires critical thinking generates critical thinking. Freire (1972) points out that 'only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical

thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education' (p. 65). Educational leaders need to embrace dialogue, critical thinking and communication.

This subsection hypothesised that the third plank of the prophetic spirituality discourse is profound pessimism. The subsection also discussed that institutional discrimination is deeply entrenched in the life of African Americans and other oppressed and struggling peoples around the world, and that institutional discrimination leads to the emergence of subcultures. In addition, the subsection posited that African Americans encounter dualities of pessimism and aggressiveness in their daily lives, and that they tackle that pessimism with aggressiveness. Lastly, reflective thinking is paramount if school leaders are to unpack inequalities and discriminatory access to resources that is embedded in the educational systems. The entire section has addressed the conceptual analysis of how ethnicity manifests itself in leadership. The section that follows examines the conceptual analysis of how gender manifests itself in leadership.

2.9 Conceptual analysis of gender in leadership

The differentiation between defining the concepts of sex and gender usually causes some confusion. It is therefore important to understand the differences between these two concepts as a way of facilitating a sociological understanding of the relationship between women and men at the workplace and in other settings. Tovey and Share (2003) state that:

Sex is commonly held to refer to the differing physical attributes, genital arrangements, chromosomal structures, reproductive systems and secondary sexual characteristics such as distribution of body hair, breast development and so on. Sex gives rise to two categories: *female* and *male*. Gender refers to the *meanings* that arise out of sexual classification; and to the socially constructed experiences and identities that arise from assumed sexual differences (p. 231).

The clues to one's gender identity are usually associated with the physical appearance attributed to male or female, and projected through an array of activities including dress code, work that that individual prefers and emotional behaviours. Tovey and Share (2003) assert that:

The categories that gender gives rise to in western societies are *feminine* and *masculine*. The word 'gender' has in many situations become a euphemism for 'women': 'gender studies' has come to mean 'women studies' and a politician may refer to 'gender equality' when what they mean is 'more opportunities for women' (p. 231).

However, this study will adhere to the sociological definition of term 'gender', which refers to all characteristics of sexual differences and identity and what is associated with the experiences of

both men and women. The use of the terms 'feminine', 'feminist' and 'feminism' will only be used on issues affecting women. Tovey and Share (2003) point out that:

For functionalists, gender relationships and differences are seen as crucial to the effective functioning of society. Gender differences serve an integrative function in society: they help to bind members together. Thus, masculinity and femininity are seen as a complementary set of roles that span the family (in particular), the public sphere and the workplace (p. 233).

Notwithstanding the views of functional sociologists cited above, it is evident that there is a relationship between inequality in various spheres of life and the gender that is ascribed to the individual. Collins (2000) points out that:

Placing U.S. Black women's experiences in the centre of analysis without privileging those experiences shows how intersectional paradigms can be especially important for rethinking the particular matrix of domination that characterizes U.S. society. Claims that systems of race, social class, gender, and sexuality form mutually constructing features of social organization foster a basic rethinking of U.S. social institutions. For example, using intersecting paradigms to investigate U.S. Black women's experiences challenges deeply held beliefs that work and family constitute separate spheres of social organization (p. 228). The majority of women in most parts of the world still find themselves being given subordinate roles both at the workplace and at home, although the disparity varies from region to region. The modern feminist discourses are divided into three main strands, and these are liberal feminism, socialist feminism and radical feminism. Firstly, Tovey and Share (2003) state that:

Liberal feminists are concerned to uncover the immediate forms of discrimination against women and to fight for legal and other reforms to overcome them. They tend to focus on mainstream methods of bringing about change, such as political lobbying, use of the media and working through existing political, business and bureaucratic structures (pp. 234 – 235).

Liberal feminists use a consensus rather than a conflict approach in trying to effect change or reform the status quo. Secondly, Tovey and Share (2003) assert that:

Socialist feminist groups argue that women's oppression is both an aspect of capitalism and of patriarchy. An end of capitalism does not in itself mean an end to the subordination of women, but is an essential part of it. The full liberation of women from oppression will also require a struggle against the control by men of private and public institutions (p. 235).

Socialist feminist movements are usually found in left-wing politics, trade union movements, women groups, academic jobs, social movements and in the media (Tovey and Share, 2003). Finally, Tovey and Share (2003) state that '*radical* feminists see male control of all women through patriarchy as the main problem. They argue that women struggle to free themselves from the control of male institutions. They are most likely to work through women-only groups' (p. 235). One notable feature is that feminist movements prefer not to involve men in their efforts to unshackle themselves from male domination. A good example is that studies that are related to gender are predominantly undertaken by women. This researcher is of the opinion that inclusion of men in the feminist movements and on studies that are related to gender might be advantageous because it can make men to be better informed about issues affecting women and empathise with their counterparts.

The Irish adult education sector is dominated by women, which makes it appropriate to explore gender relations in the exercise of leadership. Structural feminist groups who are against what in their opinion is a predetermined zero-sum or pluralist view of power argue that higher positions in the workplace are still dominated by men. Taylor (2003) asserts that 'power, and hence policy, is determined by capitalist, elitist or patriarchal ruling ideas and interests' (p. 87). Lukes (1974) argues that 'Parsons objects to seeing power as a 'zero-sum' phenomenon and appeals to the analogy of credit creation in the economy, arguing that the use of power, as when the ruled have justified confidence in their rulers, may achieve objectives which all desire and from which to benefit' (p. 31). The feminist movement is challenged by conceptual analysis problems about what constitutes feminism and that weakens its cause. Hooks (2000) points out that:

A central problem within feminist discourse has been our inability to either arrive at a consensus of opinion about what feminism is or accept definition(s) that could serve as points of unification. Without agreed upon definition(s), we lack a sound foundation on which to construct theory or engage in overall meaningful praxis (p. 18).

The United States media continue to popularise and propagate a superficial and broad definition which describes feminism as a movement that seeks to make women socially equal to men. This definition is simplistic and problematic in that in a capitalist, patriarchy and white supremacist class structure, men are themselves not equal. As a result, it is confusing which men the women would like to be equal to or whether women share the same concept of what constitute equality. Hooks (2000) states that:

Implicit in this simplistic definition of women's liberation is a dismissal of race and class as factors that, in conjunction with sexism, determine the extent to which an individual will be discriminated against, exploited, or oppressed. Bourgeois white woman interested in

the women's rights issues have been satisfied with simple definition for obvious reasons. Rhetorically placing themselves in the same social category as oppressed women, they are not anxious to call attention to race and class privilege (p. 19).

In Ireland, organisations that seek to empower immigrant women and other marginalised women are often fronted by leaders that do not necessarily come from those backgrounds. The majority of bourgeois white women have leanings to liberal feminism which does not emphasise an overhaul and complete eradication of social, economical and political structures that are entrenched in domination. Furthermore, the bourgeois white women are sometimes blamed for benefiting from feminist initiatives at the expense of the intended beneficiaries (Hooks, 2000). That has led to bourgeois white women to being accused of having a racist agenda. However, Collins (2000) states that:

The much-banded-about accusation of racism in the women's movement may be much less about the racial attitudes of individual White women than it is about the unwillingness or inability of some Western White feminists to share power. These conflicts remain muted when the power differences among women are vast—the case when the interests of poor, rural, non-American Black women are championed by Western feminists. Yet when the power differentials shrink—the case of Black American and White American women who are seemingly equal under U.S. law—relationships become much more contentious (p. 234).

There are also other women's groups that have benefited from feminism although not fully committed to its cause. In the United States, some women's groups have secured funding for conferences on issues associated with women even if leaders of those groups would not like the public to view them as advocates of feminism. Many women's groups have also benefited from social and political reforms related to the feminist movement, but after benefiting they would not like to be identified as advocates of the movement. Some women become famous and rich due to the support given to their activities by large numbers of women in a mistaken belief that they are advancing feminism rebrand themselves and substitute the term 'feminism' for another term. Creation of terms not related to feminist movement by women who are perceived to be advocates of the movement has perpetuated distorted definitions instead of refining the existing definition. Theoretical perspectives of liberal feminists are to blame for failure to radicalise the feminist movements. Hooks (2000) asserts that:

The lack of any emphasis on domination is consistent with the liberal feminist belief that women can achieve equality with men of their class without challenging and changing the cultural basis of group oppression. It is this belief that negates the likelihood that the potential radicalism of liberal feminism will never be realised (p. 21).

Liberal feminist approaches seem inappropriate and divisive in that they compartmentalise the feminist cause by suggesting that women are supposed to achieve equality with men of their own social class rather than those in other classes (Hooks, 2000). This somehow suggests that at the workplace women of working class background should strive to equate themselves with working class men rather than middle class men that might be in positions of leadership. This seems to be an indirect way of telling working class women to be content with what they already have and not to aspire for leadership positions. Collins (2000) points out that:

...despite their contributions, not all Black nationalisms are the same. But they do seem to share one common feature, namely, a norm of racial solidarity based on Black women's unquestioned support of Black men without extracting a similar commitment on the part of

Black men to Black women. In contrast to White women's maternalism, U.S. Black women are encouraged to embrace a Black paternalism, one where Black men reclaim their manhood because Black women "let them be men" (p. 235).

Active participation in feminism is sometimes politicised and leading to non-white women being discriminated against by the social, economic and political systems. According to Hooks (2000), 'individual African American, Native American Indian, Asian American, and Hispanic American women find themselves isolated if they support feminist movement' (p. 23). In addition, African-American women do not meaningfully experience that work and family constitute two distinct spheres of social organization and their image is often projected in sexist stereotypes. Collins (2000) states that:

African-American women's confinement to domestic work revealed how race and gender influenced Black women's social class experiences. Similarly, the sexual politics of Black womanhood that shaped Black women's experiences with pornography, prostitution, and rape relied upon racist, sexist, and heterosexist ideologies to construct Black women's sexualities as deviant (p. 227).

In the United States, Black feminism and intersecting oppressions that shape the experiences of other racial groups as well are understood in terms intersectional paradigms. Collins (2000) asserts that:

Intersectional paradigms make two important contributions to understanding the connections between knowledge and empowerment. For one, they stimulate new interpretations of

African-American women's experiences...Intersectional paradigms make a second important contribution to untangling the relationships between knowledge and

empowerment—they shed new light on how domination is organized. The term *matrix of domination* describes this overall social organization within which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained (p. 227).

The domination that Black women encounter is regulated in patterns of intersecting oppression in education, housing, government services, employment and other social institutions.

Analysing conceptualisation of power using intersectional paradigms brings to the surface the underlying issues that Parson and Arendt do not sufficiently deal with. Parson and Arendt's definitions of power are rather similar. Lukes (1974) points out that, on the one hand, 'Parson's conceptualisation ties it to authority, consensus and the pursuit of collective and the pursuit of collective goals, and dissociates it from conflicts of interest and, in particular, from coercion and force'. The approach that Parson offers diverts his focus from the expression of power between individuals and/or groups to that of viewing power as a property of a system.

Lukes (1974) argues that 'collective 'goals', or even the values which lie behind them, may be the outcome of a 'negotiated order' built on conflicts between parties holding differential power is ignored, since for Parsons 'power' assumes the prior existence of collective goals' (p. 30). On the other hand, 'Arendt's way of conceiving power ties to a tradition and vocabulary which she traces to Athens and Rome, according to which the republic is based on the rule of law' (p. 29). According to Arendt (1970), rule of law rests on 'the power of the people' (p. 40). In this perspective, power is dissociated from the 'command-obedience relationship' (p. 40) and 'the business of dominion' (p. 44, cited in Lukes, 1974, p. 29).

Furthermore, Lukes (1974) points out that 'all that Parsons and Arendt wish to say about consensual behaviour remains sayable, but so also does all that they wish to remove from the language of power' (p. 31). Lukes (1974) argues that Parson and Arendt's 'conceptualisation of power are rationally defensible' (p. 30). Luke (1974) advances reasons for arriving at this conclusion. Lukes (1974) points out:

In the first place, they are revisionary persuasive redefinitions of power which are out of line with the central meanings of 'power' as traditionally understood and with concerns that have preoccupied students of power. They focus on the locution 'power to', ignoring 'power over'. Thus power indicates a 'capacity', a 'facility', an 'ability', not a relationship. Accordingly, the conflictual aspect of power – the fact that it is exercised *over* people – disappears altogether from view (pp. 30 -31).

Failure to appreciate the relational characteristics of power results in a lack of interest to explore power relations and a focus on gaining people's compliance at the expense of their capability to oppose. Lukes (1974) also points out:

In the second place, the point of these definitions is, as we have seen, to reinforce certain theoretical positions; but everything that can be said by their means can be said with greater clarity by means of the conceptual scheme here proposed, without thereby concealing from view the (central) aspects of power which they define out of existence (p. 31).

As a way of improving the theoretical positions of Weber, Parsons and Arendt, Lukes (1974) offers an alternative and radical 'three-dimensional' perspective of power.

Giddens (2006) states that 'the first dimension sees power in terms of the ability to make decisions to go one's own way in observable conflicts' (p. 846). A good example is that if the government had changed its stance to establish the Irish Water – Public Utility in July 2013 in response to the Anti-austerity protestors, it would be evident that protestors had power. In addition, Giddens (2006) states that 'a second dimension to power concerns the ability to control what issues are decided upon. By this, Lukes means that groups or individuals with power can exercise it, not by making a decision, but by limiting the alternative available to others' (p. 846). A good example is that dictators usually restrict the media from reporting on activities that may project a bad image of them to the international community. By so doing, brutalities carried out by the dictatorship may take place without being known to the international community. Lastly, Giddens (2006) states that 'Lukes argues that there is also a third dimension of power, which he calls the 'manipulation of desires'' (p. 846). Lukes (1974) asks, 'Indeed, is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have – that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires? (p. 23). Furthermore, Lukes (1974) 'points out that this does not necessarily mean brainwashing. Our desires can be manipulated in more subtle ways' (cited in Giddens, 2006, p. 846). Other ways of exercising power and control over the public are socialisation and using the media to spread propaganda, advertisement and manipulation of information.

By drawing a distinction between the three dimensions of power, Luke (1994) offers a wider definition of power compared to that of Weber. In this section, where *A* and *B* are quoted in Lukes' (1994) conceptualisation of power, *A* will be treated by this researcher to be synonymous to men or male institutions, and *B* to be synonymous to feminist movements or the feminine gender. Lukes (1974) states that 'the three views we have been considering can be seen as alternative interpretations and applications of one and the same underlying concept of power, according to which *A* exercises power over *B* when *A* affects *B* in a manner contrary to *B*'s interests' (p. 27). The rationality of the definition is not conclusive and needs further investigation. For example, Giddens (2006) comments, 'This still leaves the question, how do we know what *B*'s interests are? Lukes

admits that this is ultimately a matter of opinion. Still, his conception of power has been influential in alerting sociologists to the different dimensions that the exercise of power involves' (p. 846).

Lukes (1974) uses a conceptual map of power 'and its cognates (all modes of 'significant affecting')' (p. 31) illustrates the three dimensions of power.

Figure 2.4 below illustrates the conceptual map of power 'and its cognates (all modes of 'significant affecting')' (p. 31) illustrates the three dimensions of power as Lukes (1974) hypothesises.

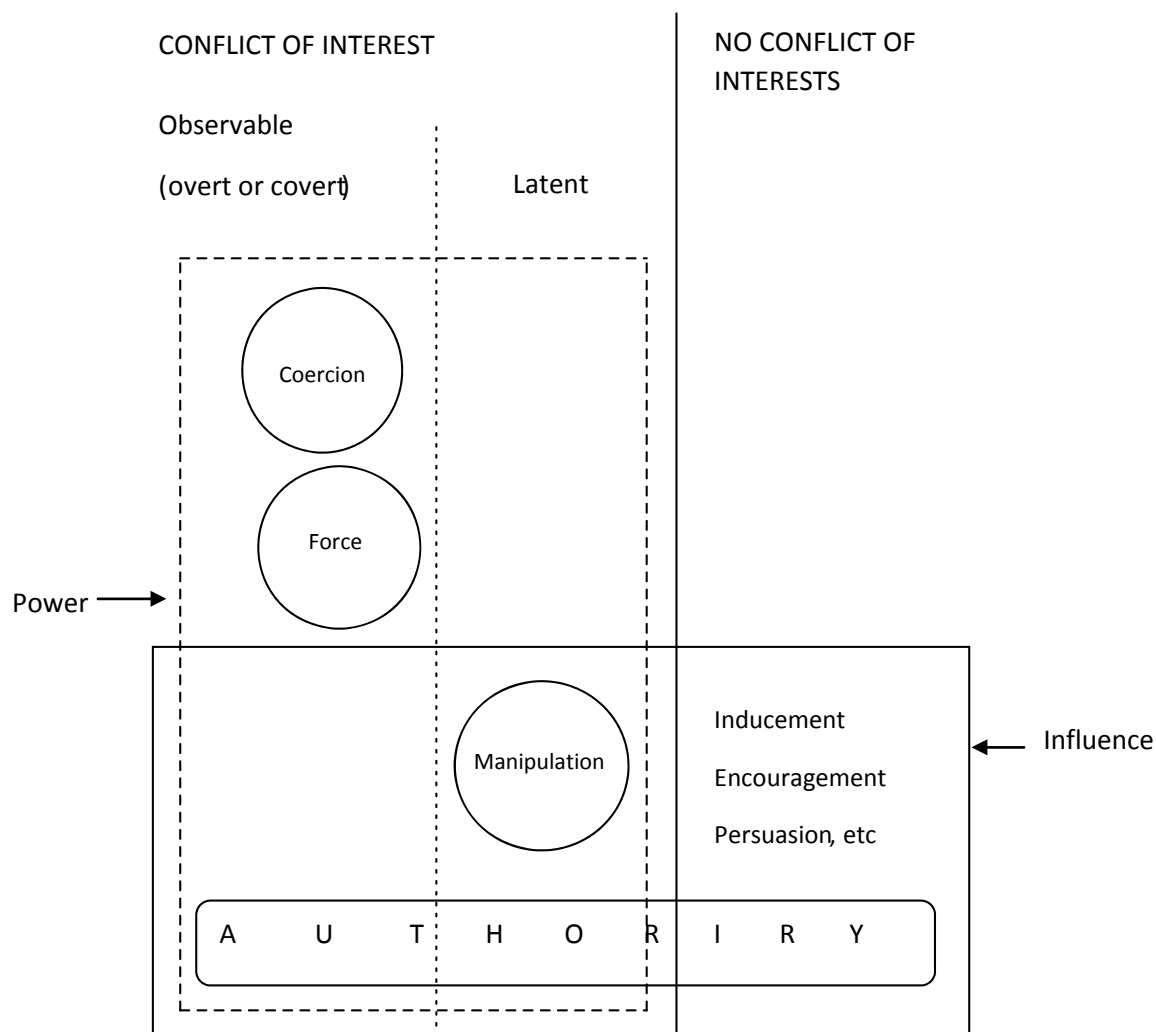


Figure 2.4: The conceptual map of power and its and its cognates

Adapted from Lukes (1974, p. 32)

The conceptual map of power shown on Figure 2.4 above is adapted from Bachrach and Baratz's (1970) typology and Lukes (1974) asserts that the map 'is itself essentially contestable – and, in particular, although it is meant to analyse and situate the concept of power which underlies the one-, two- and three-dimensional views of power' (p. 32). The reason why Lukes' (1974) is

different from Bachrach and Baratz's (1970) typology is that in addition to the first two dimensions, it incorporates the three-dimensional view. Lukes (1974) points out that:

I will be seen that in this scheme power may or may not be a form of influence – depending on whether no conflict of interests is involved. Consensual authority, with no conflict of interests, is not, therefore, a form of power. The question of whether rational persuasion is a form of power and influence cannot be adequately treated here. For what it is worth, my inclination is to say yes or no (pp. 32 – 33).

Circumstances that might lead him to answer yes or no can be demonstrated. Lukes (1974) asserts that:

Yes, because it is a form of significant affecting: *A* gets (causes) *B* to do or think what he would not otherwise do or think. No, because *B* autonomously accepts *A*'s reasons, or that one is inclined to say that it is not *A* but *A*'s reasons, or *B*'s acceptance of them, that is responsible for *B*'s change of course (p. 33).

In the above scenario, Lukes (1974) posits that 'we are here in the presence of a fundamental (Kantian) antimony between causality, on the one hand, and autonomy and reason, on the other hand. I see here no way of resolving this antimony: there are simply contradictory conceptual pressures at work' (p 33). Lukes (1974) also asserts that 'it may further be asked whether power can be exercised by *A* over *B* in *B*'s interests. That is, suppose there is a conflict now between the preferences of *A* and *B*, but that *A*'s preferences are in *B*'s interests' (p. 33). Lukes (1974) hypothesises that there are two possible explanations that may lead to the aforementioned, and states that:

(1) *A* might exercise 'short-term power' over *B* (with an observable conflict of subjective), but that if and when *B* recognises his real interests, the power relation ends: it is selfannihilating; or (2) that all or most forms of attempted or successful control by *A* over *B*, when *B* objects or resists, constitutes of *B*'s autonomy; that *B* has a real interest in his own autonomy; so that such an exercise of power cannot be in *B*'s real interests. Clearly the first of these responses is open to misuse by seeming to provide a paternalist licence to tyranny; while the second furnishes an anarchist defence against it, collapsing all or most cases of influence into power (p. 33).

Where *A* and *B* are used in this section, *A* is treated as an equivalence of men or male institutions in this section and *B* as an equivalence of the feminist movement or feminine gender. Lukes (1974) concludes by stating that 'the identification of these is not up to *A*, but to *B*, exercising choice under

conditions of relative autonomy and, in particular, independently of *A*'s power – e.g. through democratic participation' (p. 33). In brief, in the power matrix, the identification of the responses is up to the feminist movement or the feminine gender, rather than men or the male institutions.

This section posited that the differentiation between defining the concepts of sex and gender usually causes some confusion. The section also discussed that the majority of women in most parts of the world still find themselves being given subordinate roles both at the workplace and at home, although the disparity varies with regions. In addition, the section theorised that modern feminist discourses are divided into three main strands, and these are liberal feminism, socialist feminism and radical feminism. Furthermore, this section hypothesised that the Irish adult education sector has a high profile of women and that creates a predominance of gender relations in the exercise of leadership. The section also discussed that the United States media continue to popularise and propagate a superficial and broad definition which describes feminism as a movement that seeks to make women socially equal to men. In addition, the section proposed that the bourgeois white women are sometimes blamed for benefiting from feminist initiatives at the expense of the intended beneficiaries. The entire section examined the conceptual analysis of how gender manifests itself in leadership. The section that follows discusses unmasking power by embracing the critical theory.

2.10 Unmasking power using critical theory

Critical theory in education is indebted to the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, established in Germany before World War II. The School relocated to the USA during World War II to escape persecution of its members by Nazis because its members were predominantly Leftists or Jewish. They continued their work when they settled in the USA and succeeding generations of critical theorists are continuing this work (Brookfield, 2005; McLaren, 2002). McLaren (2002) asserts that 'the *critical* perspective allows us to scrutinise schooling more insistently in terms of race, class, power, and gender' (p. 188). Learning as a discourse of schooling involves an array of past practices that promote historical constructed and intended ways of reasoning.

Power relations are engraved in a group of concepts that are referred to as discourses (McLaren, 2002). Discursive practices constitute discourses including social and political discourses. McLaren (2002) states that discursive practices refer to the '*rules by which discourses are formed, rules that govern what can be said and what must remain unsaid, and who can speak with authority and who must listen*'. Social and political institutions such as schools and penal institutions are governed by discourse practices' (p. 209). Furthermore, McLaren (2002) points out that 'discourses and discursive practices influence how we live our lives as conscious thinking subjects. They shape our subjectivities (our ways of understanding in relation to the world) because it is only in language and

through discourse that social reality can be given meaning' (p. 210). Truth in the social and political discourses is understood to be given validity by those with authority who determine what counts to be true. Therefore, what can be accepted as truth at a certain point in time is given weight by the existence of good power relations. In the absence of good power relations that might not be the case.

Learning as a discourse of schooling has its historical roots in behavioural psychology (Foucault, 1998). When we say learning widens our horizons about the knowledge of the world, there is more to that than mere interpretation. This is because Foucault (1998) points out 'our speech is ordered through principles of classification that are socially formed through a myriad of past practices...A social epistemology studies speech as effects of power' (p. 9). The psychological vision of the world involves revision of the learner's belief and value system (Foucault, 1998). It is also influenced by the pedagogical approaches that teachers use. Foucault (1998) argues that 'a social epistemology enables us to consider the word *learning* not as standing alone, but as embodying a range of historically constructed values, priorities, and dispositions toward how one should see and act toward the world' (p. 9). In other words, learning as a social and political discourse is embedded with hidden curriculum (Giddens, 2006; Haralambos *et al.*, 2004; McLaren, 2002; Tovey and Share, 2003). Haralambos *et al.* (2004) argue that:

It is not the content of lessons and the examinations that pupils take which are important, but the form that teaching and learning take and the way the schools are organised. The hidden curriculum consists of those things that pupils learn through the experience of attending school, rather than the stated educational objectives of such institutions (p. 699).

Critical sociologists and educators argue that the success of capitalism relies on an education system that churns out an industrious, highly stimulated, and submissive and compliant labour force, which is too disintegrated to form a strong alliance to challenge the status quo. The capitalist system to a large extent achieves those goals through the hidden curriculum (Giddens, 2006; Haralambos *et al.*, 2004; McLaren, 2002; Tovey and Share, 2003).

McLaren (2002) points out that:

The hidden curriculum deals with the tacit ways in which knowledge and behaviour get constructed, outside the usual course materials and formally scheduled lessons. It is a part of the bureaucratic and managerial "press" of the school – two combined forces by which students are induced to comply with dominant ideology and social practices related to authority, behaviour, and morality (p. 212).

However, Foucault (1980) argues that power is elusive, difficult to substantiate and to identify its exact location. Foucault (1980) remarks:

Power in the substantive sense, '*le pouvoir*', doesn't exist. What I mean is this. The idea that there is either located at – or emanating from – a given point something which is a 'power' seems to me to be based on a misguided analysis, one which at all events fails to account for a considerable number of phenomena (p. 198).

Keeney (2010) generally concurs with Foucault (1980) and mentions that 'leadership is momentary rather than fixed' (p. 54). The dominant class exercises power over subordinate classes through a process known as hegemony. It uses social institutions to achieve its hidden agendas. McLaren (2002) states:

Hegemony refers to the maintenance of domination not by the sheer exercise of force *but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as church, the state, the school, the mass media, the political system, and the family*. By *social practices*, I refer to what people say and do...social practices may be accomplished through words, gestures, personally appropriate signs and rituals, or a combination of these (p. 202).

Hegemony makes it possible for the dominant class to achieve its agendas with little or no resistance from the subordinate classes. The subordinate classes sometimes think that it is by natural arrangement that members of the dominant class happen to exercise power over them or to occupy superior positions.

McLaren (2002) defines hegemony as a struggle 'in which the powerful win the consent of those who are oppressed, with the oppressed unknowingly participating in their own oppression' (p. 203). Brookfield (2005) agrees with McLaren (2002) comments that 'hegemony is the process by which we learn to embrace enthusiastically a system of beliefs and practices that end up harming us and working to support the interests of others who have power over us' (p. 94). A typical example is that for a long time black people were made to believe they were naturally less intelligent than their white counterparts and therefore deserved to be led by the latter. This was because of colonial racial stereotyping and prejudicial practices that were inculcated into native black people during the colonial and neo-colonial era.

Hegemony needs the support of an ideology in order to achieve its goals of oppressing and suppressing the subordinate classes. Ideology plays a central role in critical theory.

Brookfield (2005) asserts that ideology is a 'system of beliefs, values, and practices that reflects and reproduces existing social structures, systems, and relations. Ideology maintains the power of a

dominant group or class by portraying as universally true beliefs that serve the interests mainly of the dominant group' (p. 68). McLaren (2002) concurs with Brookfield (2005) and stating that:

...ideology refers to the production of sense and meaning. It can be described as way of viewing the world, a complex of ideas, various types of social practices, rituals, and representations *that we tend to accept as natural and common sense*. It is the result of intersection of meaning and power in the social world. Customs, rituals, beliefs, and values often produce within individuals distorted conceptions of their place in the socio-cultural order and thereby serve to reconcile them to that place and to disguise the inequitable relations of power and privilege; this is sometimes referred to as 'ideological hegemony' (p. 205).

Ideology can undergo a transformational process to become hegemony. According to Brookfield (2005), 'ideology becomes hegemony when the dominant ideas are learned and lived in everyday decisions and judgements and when these ideas (reinforced by mass media images and messages) pervade the whole existence' (p. 95). Foucault (1980) argues that the notion of ideology seems difficult to use without circumspection for three reasons:

The first is that, like it or not, it always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth...The second drawback is that the concept of ideology refers, I think necessarily, to something of the order of a subject. Thirdly, ideology stands in a secondary position relative to something which functions as its infrastructure, as its material, economic determinant, etc. (p. 118).

Critical theory encourages educators to use a critical teaching approach. Brookfield (2005) asserts that 'critical teaching begins with developing students' powers of critical thinking so that they can critique the interlocking systems of oppression embedded in contemporary society' (p. 350). Students taught criticality are most likely to utilise it in their future professions and leadership roles. Dillen (2008) points out:

Social-constructivism is a critique on naïve realism, where language is seen as a transparent rendition of reality. Social constructivists state that every discourse is influenced by ideology, thereby usually favouring the most powerful. They also show that most of the accepted presentations of reality 'forget' some elements, namely, those which are important for the weakest. In this sense, the social-constructivist approach aims at liberating the weakest from oppression (p. 54).

Laurin (2010) notes that leadership from deep within ranks that supports a people-centric organisational culture is known for:

Taking strategy and vision that come from the top levels immediately to the floor, to the people doing work. There is open communication at all levels about proposed changes, and employees are encouraged to ask questions and challenge viability. Then, the workers and senior leaders almost “put the squeeze” on the layers of middle management to get everyone on the same page and share the value in proposed changes (p. 26).

In addition to what has been cited above, the culture of an organisation has to encourage creativity, innovation and competitiveness. This researcher took into consideration while carrying out this research that there was likelihood that some of the research participants especially could be experiencing poverty. Hence, this researcher was reflexive at all times, for example, asked questions that in his opinion would not make research participants feel uncomfortable and incorporated a paradigm that has a liberating agenda. Raffo *et al.* (2009) observe:

If the critical perspective teaches one thing, it is that the relationship between poverty and education is unlikely to be disrupted unless fundamental issues of power and interest, advantage and disadvantage are addressed. Simply tackling the presenting ‘problems’ of poverty and education will, this perspective suggests, ultimately prove to be ineffective if underlying inequalities are permitted to reproduce these problems in other forms (p. 352).

The socio-cultural theory in distributed leadership is not explicit about the distribution of power. According to Hartley (2009), ‘much of the distributed leadership literature is silent on the matter of power. In that sense it is normative in its orientation’ (p. 146). Spillane (2006) claims that leaders who do not share any cultural and organisational values, beliefs and goals can be considered to be practising distributed leadership (cited in Hartley, 2009).

That perspective makes distributed leadership practice as viewed by critics as rather cumbersome, giving rise to the question: How can leadership be considered to be distributed when it is not coordinated, and with no shared purpose? Hartley (2009) also argues that Spillane’s distributed leadership concepts are not clear on the relative weight assigned to the psychologies of individual actors. Hartley (2009) argues:

We are left to infer from Spillane that macro-structural aspects, as well as individual properties, somehow become instantiated harmoniously within the situation. The argument here is that if socio-culturally-informed research in distributed leadership focuses only on the practice aspect – on the interaction – then we need to know the relative weight assigned to individual psychologies, to institutional structures, and to wider macro-structural conditions.

In Archer's terms, consideration should be given to the "interplay" between individual agency and structure, both of which retain ontological status (p. 146).

Hartley (2009) argues that if the distribution of power and empowerment in distributed leadership involves democratic principles, then it may imply that it is only applicable in situations where leaders are voted into power and not appointed. Contrary to that assertion, leaders are appointed not elected into positions of authority in VTOS educational institutions.

In contrast to Spillane's (2006) notions of distributed leadership without shared principles, Laurin (2010) asserts that 'people can lead from wherever they work' (p. 26) as long as there is 'commitment to each other's success and the overall success of the organisation' (p. 26). It is commitment to a shared vision or mission statement that may help an organisation to achieve overall success. Belbin (1981) agrees stating:

It is evident that people may work as a team without being part of a working group. Conversely, people may belong to the same working group without constituting a team. The essence of a team is that its members form a co-operative association through a division of labour that best reflects the contribution that each can make towards a common objective. The members do not need to be present at the same place and at the same time to enable the team to function (p. 135).

Spillane's perspectives on distributed leadership downplay the notion of shared values, beliefs and goals. This researcher is of the opinion that de-emphasising the role of a shared vision weakens the concept of distribution and might result in education institutions not taking the leadership perspective seriously. In contrast, VTOS stands to benefit from distributed leadership because it demystifies the heroic leadership genre that equates the overall success of an educational institution to an individual leader (Spillane, 2005).

This section discussed unmasking power by embracing critical theory. The section also explored how critical theory can be used to expose how hegemony, ideology and power interconnect to create skewed power relations in society including educational institutions.

The following section addresses the Freirean philosophy and methodology.

2.11 The Freirean philosophy and methodology

Paulo Freire contributed to the teaching of adults with low educational achievements, the entire struggle for national liberation and community development. Freire's methodology and philosophy in education and development are still being used around the world to emancipate and empower the marginalised. McLaren and Leonard (1993) state that 'Freire has devoted a lifetime to understanding how subordinate groups in both totalitarian regimes and liberal democracies

become depoliticised, deracinated, and recontained by the dominant culture' (p. 52). Freire (1972) points out that:

Conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth. Those who undergo it must take on a new form of existence; they can no longer remain as they were. Only through comradeship with the oppressed can the converts understand their characteristic ways of living and behaving, which in diverse moments reflect the structure of domination (p. 37).

Freirean teachings are transformational and help to motivate and mobilise course participants by using approaches that encourage them to support one another through collective action and identity. Support through collective action and identity helps participants to achieve levels of self-esteem and self-confidence that would not be easy to achieve without the collaborative support from peers. This fosters strong feelings of self-efficacy and self-worth and a sense of purpose in what they are doing (Burns, 2003). Freire (1972) asserts that:

Critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever stage their struggle for liberation has reached. The content of that dialogue can and should vary in accordance with historical conditions and the level at which the oppressed perceive reality. But to substitute monologue, slogans and communiqués for dialogue is to try to liberate the oppressed with the instruments of domestication (p. 41).

The oppressed need to believe in themselves, that is, have self-efficacy in order to engage in a well-organised struggle for their liberation. Elias (1994) points out that:

Freire's educational efforts are decidedly political. He is not an educator who sees intrinsic value in education for its own sake. What motivates him is realisation that people's lives in many parts of the world are impoverished. As an educator, Freire attempted to respond to this in the way he knew best, by involving the people in a process of critical reflection on their situation (p. 29).

The realisation by the oppressed that there is a need to free themselves from the shackles of oppression cannot remain only intellectual. It must include action, and should transcend mere activism to involve reflection. It is only when the organised struggle has transcended mere activism and reached the level of reflection that it becomes praxis. McLaren and Leonard (1993) assert that 'liberating praxis is not a creature of reason alone, but is a certain type of reasoning process that is undertaken as part of action both in and on the world' (p. 54). Freire (1972) states that:

At all stages of their liberation, the oppressed must see themselves as men engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human. Reflection and action become imperative when does not erroneously attempt to create a dichotomy between the content of humanity and its historical forms (p. 41).

Reflection must not be mistaken for armchair revolution. It should be a critical and true reflection that is preceded by effective action, and after critical and true reflection more effective action may follow. If the liberation struggle is executed this way then it is praxis.

According to Freire (1972), 'in this sense, the praxis is the new *raison d'être* of the oppressed; and the revolution, which inaugurates the historical moment of this *raison d'être*, is not viable apart from their concomitant conscious involvement. Otherwise, action is pure activism' (p. 41). The marginalised that transcend the purely intellectual stage, action, activism and critical reflection and reach the stage of praxis must have a high reasoning capacity. McLaren and Leonard (1993) state that 'Freirean pedagogy makes it clear that theory and practice work in concert, are mutually informing, and together constitute a dialectical praxis' (p. 54). The oppressed with a low reasoning may not have the capacity and skills to handle the rigours of dialogue, reflection and communication. They may fall into the trap of resorting to the use of monologues, communiqués, slogans and instructions.

Freirean teaching approaches encourage the use of dialogue rather than monologue. Elias (1994) asserts that in literacy classes 'dialogue was to replace the traditional lecture or passing on of information. Learners were not to be passive recipients but active group participants' (p. 19). Freire (2005) points out that it is important for educators 'to live the balanced, harmonious experience, between talking to learners and talking with them' (p. 111). It is also important for teachers to acquire the requisite knowledge that is needed in order to teach a particular content. Freire (2005) asserts that 'teachers' political, ethical, and professional responsibility puts them under an obligation to prepare themselves before engaging in their teaching practice' (p. 32). It is also important for educators to be role models and to practise what they say so that they do not send out contradictory messages to the learners (Julsuwan *et al.*, 2011). Freire (2005) points out that:

The worst thing, however, for the training of the learner is that in the face of the contradiction between words and deeds, the learner tends not to believe what the educator says. If the educator makes a statement, the learner waits for the next action to detect the next contradiction. And this destroys the image that educators construct of themselves and reveal to the learners (p. 98).

Learners tend to respect and trust educators that practise what they teach or who openly acknowledge that they do not know something and need more time to research the topic.

According to Freire (2005), 'our relationship with students is the testimony of our constant commitment to justice, liberty, and individual rights, of our dedication to defending the weakest when they are subjected to the exploitation of the strongest' (p. 100). It is the moral and ethical duty of the society in general and of public servants in particular to protect vulnerable groups from exploitation and abuse by the privileged. Furthermore, Freire (2005) asserts that 'our relationship with learners demands that we respect them and demands equally that we be aware of the concrete conditions of their world, the conditions that shape them' (p. 102). Modules in Psychology including Human Growth and Development equip educators about understanding the physical and intellectual development of humans. In addition, Freire (2005) states that:

In sum, the relationship between educators and learners is complex, fundamental, and difficult; it is a relationship about which we should think constantly. How nice it would be, nevertheless, if we tried to create the habit of evaluating it or of evaluating ourselves in it while we were educators and learners also (p. 107).

The teaching profession needs prospective trainees who seriously take into consider the complexities, the moral and ethical obligations that go with the profession. It does need potential trainees who simply joining the profession, for instance, because training vacancies are readily available when compared to other professions.

This section theorised the Freirean philosophy and methodology. The section also discussed that Freire's methodology and philosophy is still being employed around the world by the marginalised in order to facilitate community education and development initiatives. Furthermore, the section discussed Freirean teachings are transformational, and motivate and mobilise course participants to support one another through collective action and identity. Support through collective action and identity helps participants to achieve collective efficacy. The section also discussed that critical and true reflection followed by effective action, and another or other cycles of critical and true reflection each time followed by effective action lead to praxis. The section that follows is a conclusion of what was discussed in this chapter.

2.12 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the theories, policy and practice in adult education and training. An analysis of adult education and training shows that it can be traced to the industrial revolution and has evolved for a period spanning more than a century. Operational definitions of the terms 'adult learning' and 'adult education' vary with jurisdictions. The chapter also discussed the Competing Values Framework as the conceptual framework adopted for this study. A critical analysis highlights that individuals who are aware and knowledgeable about the existence of complexities of choices when responding to competing tensions or frames can use that knowledge to develop themselves

and become knowledgeable team members, leaders or managers. In addition, the chapter explored theories and practice in sustainable leadership and distributed leadership. Both theoretical perspectives are in their infancy and still evolving and being developed. A critical analysis of the two approaches that there are conflicting views about the unit of analysis in both of them. Theories and practice in transformational leadership was also examined. The reviewed literature shows that transformational leadership evolved from transactional leadership. A critical analysis reveals that critical transformational leadership and critical spirituality enhances the manner in which leaders deal with issues of race, gender and class.

This chapter provided a social analysis of power, ethnicity and gender in the exercise of leadership. The chapter also discussed unmasking power by embracing critical theory. Finally, this chapter addressed the Freirean philosophy and methodology.

The next chapter discusses the methodology and methods that underpin the study. It addresses the methodological assumptions that form the philosophical underpinnings of the research design.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Methods

3.0 Introduction

This chapter addresses the methodological assumptions that form the philosophical underpinnings of the research design. The chapter will do that by discussing the paradigm, stance and approach that will be used during the research process. It addresses the research topic and purposes of the research study. The chapter also discusses the research design, and addresses issues pertaining to ethical practice. It looks into the quality of the research and examines various elements that determine quality. Finally, it addresses qualitative procedures and discusses the final breakthrough that this researcher made by being granted permission to access the research site.

Methodology covers theoretical, political and social aspects of the research. Robson (2002) defines methodology as the 'theoretical, political and philosophical backgrounds to social research and their implications for research practice, and for the use of particular research methods' (p. 549). A good example of that is the way in which a quantitative researcher conceptualises a research process is different from that of a qualitative researcher. Other philosophical foundations that are closely linked to research methodology (praxeology) of social inquiry are paradigm epistemology, ontology and axiology.

The purpose(s), theory, research questions, methods and sampling strategy are the aspects that constitute the research design or strategy. Research designs can be referred to as the plans, superstructure or chassis of the research project (Thomas, 2009, p. 99). Creswell (2009) concurs with Thomas (2009) stating that 'research designs are plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. It involves the intersection of philosophical assumptions, strategies of inquiry, and specific methods' (p. 233). The research strategy that is chosen for a particular research process is influenced by the research question that the researcher is trying to answer. All elements of the research design including (purpose(s), theory, research questions, methods and sampling strategy) need to be kept in balance, inter-connected and with some directionality in the entire research process. Robson (2002) points out:

Both your purposes and theory feed into, and help you specify, the research questions. When you know something about the research questions you want to be answered, then you are able to make decisions about the methods to be used and the strategy to be used in sampling. However, unless you are dealing with a fixed design which is tightly pre-specified, this should not be taken to imply a once-and-for-all consideration of the different aspects (p. 81).

The study adopted a flexible mixed methods design in a sequential explanatory strategy embedded with an interpretivist paradigm with a critical constructivist stance, and a narrative approach. The aforementioned design, strategy, paradigm and stance facilitated an exploration of coaching, mentoring and training for sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership. The flexible design allowed a degree of flexibility in making revisits to all aspects of the research process cited above, refining, modifying and reviewing them as the study progressed.

The purpose of this study is motivated by the researcher's personal experiences of coaching, training and mentoring in non-formal educational settings. Creswell (2009) asserts that 'research problems are found in personal experience with an issue, a job-related problem, an adviser's research agenda, or the scholarly literature' (p. 102). This research was carried out in the adult education sector with a primary focus on exploring how and in what ways an adult education centre under the remit of an Education and Training Board (ETB) located in Ireland tackles issues of sustainable, transformational or distributed leadership within its Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) programme. It was anticipated that the study will capture the voices of policy makers, adult education leaders, adult educators and adult learners.

The study investigated if teaching staff acquire and impart leadership and other transferrable skills to students using coaching, mentoring and training. Bolt (2000) defines coaching as 'a participative partnership designed to develop an individual to their full potential. It is a one-to-one process which typically focuses on personal development and problem-solving, whereby the coach and individual agree on the issues involved and jointly consider solutions' (pp. 3-4). Hence, coaching is a collaborative and bi-directional process in which the intern takes ownership of decisions that are being made (Bolt, 2000; Dahlstedt and Nordvall, 2011; Ilesanmi, 2011; Malone, 2000; Rațiu and Băban, 2012; Robertson, 2009). A coach enhances innovation and change, and improves skills, techniques, knowledge, attitudes of the trainee. According to Grant (2011) 'coaching is about creating purposeful, positive change and so change theory has a vital place in the teaching of coaching psychology' (p. 94). The coach uses emotional intelligence and focuses on intra-personal skills in order to develop the individual to articulately deal with her/his emotions. The coaching process also targets interpersonal skills to help the coachee to be able to relate to others or to deal with the emotions of others (Grant, 2011).

Mentoring is a process whereby a protégé learns knowledge, competences and skills from a knowledgeable and experienced person. Bolt (2000) asserts that during a mentoring partnership 'the individual is explicitly learning from a more experienced senior person who typically advises on career advancement issues' (p. 6). The relationship between the mentor and mentee is not of equal partnership (Adeyemi (2011; Bell and Treleaven, 2011; Bolt 2000; Fajana and Gbajumo-Sheriff, 2011; Herrera *et al.*, 2011; Ilesanmi, 2011; Ojedokun, 2011). As a result, if the mentoring process is

not handled well, there is likelihood that the mentee may develop a dependency syndrome. The exception is in mentor-coaching where relationships are asymmetrical and the dependency syndrome is less likely to occur (Rațiu and Băban, 2012). A mentor-coach offers one-to-one mentoring to senior executives.

Training is synonymous to teaching and usually employed when transferrable skills are imparted to a group (Walmsley, 2005). Bolt (2000) states that '*training* tends to involve specific skills' (p.6). If training is not conducted properly it may result in trainees being 'passive recipients in the process' (p. 6). In other words, if compared to coaching and mentoring, training is less engaging and less interactive. Walmsley (2005) states:

Training is the formal teaching of skills and is often undertaken by an organisation as a strategic activity aimed at improving the performance of the business by improving the performance of its employees. A training course or seminar or other type of training event is an experience designed to impart knowledge and/or skills (p. 4).

The choice of the training techniques is partly influenced by the availability of resources. Since training involves a group of trainees, it is most likely to be the cheapest among the three.

Research projects are partly influenced by the way the researcher and the researched view the world. This is philosophically known as a paradigm. The section that follows discusses the paradigm that was employed during the research process and the reasons why it was chosen.

3.1 The paradigm adopted by the study

The nature of the problem that was investigated in this inquiry informed the researcher in selecting an appropriate paradigm for the study. The study adopted an embedded single-case, and a flexible mixed methods design in a sequential explanatory strategy embedded with an interpretivist paradigm with a critical constructivist stance and a narrative approach. Denzin and Lincoln state that 'the net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises may be termed a *paradigm*, or an interpretive framework' (p. 31).

According to Kuhn (1970) a paradigm is 'a fixed set of assumptions about the way inquiry should be conducted' (cited in Thomas, 2009, p. 73). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) assert:

All research is interpretive; it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. Some beliefs may be taken for granted, invisible, only assumed, whereas others are highly problematic and controversial. Each interpretive paradigm makes particular demands on the researcher,

including the questions the researcher asks and the interpretations he or she brings to them (p. 31).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that ‘while paradigms are thus enabling, they are also constraining’ (p. 15). This is because they legitimate and socialise practitioners, and are normative in that they direct practitioners on what to do and not to. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that ‘paradigms represent a distillation of what we *think* about the world (but cannot prove). Our actions in the world, including actions that we take as inquirers, cannot occur without reference to those paradigms: “As we think, so do we act”’ (p. 15). Cameron (2011) argues that:

Inconsistency is evident across the literature on how paradigms are dichotomised, polarised, labelled, and at what level of abstraction they are discussed. Nonetheless, there are sufficient levels of common ground to enable the drawing of parallels and connections between these, and the labels assigned to them (p. 100).

Paradigms outline what has to be scrutinised and observed, the structure and kind of questions to be asked and probed for answers in relation to a particular topic, and how the results of a scientific study should be interpreted.

Scientific research advances through successive revolutionary changes or paradigm shifts. The paradigm change or shift is necessitated by failure of the existing paradigm to solve the current problems that are of interest to the community of researchers in a specific field. The transition phase is a crisis because field members fail to solve problems using logical means. Instead, they may resort to using unscientific approaches such as guesswork and intuition. A paradigm shift is a new way of thinking and is transformational and revolutionary in nature, and is usually met with stiff resistance from some members of the community of researchers who still want things to be done the old way.

Theoretically, there are skewed power relations between a leader and a follower, trainer and a trainee, a coach and coachee, and a mentor and a mentee. For that reason, the research study adopted a flexible mixed methods design in a sequential explanatory strategy embedded with an interpretivist paradigm with a critical constructivist stance, and a narrative approach. This researcher envisages that the method, design, strategy, paradigm, stance and approach adopted by the study will meaningfully help to answer the question: *How and in what ways does the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) of an Education Training Board (ETB) in Ireland transfer sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership skills to teachers/tutors in order to improve service delivery to adult learners?*

Robson (2002) points out that 'interpretivist approaches emphasise the meaningful nature of people's participation in social and cultural life. The focus is on an analysis of the meanings people confer upon their own and others' actions' (p. 549). In addition, Robson (2002) asserts that constructivism is 'the view that reality is socially constructed, i.e. that the phenomena of the social and cultural world and their meanings are created in human social interaction' (p. 552). As we interact in the social and cultural world, stories are constructed and reconstructed. Therefore, what may be considered to be true now may be viewed differently in future, and accepted truths in a certain society may not necessarily be treated the same way in other societies. In other words, in the social and cultural world, there is relative truth and no absolute truth out there.

Chase (2005) states that 'contemporary narrative inquiry can be characterised as an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in biological particulars as narrated by the one who lives them' (p. 651). Narrative inquiry has not been fully developed and may be in oral or written format and solicited during the fieldwork stage of the research. It can be information gathered during an interview or from a spontaneously occurring discussion.

Researchers with qualitative leanings and a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, and those with quantitative inclinations and positivist paradigm do not agree on everything that constitutes reality and creation of knowledge. There are contentious and divisive issues that have led to debates between interpretivists and positivists are sometimes referred to as paradigm wars (Bryman, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003 and 2010). Bryman (2008) points out that there are 'contrasting epistemological and ontological positions that characterize quantitative and qualitative research and their various synonyms' (p. 13). Approaches to leadership are also characterised by contrasting epistemological and ontological viewpoints. Actions of a leader are shaped by philosophical worldviews including ontology, axiology, epistemology and praxeology (Souba, 2011).

The subsection discussed the paradigm that was employed during the research process and the reasons why it was chosen. The subsection that follows discusses the role of philosophical foundations that shape leadership.

3.1.1 Role of philosophical underpinnings that shape leadership

Epistemology, ontology, axiology and praxeology provide ethical and moral foundations, and philosophical underpinnings and worldviews to leadership. The philosophical worldviews of leadership are also referred to as leadership paradigms. According to Souba (2011), 'paradigms are potent because they shape how we perceive and interpret the world and act in it' (p. 2). This

research investigates the philosophical worldviews and how the Co-ordinator, teachers and students experience leadership at the Adult Education Centre located in Ireland.

Human knowledge has origins, nature and limits, and is either objective or subjective.

Epistemology is 'beliefs about the nature of knowledge, including those related to objectivity/subjectivity dualism' (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2010, p. 4). Epistemology is 'the division of philosophy that investigates the foundations of knowledge and understanding' (Singleton 2005, p. 40), and it refers 'to what we can know about leading' (Souba, 2011, p. 2). Therefore, epistemology informs a leader what s/he needs to learn in order to improve leadership skills.

Ontology is the study of the nature of reality, either real or relative. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010) define ontology as 'beliefs about the nature of reality and others (e.g., the possibility of generalisations and the nature of causality)' (p. 4). Souba (2011) asserts that 'ontology relates to the nature of being a leader' (p. 2). Thus, ontology has implications on a leader's reflections and inward examination.

Axiology underpins ethical considerations in research. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010) define axiology as 'beliefs about the role of values or ethics in conducting research' (p. 4). Singleton and Straits (2005) assert that 'when we think about how to conduct research, we must think not only of using the *right* techniques but also of *rightly* using the techniques we have learned' (p. 515). We do that by thinking about research ethics throughout the research process. According to Souba (2011), 'axiology studies leadership values, value judgements, and ethical choices' (p. 2). Axiology helps a leader to make moral and ethical decisions instead of bad choices. Souba (2011) also states that 'praxeology (sometimes referred to as methodology in the research realm) examines the leader's actions and behaviours' (p. 2). As a result, praxeology informs leadership methodologies, styles and approaches.

The preceding subsection discussed the role of philosophical foundations in shaping leadership. The subsection below discusses how hegemony, ideology and power interconnect and create skewed power relations in society including educational institutions. Hegemony, ideology and power have underlying issues that are not easily identifiable unless when they are examined using critical lenses.

The entire section discussed the paradigm, stance and approach that were used during the research process. The section that follows addresses the research topic and purposes of the research study.

3.2 Research topic and purposes of research study

Before a topic can be elevated to a research study, there is a need for the researcher to reflect on whether the research topic can and should be researched (Creswell, 2007 and 2009; Flick, 2009; Singleton and Straits, 2005; Thomas, 2009). Creswell (2009) states that 'a topic *can* be researched if researchers have participants willing to serve in the study. It also can be researched if investigators have resources to collect data over a sustained period of time and to analyse the information, such as available computer programs' (p. 24). In addition, Creswell (2009) points out:

The question of *should* is a more complex matter. Several factors might go into this decision. Perhaps the most important are whether the topic adds to the pool of research knowledge available on the topic, replicates past studies, lifts up the voices of the underrepresented groups or individuals, helps address social justice, or transforms the ideas and beliefs of the researcher (p. 24).

This research topic on coaching, mentoring and training for leadership in the adult education sector has the potential to raise the voices of the underrepresented groups. It also helps address social justice and shall transform the ideas and beliefs of this researcher.

According to Burns (2003), the moral obligations of leadership, 'its actions and achievements are measured by the supreme public values that themselves are the profoundest expressions of human wants: liberty and equality, justice and opportunity, the pursuit of happiness' (p. 2). Leadership is a moral calling with an aim of dealing with human wants as premised in the public values. In contemporary societies, the influence of good leaders is not necessarily confined to geographical boundaries. Good leaders strive to respond to the needs of national and global citizens. They reach out to the marginalised and impoverished. Singleton and Straits (2005) state:

Research is undertaken for three broad purposes: (1) to *explore* a phenomenon such as a group or setting in order to become familiar with it and to gain insight and understanding about it, frequently in order to formulate a more precise research problem for further study;

(2) to *describe* a particular community, group, or situation as completely, precisely, and accurately as possible; (3) to examine and formally to *test relationships* among variables (p.68).

The study on coaching, mentoring and training for leadership was exploratory because very little was known about the phenomenon.

This section addressed the research topic and the purpose(s) of the study. The section that follows discusses the research design.

3.3 The research design

A researcher has to plan, think about the purpose(s) of the research, what s/he intends to do, and the shape that the project will finally take. That is referred to as a research design. A research design is metaphorically what a plan or working drawings are to an architect or engineer. A researcher has to plan, think about the purpose(s) of the research, what s/he intends to do, and the shape that the project will finally take.

It is pertinent before collecting data to make preliminary decisions and formulate a plan or strategy that will be used as a course of action. The plan or strategy that is formulated is what we call a research design or strategy. Singleton and Straits (2005) point out:

Basically, it consists of a clear statement of the research problem as well as plans for gathering, processing, and interpreting the observations intended to provide some resolution to the problem. To formulate a research design is to anticipate the entire research process, from beginning to end. To do this, one needs to have an adequate knowledge of every stage of social research (p. 69).

Social research stages are not the same and may differ depending on whether the study is for purposes of exploration, description, or testing of relationships. They may include the formulation of the research problem, preparation of the research design, sampling, data collection, data processing, data analysis and interpretation.

Thomas (2009) states that ‘the research design is the plan for the research. In being a plan, it has to take into account your expectations and your context’ (p. 71). Kelly (2004) states that the key principles of a good research design are threefold. They are as follows:

- There should be a *clearly conceived question*, problem or hypothesis
- The methods proposed should be likely to produce *robust data analysis* which will *address the research question*
- The approach taken should be in line with *ethical research practice* (p. 130).

Robson (2002) highlights criteria necessary for good research design as follows:

- If the only research questions to which you can get answers are not directly relevant to the purposes of the study, then something has to change – probably the research question.
- If your research questions do not link to theory it is unlikely that you will produce answers of value.... In this case, theory needs developing or the research questions need changing.

- If the methods and/or the sampling strategy are not providing answers to the research questions, something should change. Collect additional data, extend the sampling or cut down on or modify research questions (p. 82).

The researcher used a flexible design, in order to retain flexibility to accommodate necessary changes throughout the research process lifecycle. Figure 3.1 below is a framework for the research design that the researcher has adopted.

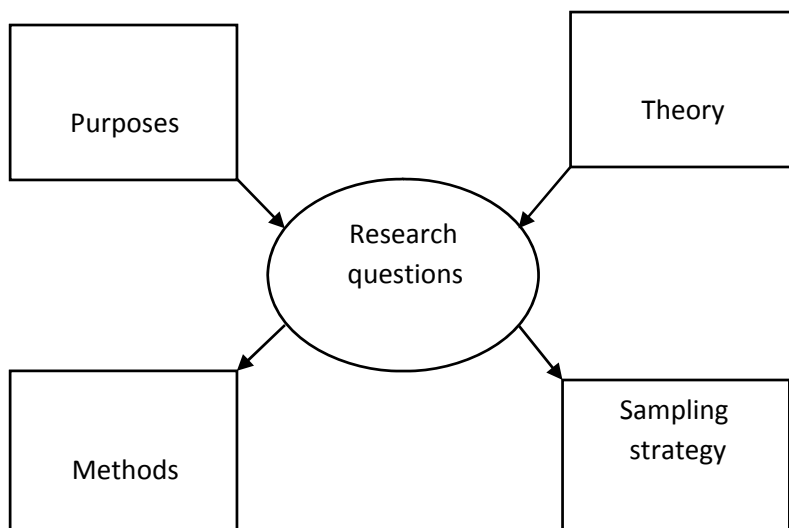


Figure 3.1: Framework for research design

Adapted from Robson (2002, p. 82)

Figure 3.1 shows the interrelationship of the research design elements, and that they are kept in balance. This arrangement and direction of the arrows indicate that the process is coordinated and has directionality. The reasons for undertaking the study feed into the primary and embedded research questions helping to determine the type of questions that are formulated. Since the study adopts a flexible design, the reasons and theory informed the researcher when to reformulate, append and reduce questions. The literature review informs the research questions, methodology and sampling strategy to employ.

The primary research question and secondary questions are considered to be synonymous to a door or window to the research study. The subsection below discusses formulation of research questions.

3.3.1 Formulating research questions

Primary research question and secondary questions should be formulated ‘in concrete terms with the aim of clarifying what the field contacts are supposed to reveal’ (Flick, 2009, p. 98). In addition, Flick (2009) states ‘the less clearly you formulate your research question, the greater is the danger that you will find yourself in the end confronted with mountains of data helplessly trying to analyse them’ (Flick, 2009, p. 98). At the beginning of the research study, the researcher identified the main research question and secondary questions. The flexible research design gave the researcher the leverage to amend questions, methodology and methods as the research progressed. Moreover, the researcher took into consideration that the study was explored through critical analysis, and meaning-making of stories of stakeholders, that is, policy-makers, VTOS administrators, educators and learners.

At the beginning of the research process, a primary research question and secondary questions were formulated. The primary research question asked is: *How and in what ways does the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) of an Education Training Board (ETB) in Ireland transfer sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership skills to teachers/tutors in order to improve service delivery to adult learners?*

The secondary research questions are as follows:

1. How is sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership in the field of adult education defined by policy-makers, the VTOS Coordinator, adult educators and learners?
2. What are the benefits and challenges that the policy-makers and adult educators encounter in their quest to transfer sustainable, transformational or distributed leadership skills?
3. What do students say about the quality of support that they receive from the Administrator, Coordinator, teachers/tutors and peers?
4. How and in what ways do teachers/tutors transfer leadership skills to adult learners?
5. Do teachers/tutors think leadership skills were embedded in the curriculum of course(s) that they did when they trained as educators?
6. How important do adult learners think the skills of numeracy, reading, writing and interpersonal skills are to their personal lives?
7. Do adult learners think the VTOS courses that they are doing are helping them to achieve their objectives?

Secondary questions help to facilitate an in-depth testing, description, explanation or exploration of the topic that is being investigated.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) conceptualise research questions into four types depending on the phenomenon being investigated (cited in Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) states that the four types of research questions conceptualised by Marshall and Rossman (2006) are 'exploratory (e.g., to investigate phenomenon little understood), explanatory (e.g., to explain patterns related to phenomenon), descriptive (e.g., to describe the phenomenon), and emancipatory (e.g., to engage in social action about the phenomenon)' (p. 107). Creswell (2007) points out that 'qualitative research questions are open ended, evolving, and nondirectional; restate the purpose of the study in more specific terms; start with a word such as "what" or "how" rather than "why"; and are few in number (five to seven)' (p. 107). This researcher formulated primary and secondary research questions that facilitated an in-depth investigation on coaching, mentoring and training for sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership in the VTOS of an ETB located in Ireland.

Factors that influence the type of research questions that researchers ask in most cases are influenced by the researchers' individual biographies, social contexts and worldviews (Creswell, 2007 and 2009; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Flick, 2009; Robson, 2002; Singleton and Straits, 2005; Thomas, 2009).

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) state that the four major interpretive paradigms that inform qualitative research are 'positivist and postpositivist, constructivist-interpretivist, critical (Marxist, emancipator), and feminist-poststructural' (p. 31). This study adopted a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm.

Flick (2009) also points out that 'in many cases, their origin lies in the researchers' practical interests and their involvement in certain social and historical contexts' (p.98). Good research questions are specific, clear, narrow, answerable, relevant, and interconnected (Robson, 2002; Singleton and Straits, 2005).

This subsection discussed the formulation of the research questions. The entire section addressed the research design. The section that follows examines ethical considerations.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in research are important in research particularly when human beings are participants in a study. That ensures that research participants are protected from physical, emotional or any other type of harm. Fontana and Frey (2005) state:

Traditionally, ethical concerns have revolved around the topics of *informed consent* (receiving consent by the respondent after having carefully and truthfully informed him or her about the research), *right to privacy* (protecting the identity of the respondent), and *protection from harm* (physical, emotional, or any other kind) (p. 715).

The majority of sociologists and social researchers unanimously agree on the three aforementioned ethical concerns, but there are other ethical considerations that are not unanimously adhered to (Fontana and Frey, 2005). Informed consent was sought from the Adult Education Centre and research participants by sending them a Participation Information Sheet and asking participants to sign an Informed Consent Form before participating in the study. This researcher at all times asked for permission to record proceedings before tape recordings of the interviews were undertaken.

The right to privacy (protecting the identity of the respondent) was achieved by establishing ground rules relating to confidentiality of what was discussed during the research process were established at the beginning of data collection or interview sessions. Flick (2009) points out that 'researchers need to guarantee participants' confidentiality, which means that the information about them is only used in a way which makes it impossible for other persons to identify the participants or for an institution to use it against the interest of the participant' (p. 40). Ground rules were reviewed from time to time and new ones added to the list when the need arose.

Data including recordings and transcripts are stored in a safe locked facility that is not accessible to any unauthorised persons. In order to protect electronic data from unauthorised access, the data has been encrypted (Flick, 2009, p. 42). This entails encrypting electronic copies of information and ensuring they are only accessed through use of a password.

The research participants were protected from physical, emotional, or any other kind of harm, and it was clearly explained to participants that participation in the study was strictly voluntary. Participants were given a Participant Information Sheet and an Informed Consent Form, both emphasised that participation was voluntary. In addition, participants were informed that they could refuse to answer any question that they were not comfortable with, and that they were free to withdraw from the research proceedings at any time (Robson, 2002, p. 381). The room(s) where focus group and one-to-one interviews took place met internationally approved Safety, Health and Welfare standards.

Research was carried out in a manner that adhered to internationally recognised professional, legal and ethical standards. Adherence to professional, legal and ethical standards was overseen by the Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee. Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee (2013) states that 'research involving human participants includes the physical participation of people in research projects as well as their involvement through provision of or access to personal data not already in the public domain' (p. 1). Professional, legal and ethical standards in research are enforced by research ethics committees or other similar bodies.

Beauchamp (2003) outlines four fundamental methods and principles in biomedical ethics. The same principles underpin the development of ethical considerations in social research and practice.

The principles are as follows:

- Beneficence (the obligation to provide benefits and balance benefits against risks)
- Non-maleficence (the obligation to avoid the causation of harm)
- Respect for autonomy (the obligation to respect the decision-making capacities of autonomous persons)
- Justice (obligations of fairness in the distribution of benefits and risks)

In contrast, firstly, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) argue that:

Respect, beneficence, and justice are problematic terms. Surely there is more to respect than informed consent – more, that is, than getting people to agree to be participants in a study. Respect involves caring for others, honouring them, and treating them with dignity. An informed consent form does not do this, and it does not confer respect on another person (p. 50).

Secondly, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) argue that ‘beneficence, including risks and benefits, cannot be quantified, nor can a clear meaning be given to acceptable risk or benefits that clearly serve a larger cause’ (p. 50). Lastly, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) point out:

Justice extends beyond implementing fair selection procedures or unfairly distributing the benefits of research across a population. Justice involves principles of care, love, kindness, and fairness, as well as commitments to shared responsibility and to honesty, truth, balance, and harmony (p. 51)

The majority of sociologists and other social researchers agree on most procedural issues and the principle of informed consent discussed in preceding paragraphs. However, Fontana and Frey (2005) argues that ‘there are other ethical concerns that are less unanimously upheld. The controversy over overt/covert fieldwork is more germane to participant observation but could include the surreptitious use of tape-recording devices’ (p. 715). Fontana and Frey (2005) also state that ‘another problematic issue stems from the researcher’s degree of involvement with the group under study’ (p. 715). Lastly, Fontana and Frey (2005) point out that ‘another ethical problem is raised by the veracity of the reports made by researchers’ (p. 715). This researcher addressed the issues raised by Fontana and Frey (2005) by ensuring that he did not use

overt/covert tactics during fieldwork and by at all times asking for permission from research participants to record them before recording any sessions.

This researcher kept the involvement of the researched professional at all times, and permission was always sought before any interactions took place. The transcribed interviews were shared with members of staff who participated in the study as a way of identifying errors and rectifying them. The transcribed interviews were not shared with students because some of them had left finished their courses and left the education institution. As a result, there was a possibility breaching ethical considerations if the transcripts were shared outside the education institution. The outcomes of the study will be shared with all research participants at the Adult Education Centre after due processes in college have been completed.

In recent years, the post-structuralist ways of viewing and thinking about the world are opening up, broadening and changing our perspectives about ethical considerations (Ali and Kelly, 2004). Ali and Kelly (2004) point out that 'one of the most influential interventions into research ethics has come from feminist researchers who have challenged the idea that ethical practice *per se* can ensure non-harmful research practice' (p. 116). In addition, Ali and Kelly (2004) assert that:

They [feminist researchers] have shifted emphasis onto the role of power relations at all levels of knowledge production, from *epistemology*, through research relationships, to the dissemination of findings. If we think about research in this larger way then the links between power, politics and research ethics become clearer (p. 116).

The post-structuralists include feminist researchers who have been in the forefront in positing that ethical considerations are ingrained with political and moral considerations of those involved in research studies (Ali and Kelly, 2004).

Ali and Kelly (2004) assert that 'more importantly, what is considered to be ethical in research has changed over time and may be highly influenced by the researcher's own theoretical, moral or political approach to research...Even epistemological frameworks can be informed by ethical considerations' (p. 116). This researcher avoided theoretical and political biases by being cognisant that ethical practice depends on professional integrity, reflexivity and empathy throughout the research process.

This subsection introduced issues pertaining to ethical practice when carrying out research. The subsection that follows addresses entry to a research site and challenges that were encountered by this researcher.

3.4.1 Entry to research site and challenges encountered

There are a variety of factors that influence the outcomes of negotiations to access a research site. Some of the factors that play an intermediary variable in being refused or granted permission to access a research site include the social and cultural capital of the researcher. In other words, researchers who lack the necessary social and cultural capital are less likely to have networks and information to grant them access to research sites.

It was important for this researcher to be familiar with codes of ethics before engaging in fieldwork. Flick, (2009) points out that it is the researcher's responsibility to make sure his research proposal has been 'reviewed by the ethics committee for ethical soundness' (p. 39). In addition, Flick (2009) states that review of a research proposal focuses on three aspects, which are 'scientific quality, the welfare of the participants, and respect for the dignity and rights of the participants' (p. 39). The study should not replicate an existing research study, thereby not contributing new knowledge. The researcher assessed and weighed the benefits of involving research participants against potential risks. Each participant's consent was sought in advance to ensure that they were accorded respect, dignity and that their rights have been upheld.

According to Allmark (2002), the following are the criteria to guide researchers on the principle of informed consent as a precondition for participation:

- The consent should be given by someone competent to do so;
- The person giving the consent should be adequately informed;
- The consent is given voluntarily. (p. 13, cited in Flick, 2009, p. 41)

Although confidentiality was maintained at all times, it was paramount to note that confidentiality has limitations. It can be breached if participants are engaged in unlawful activities because the law takes precedence.

This researcher experienced some challenges before making a breakthrough to access the research site.

Informal negotiations for access began in the first quarter of 2013 with an Adult Literacy Organiser (ALO) for Adult Literacy and Basic Education Service in the South-Western region of Ireland. Initially, the ALO seemed agreeable with granting permission to access the research site. However, there were unexplained delays in reaching a formal agreement to access the research site until the service closed for the summer holidays. Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that 'the tasks of contacting appropriate individuals at the inquiry site of gaining entrée have both formal and informal aspects' (p. 252). At the beginning of the 2013/14 academic year, the issue of access to the

same research site was pursued culminating in a written Information Sheet in October 2013 being sent to the ALO. The Information Sheet is illustrated in Appendix B.

Due to delays in responding to correspondences and phone calls, this researcher decided to visit the site of research. The visit yielded promises, but no written commitment. After realising that the ALO was not ready to commit, this researcher finding finding an alternative research site.

Next, a Centre Co-ordinator of an institution that teaches English as a second language was approached. The Co-ordinator agreed that the study could be carried out at the institution subject to certain conditions being met. First, no one to one interviews with students were permitted. Second, the Co-ordinator was to scrutinise all the survey material prior to giving consent for the material to be distributed to potential participants.

In January 2014, the research material was submitted to the Co-ordinator. The research material consisted of questionnaires for students and teachers, focus group semi-structured interview questions for students, informed consent forms, participation information sheets, and one-to-one semi-structured interview questions for teachers and the coordinator. The aforementioned documents are included in the research project in Appendices B to R. After scrutinising the material, the Co-ordinator advised that the students and teachers were too busy to participate in the study and withdrew the institution from the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert:

The keys to access are almost always in the hands of multiple gatekeepers, both formal and informal. In most cases those gatekeepers, before giving assent, will want to be informed about the inquiry in ways that will permit them to assess the costs and the risks that it will pose, both for themselves and for the groups to which they control access (p. 253).

This researcher's diplomatic efforts failed to convince the Co-ordinator to change the decision.

Failure to obtain permission to access the two research sites resulted in modification of the reviewed literature and contents of the MIREC application for ethical approval twice. That had serious time implications on the study.

There may have been poor judgement and oversight by this researcher regarding a number of issues. First, that granting permission of access might not have been the sole responsibility of the gatekeepers that were approached, but that approaching someone more senior might have yielded positive results. Second, the gate keepers might think/believe the study outcomes may have adverse consequences on the reputation and funding of the institution. Finally, that consultation with members of staff may have persuaded the gatekeepers against participating in the study.

After a number of unsuccessful efforts, a final breakthrough came when this researcher decided to approach a former postgraduate classmate that was working as a Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) Co-ordinator in an Adult Education Centre in Ireland. He phoned the VTOS Co-ordinator towards the end of January 2014 and explained his problem in relation to doing the fieldwork stage of his Structured PhD thesis. The VTOS Co-ordinator requested written information about the study during the telephone conversation. She also said that she would first discuss the issue with the VTOS Administrator before any decision could be made. The following day, an email with an Information Sheet attached was sent to the Co-ordinator. The VTOS Co-ordinator also asked for more information including the length of time it would take to complete questionnaires, conduct focus group interviews and one-to-one interviews. The information was emailed to the VTOS Co-ordinator around the end of January 2014. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state:

It has always been recognised that building and maintaining trust is an important task for the field inquirer. While no one would argue that the existence of trust will automatically lead to credible data, the inverse seems indubitable. Respondents are much more likely to be both candid and forthcoming if they respect the inquirer and believe in his integrity (p. 256).

After supplying the VTOS Co-ordinator with all the information she had requested, permission to access the research site was granted.

The MIREC Administrator advised this researcher to submit a revised MIREC application, which was reviewed and approved within a week. The proposed start date for fieldwork was the beginning of March 2014, and the anticipated completion date was the end of April 2014. However, there were challenges that resulted in focus group and one-to-one interviews being delayed until the end of May 2014.

Four teachers and eighty students at the Adult Education Centre located in Ireland were approached to participate in the study. Out of 80 students, 35 completed the questionnaires, which was a return rate of 43%. Out of 4 teachers, 3 teachers completed the questionnaires, and that was a return rate of 75%. The VTOS Co-ordinator participated only in a one-to-one interview and did not complete a questionnaire.

Out of 35 students that completed the questionnaires, 23 indicated on the Voluntary Consent Form that they would like to take part in the qualitative phase of the interview process. The researcher supplied the VTOS Coordinator with the names of students that volunteered to part in the second stage of the interview process. The VTOS Coordinator used that information to form focus groups. The students were grouped mainly in accordance with the courses that they were enrolled in. That

was because the Centre Co-ordinator felt that some of the students were going to contribute freely and confidently if they were put in groups that had members that they were familiar with.

This section discussed how this researcher made a final breakthrough to carry out research at an Adult Education Centre run under the auspices of the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) programme.

The timeline of challenges encountered up to obtaining a research site are summarised in a table in Appendix S. This subsection addressed difficulties of obtaining research site permission and presumed reasons. The subsection also discussed the final breakthrough in getting permission to access the site of research. The subsection that follows discusses ethics approval.

3.4.2 Ethics Approval

Axiology (ethics) is a set of principles or code of ethics that guide the moral conduct and soundness of a research project. Flick (2009) defines the code of ethics as a 'set of rules of good practice in research (or interventions) set up by professional associations or by institutions as an orientation for their members' (p. 467). Adherence to codes of ethics and a review of ethical soundness of the research was overseen by the Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee (MIREC), which is affiliated to the University of Limerick

Research Ethics and Governance Committees. MIREC states on its website that the body 'has responsibility for all aspects of research ethics insofar as they relate to research projects carried out by MIC staff and MIC research postgraduates where the projects involve human participants'. This researcher officially sought a research site to conduct fieldwork after receiving ethics approval from MIREC.

Flick (2009) points out that 'ethics committees have been established in many areas. In order to ensure ethical standards, the committees examine the research design and methods before they can be applied' (p. 39). It is pertinent to consider that implementation of ethical considerations is not self-evident. It consists of more complex issues that cannot be easily drafted and followed like a manual. A good example is that Ali and Kelly (2004) asserts that:

In this kind of model, ethical practice is akin to a form of professional practice. Ethics here is centred on *procedural issues* and especially on the principle of *informed consent*. The emphasis on correct ethical procedures contains the danger that somewhat prescriptive codes of practice are formulated which may allow researchers to think that as long as certain procedures are followed, the research practice is automatically 'ethical' (p. 116).

In fact, where what is theoretically desirable competes with what is practically possible, the former must apply.

This subsection discussed ethics approval. It was paramount to guard against any biases throughout the research process. Biases can be avoided by upholding to the principles of empathy and reflexivity. The subsection below addresses empathy and reflexivity.

3.4.3 Empathy and reflexivity

Sometimes researchers approach studies not fully aware of the less unanimously upheld aspects of ethical considerations that need to be observed during the fieldwork phase of the social inquiry. The less unanimously upheld aspects of ethical considerations continue to exist as grey areas in social inquiry possibly because they continue to receive less publication from the community of sociologists and other social scientists. A good example of such aspects of ethical consideration includes the extent to which the researcher can be involved with research participants, and type of relationships that can be established. This researcher addressed the less obvious aspects by incorporating principles of empathy and reflexivity in his approach during the fieldwork phase. Fontana and Frey (2005) state:

“Empathetic” emphasizes taking a stance, contrary to the scientific image of interviewing, which is based on the concept of neutrality. Indeed, much of traditional interviewing concentrates on the language of scientific neutrality and the techniques to achieve it. Unfortunately, these goals are largely mythical (p. 696).

It may be argued that neutrality cannot be achieved in a research process that embodies a criticality. However, this researcher is of the opinion that criticality does not necessarily interfere with neutrality. Fontana and Frey (2005) also state that contemporary approaches ‘in interviewing differ from the conventional approach; they see that it is time to stop treating the interviewee as a “clockwork orange”, that is, looking for a better juicer (techniques) to squeeze the juice (answers) out of orange (living person/interview)’ (p. 696). This can be achieved by making research participants aware that they are not obliged to answer certain questions that they are not comfortable with.

Creswell (2007) asserts that reflexivity ‘means the writer is conscious of the biases, values, and experiences that he or she brings to a qualitative research study’ (p. 243). This researcher was conscious of biases by being conscious of his educational, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Aneas and Sandin (2009) mention:

Reflexivity implies paying attention to the diverse linguistic, social, cultural, political and technical elements which influence in an overall fashion the process of knowledge development (interpretation) in the language and narrative (forms and presentation) and impregnate the production of texts (authority and legitimacy).

According to Josselson (2007), 'people can give informed consent to participate in the *research* project, but they cannot give prior consent to participate in an open-ended *relationship* that is yet to be established' (p. 545). Therefore, it is paramount for the researcher to have values that promote professional relationships with research participants. Reflexivity dictates that the researcher's self-concept must be acknowledged, as 'its fantasies, biases, and horizons of understanding, is the primary tool of inquiry' (Josselson, 2007, p. 545). Power relations between the researcher and those being researched might be skewed because the majority of them have a low level of education. It was therefore important that a balancing mechanism through empathy and reflexivity was incorporated during the research process.

Reflexivity helps research to deal with issues of power relations. It helps to embrace a social epistemology which 'enables us not to consider the word learning not as standing alone, but as embodying a range of historically constructed values, priorities, and dispositions toward how one should see and act toward the world' (Foucault, 1998, p. 9). Reflexivity plays an important role in researching discourses that have aspects of inequality, skewed power or class relations. This researcher was aware that issues of power relations may arise in this study because one of the entry requirements of the VTOS programme is that prospective applicants must be of low educational attainment.

Constructivism and interpretivism help to construct and deconstruct a narrative. However, it is pertinent to mention that understanding of words and text is a hugely contested terrain. Robson (2002, p. 173) provides what seems to be a useful checklist in identifying areas of potential research bias and on how to be reflexive. The guidelines are in Appendix T.

The preceding subsection addressed empathy and reflexivity. The next subsection discusses data management.

3.4.4 Data Management

At the beginning of the research process, the researcher considered and determined how data would be stored and managed. The collected data was stored electronically or as hard copies, and in either case in more than one file as a back-up mechanism. In addition a research journal/diary consisting of notes, thoughts, assumptions and activities undertaken during the research process was kept. Stake (1995) points out that:

...the researcher should have a storage system. For many researchers, the most important thing is to have a personal diary or log in which everything is kept: calendar, telephone numbers, observation notes, expenses. Increasingly this information is kept in electronic files – which facilitates categorising and editing information – but a hard copy is still the preference of most (p. 55).

In addition, audio-recorded interviews were transcribed at the earliest opportunity, and for confidentiality reasons, the digital recorder was kept in a private and safe place that was locked at all times.

The main Irish law dealing with data protection is the Data Protection Act 1988. The 1988 Act was amended by the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003. An administrative consolidation of the law is available at: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1988/en/act/pub/0025/index.html>.

The Data Protection Act, 1988 is an act to give effect to the convention for the protection of individuals with regard to automatic processing of personal data done at Strasbourg on the 28th day of January, 1981, and for that purpose to regulate in accordance with its provisions the collection, processing, keeping, use and disclosure of certain information relating to individuals that is processed automatically. [13th July, 1988]

The 2003 Amendment Act brought our law into line with the EU Data Protection Directive 95/46/EC.

The UK government responded to the possibilities of distribution of personal information collected as part of a research study by enacting the 1998 Data Protection Act. It sets out eight principles of good practice. The legislation outlines that stored personal data includes both facts and opinions expressed by research participants. In brief, the data should be:

- Fairly and lawfully processed
- Processed for limited purposes
- Accurate
- Not kept longer than necessary
- Processed in accordance with the data subject's right
- Secure
- Not transferred to countries without adequate protection

(See: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/schedule/1>)

The Mary Immaculate College (MIC) Record Retention Schedule stipulates that the data collected for this study will be stored for the duration of the research project and destroyed *three years* after publication of the research project. That will be for approximately a total period of four years.

This subsection discussed data management. The entire section addressed issues pertaining to ethical practice when carrying out research. The section that follows explores the quality of the research study and examines various elements that contribute to improve quality.

3.5 Quality

The elements that contribute to improving quality of a research study are validity, reliability, triangulation, holism and its scope, among others. The subsection that follows discusses the validity of the study.

3.5.1 *Validity of the study*

Robson (2002) states that validity in a qualitative research is judged by 'being accurate, or correct, or true. These are difficult (some would say impossible) things to be sure about' (p. 170). Validity consists of internal validity and external validity. Yin (2009) asserts that:

...internal validity is mainly a concern for explanatory case studies, when an investigator is trying to explain how and why event x led to event y . If the investigator incorrectly concludes that there is a causal relationship between x and y without knowing that some third factor – z – may actually have caused y , the research design has failed to deal with some threat to internal validity (p. 42).

This study is not an explanatory but an exploratory study. Yin (2009) points out that the logic of internal validity 'is inapplicable to descriptive or exploratory studies (whether the studies are case studies, surveys, or experiments), which are not concerned with this kind of causal situation' (p. 43). Internal validity is further complicated by the fact that it relies on the investigator's inferences based on data collected, for instance, from reviewed literature and interviews with researchers and not directly observed.

Cook and Campbell (1979) define external validity as 'the approximate validity with which we infer that the presumed causal relationship can be generalised to and across alternate measures of the cause and effect and across different of persons, settings, and times' (p. 37, cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 291). Yin (2009) points out that 'the external problem has been a major barrier in doing case studies. Critics typically state that single cases offer a poor basis for generalisation' (p. 43). That is because critics compare a single case to a survey research where a sample is studied in order to generalise to a 'larger universe'. In addition, Yin (2009) argues that '*this analogy to samples and universes is incorrect when dealing with case studies*. Survey research relies on *statistical* generalisation, whereas case studies (as with experiments) rely on *analytic* generalisation' (p. 43). The findings of this embedded singlecase study were not be used for generalisation.

The kinds of understanding involved in qualitative research mainly include description, interpretation and theory. However, each of them has got threats that weaken its validity and make it less trustworthy.

First, Robson (2002) asserts that ‘the main threat to providing a valid interpretation of what you have seen or heard lies in the inaccuracy or incompleteness of the data’ (p. 171). Audiotapes and journal entries provided this researcher a fall-back when he could not vividly remember what transpired during an interview. Interview proceedings were audio-taped.

Second, Robson (2002) states that the main threat to providing a valid interpretation is that of imposing a framework or meaning on what is happening rather than this occurring or emerging from what you learn during your involvement with the setting’ (p. 171). Emerging themes and categories were developed by studying the raw data in rigorous and systematic manner.

Lastly, Robson (2002) predicates that ‘the main threat is in not considering alternative explanations or understandings of the phenomena you are studying’ (p. 172). Although prepared questions were asked during the interviews, there was considerable freedom for discussions to go on a different direction and to run their course.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that that reactivity, indeterminacy and interaction are possible threats to internal validity of flexible design research (pp. 94 – 108). Reactivity is synonymous to what various authors refer to as the ‘Hawthorne effect’ or “‘guinea pig” effect’, the ‘Pygmalion effect’ and the ‘John Henry effect’. These terms generally refer to the fact that humans can change behaviour when they know they are being studied. Indeterminacy is on the premise that it is difficult to predict human behaviour because humans are unique. As a result, it is therefore difficult to predict the behaviour of both the researcher and the researched.

The interaction between an investigator and research participants during the research process helps to shape their attitudes and behaviours. One such interaction happens during interviews. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that since ‘an interview is said to be a conversation with a purpose, but it would be a rare conversation that was entirely one-sided, no matter how dominant one member of the dyad might be or how submissive the other’ (p. 100). In other words, the investigator and research participant are co-creators of data and new knowledge.

The validity of this study was improved by triangulating sources of information and by identifying and comparing similarities and differences. Transcripts of interviews with teachers and the Co-ordinator were shared with them as a way of ascertaining that there were no misrepresentations.

This subsection discussed the validity of the study. The subsection that follows addresses the reliability of the study.

3.5.2 Reliability

Social scientists use the terms 'reliability' and 'validity' to measure or evaluate quality (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Robson, 2002; Singleton and Straits, 2005; Thomas, 2009). Singleton and Straits (2005) state that 'reliability is concerned with questions of stability and consistency. Is the operational definition measuring "something" consistently and dependably...Do repeated applications of the operational definition under similar conditions yield consistent results?' (p. 91). Thomas (2009) agrees with Singleton and Straits (2005) and asserts that 'reliability refers to the extent to which a research instrument such as a test will give the same result on different occasions' (p. 105). There are two types of reliability. These are test-retest reliability and inter-rater reliability. Test-retest reliability is when the same assessment given to the same group of participants yields the same results when it is given soon after. Inter-rater reliability is when the same assessment to the same group of students gives similar results when assessed by two different assessors.

It is important to note that the terms 'reliability' and 'validity' are used more in quantitative research than in qualitative research. Robson (2002) points out that 'the terms 'reliability' and 'validity' are avoided by many proponents of flexible, qualitative design' (p. 170). A good example is that Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 294-301) prefer the terms *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*. In contrast, positivists use the expressions and terms *internal validity*, *external validity*, *reliability* and *objectivity*, as corresponding equivalents to the four preferred by interpretivists.

Researchers with inclinations towards positivist paradigm argue that reliability and validity are not applicable to qualitative research. Robson (2002) argues:

The problem is not so much with the apple-pie of desirability of doing reliable and valid research, but the fact that these terms are have been operationalised so rigidly in fixed design quantitative research. An answer is to find alternative ways of operationalising them that are appropriate to the condition and circumstances of flexible, qualitative inquiry (p. 170).

Table 3.1 below illustrates a summary of corresponding terms preferred by interpretivists and positivists.

<i>Interpretivists</i>	<i>Positivists</i>
Credibility	Internal validity
Tranferrability	External validity

Dependability	Reliability
Confirmability	Objectivity

Table 3.1: A summary of corresponding terms used by interpretivists and positivists

The reliability of this research was enhanced by triangulating sources of information and by identifying and comparing similarities and differences across various sources of data. Transcripts for interviews done with teachers and the Co-ordinator were shared with them as a way of detecting any misrepresentations.

This subsection addressed the reliability of the study. The subsection below discusses triangulation.

3.5.3 Triangulation

Social scientists borrowed the term ‘triangulation’ from navigation and trigonometry, and they use it as a metaphor. Thus, it does not necessarily refer to three methods or approaches (Singleton and Straits, 2005; Thomas, 2009, p. 111). Singleton and Straits (2005) state that ‘in social research, the logic of triangulation applies to situations in which two or more dissimilar measurement or approaches are used...The key to triangulation is the use of dissimilar methods or measures, which do not share the same methodological weaknesses – that is errors and biases’ (p. 382).

Triangulation enhances generalisability, and improves quality and validity of a social inquiry. Denzin (1989b) distinguishes the following four types of triangulation:

- data triangulation: the use of more than one method of data collection (e.g. observation, interviews, documents);
- observer triangulation: using more than one observer in the study;
- methodological triangulation: combining quantitative and qualitative approaches; ▪
theory triangulation: using multiple theories or perspectives (pp. 237 – 241).

In addition to the above, Thomas (2009, p. 111) added *design frame triangulation* (the use of more than one design frame, for example, a case study and longitudinal study). However, triangulation has its critics (Thomas, 2009; Robson, 2002). Thomas (2009) argues that ‘some interpretive researchers argue that a piece of interpretive research has value and completeness in itself. It doesn’t need any verification from other kinds of research. It has integrity as a singular inquiry’ (p. 111). Robson (2002) concurs with Thomas (2009) by pointing out that triangulation ‘opens up possibilities of discrepancies and disagreements among different sources’ (p. 175). Nonetheless, it appears as if the advantages of using triangulation outweigh the disadvantages.

Data was elicited by reviewing Irish policy documents about the VTOS programme, from questionnaires completed by the coordinator, teachers and students, and supplemented through focus group and one-to-one interviews with the same stakeholders. Interviews were audio-taped and notes were taken during the courses and entered in a journal.

This subsection discussed triangulation. The subsection that follows discusses holism of the research study.

3.5.4 Holism

The complexity of human beings and contextual nature of their behaviour is a contentious issue in quantitative research. Quantitative researchers view humans as contaminants to outcomes of research who try to nullify or eliminate the context (Stake, 1995). Mishler (1979) coined the term 'context-stripping' in describing the exercise of nullifying the context (cited in Silverman, 2004, p. 332). Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that in the positivist paradigm the inquirer and respondent relationship is as follows:

The inquirer and the object of inquiry are independent; knower and the known constitute a discrete dualism. The naturalist version, however, states: The inquirer and the 'object' of inquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable (p. 94).

In other words, in qualitative research, the complexity and contextual nature of humans is not viewed as undesirable and a potential contaminant. Conversely, it plays a key role in the research process. Context is emphasised and not eliminated or stripped (Linclon and Guba, 1985; Silverman, 2004, p. 332). In fact, the complexity and contextual nature of humans help to enrich the social inquiry. According to Stake (1995), a qualitative study is holistic if it has the following characteristics:

- Its contextuality is well developed;
- It is case oriented (a case is seen to be a bounded system);
- It resists reductionism and elementalism; and
- It is relatively noncomparative, seeking to understand its object more than to understand how it differs from others (p. 47).

A holistic approach involves capturing a complex picture of the issue that is being studied and viewing the issue from multiple vantage points. Creswell (2007) theorises that a holistic account involves capturing a 'complex picture of the problem or issue under study. This involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching

the larger picture that emerges' (p. 39). A holistic design has advantages and disadvantages. Yin (2009) points out:

The holistic design is advantageous when no logical subunits can be identified or when the relevant theory underlying the case is itself of holistic nature. Potential problems arise, however, when a global approach allows an investigator to avoid examining any specific phenomenon in operational detail. Thus, a typical problem with the holistic design is that the entire case study may be conducted at an unduly abstract level, lacking sufficiently clear measures or data (p. 50).

Because of reasons cited above, this researcher chose to use *the embedded case study design*. Different course groups at the Adult Education Centre were selected using a purposive sampling method and were treated as embedded units. However, this was done taking into consideration that no research design is foolproof.

This subsection discussed the holism of the study, and the entire section discussed the quality of the research and examined various elements that contribute to improve quality. The section that follows addresses qualitative procedures.

3.6 Qualitative procedures

From the onset, this researcher envisaged the study adopted an embedded single, and a flexible mixed methods design in a sequential explanatory strategy embedded with an interpretivist paradigm with a critical constructivist stance, and a narrative approach. The primary research question posed is: *How and in what ways does the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) of an Education Training Board (ETB) in Ireland transfer sustainable, transformative and distributed leadership skills to teachers/tutors in order to improve service delivery to adult learners?*

The critical interpretivist position in qualitative research is a theoretical lens through which a researcher explores or investigates how social institutions influence social life, social struggles and historical dilemmas brought by domination and discrimination (Fay, 1987; Madison, 2005; McLaren, 2002; Morrow & Brown, 1994). The critical interpretive position encourages the inclusion of the 'voice of the clients' or research participants in shaping policy guidelines and regulations that directly affect their lives. Chase (2005) points out that the central question for all narrative researchers 'revolves around which voice or voices the researchers use as they interpret and represent the voices of those they study' (p. 652). Furthermore, Chase (2005) states that narrative researchers 'separate their voices from narrators' voices through their interpretations. They assert an authoritative interpretive voice on the grounds that they have a different interest from the narrators in the narrators' stories' (p. 664). During an interview session, both the narrator and the

listener or reader, for example, are focused on developing the richness and distinctiveness of the narrator's story.

However, Chase (2005) points out that when the researcher is interpreting s/he 'turns to *how* and *what* questions that open up particular ways of understanding what the narrator is communicating through his or her story' (p. 664). Despite that in most cases the 'how' and

'what' questions are taken for granted by narrators when telling their stories, they facilitate a broader and deeper investigation of the narrative processes.

Qualitative procedures adopt different approaches to academic inquiry in terms of 'philosophical assumptions; strategies of inquiry; and methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation' (Creswell, 2009, p. 173) when compared to quantitative research. The differences are in terms of methods, strategies and the positionality of the researcher. The subsection below discusses the methods, strategy and positionality of this researcher.

3.6.1 Methods, strategy and positionality of researcher

Yin (2009) points out that a single-case study uses either a holistic or embedded study design.

A holistic design is used when a case study examines 'only the global nature of an organisation or a programme' (p. 50). Alternatively, 'the same single-case study may involve *more than one unit of analysis*. This occurs when, within a single case, attention is also given to a subunit or subunits' (p. 50). Even though the case study focused on a VTOS Adult Education Centre, the study also analysed its component course groups. Despite the embedded case design's obvious strengths, it also has weakness. Yin (2009) highlights one major shortfall of an embedded case design as occurring 'when the case study focuses only on the subunit level and fails to return to the larger unit of analysis' (p. 52). Here, this researcher believes Yin is talking about one stripping a system into its components for analysis and after understanding the components, then one must combine the components to understand how they function together. For example, one disassembles a car engine, to find out which component is not working properly and fixes it if there is a need to do so. After reassembling the engine, s/he runs it to see if the car is working properly or if there is any component that still needs to be attended to. This researcher embraced a holistic rather than reductionist analysis, that is, he took into consideration that the sum of the parts is greater than the whole.

This researcher avoided only focusing on the whole organisation without a profound understanding of the individual course groups. He also averted concentrating on certain course groups whilst leaving out others or without understanding the whole. This researcher was also cognisant that a case is good for particularisation rather than generalisation (Stake, 1995; Yin 2009). Stake (1995) asserts:

The real business of a case study is particularisation, not generalisation. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the emphasis is on understanding the case itself (p. 8).

The case study research is a linear as well as iterative process and that is illustrated in Figure

3.2.

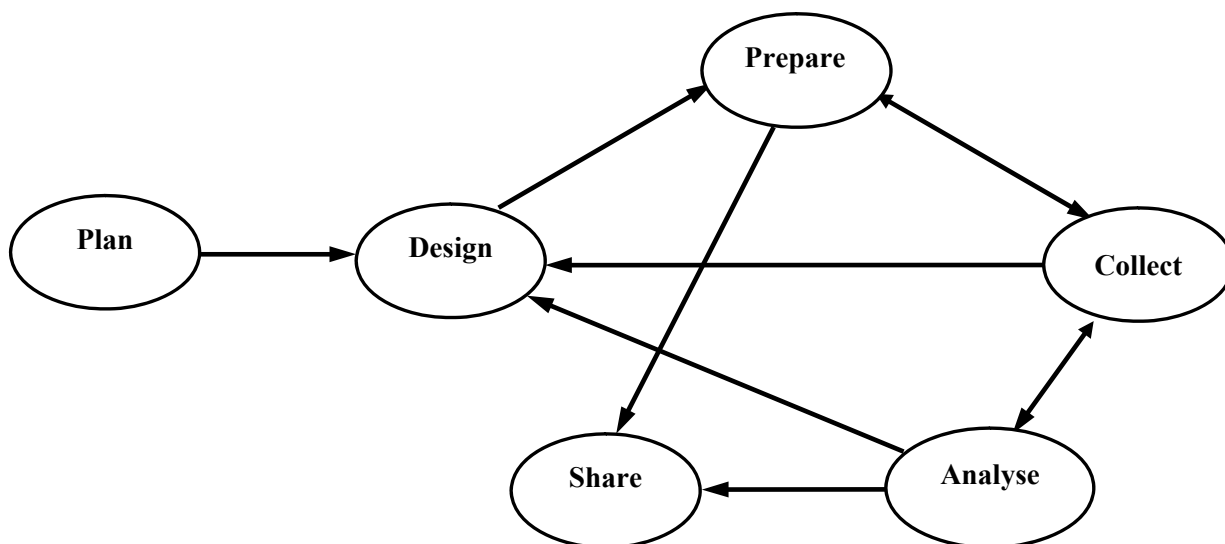


Figure 3.2: Doing Case Study Research: A linear but iterative process Adapted

from Yin (2009, p. 1)

A case study was chosen because of the richness of the phenomenon and the extensiveness of the real life context. In addition to data points, a case study has many variables of interest. That makes the phenomenon appropriate in employing many sources of evidence by means of triangulation. During the planning stage, the rationale, scope and research questions were identified. The decision to use a case study compared to other methods was undertaken. This researcher made an informed decision after familiarising himself with the strengths and weaknesses or limitations of a case study. The research design brought together various components of the study and preparations to embark on the long arduous and convoluted academic journey were made. The research design and other aspects of the preparation were shared with friends, peers and research supervisors. Research questions were reformulated when there was a shift from multiple-case studies to an embedded single-case study (Creswell, 2007 and 2009, Robson, 2002; Thomas, 2009). Plan, design, prepare, collect, prepare and analyse may theoretically be thought to be linear processes, but in practice are iterative processes.

The scientifically-based research (SBR) movement has over the years been increasingly using qualitative research methods in the form of mixed methods including their randomised use in experimental designs. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) argue that 'mixed-methods designs are direct descendants of classical experimentalism' (p. 12). In the past, mixed-methods designs used to adopt a hierarchical arrangement in which more weight or priority was given to the quantitative methods and the qualitative methods only paid a subordinate or secondary role. This used to be the case because during that time most researchers were more inclined towards quantitative rather than qualitative research. Unfortunately, this problem has not been completely eradicated. Cameron (2011) asserts:

Mixed methods researchers need to be versatile and innovative with a repertoire of research skills that exceeds those needed for single mode research. They need to explicitly state their philosophical foundations and paradigmatic stance before rigorously defending their methodological choices and demonstrate a sound knowledge base of mixed methods research designs and methodological considerations (p. 106).

This can be achieved by embracing paradigms, pragmatism and praxis, which Cameron (2011) respectively refers to as P1, P2 and P3 or the first three Ps of the Five Ps of mixed methods research (MMR). According to Cameron (2011), the 'Five Ps tend to cover the key categories of challenges that arise from mixed methods research designs. They include philosophical considerations and approaches, as well as methodological choices and processes, competencies, practicalities and political considerations' (p. 97). A mixed methods researcher needs to document and argue paradigmatic stance, be informed about contemporary philosophical debates, and make an informed choice and correct utilisation of MMR designs, methods and data analysis. In addition, Cameron (2011) points out:

They need to demonstrate proficiency and competence in both the quantitative and qualitative methods chosen as well as proficiency and competency in applying the rules of integration to methods and data analysis. They are also required to become cognisant of the politics of publishing in a new and emerging methodological movement without debasing or underreporting the essence of their mixed methods studies (p. 106).

This can be achieved by embracing proficiency and publishing, which are respectively referred to by Cameron (2011) as P4 and P5 of the Five Ps. A mixed methods researcher needs to be competent and skilled in both quantitative and qualitative methods and their data analysis as well as mixed methods and their integrated data analysis. In addition, the researcher needs to be aware of the politics and challenges that are involved in reporting and publishing MMR.

The sequential explanatory strategy in MMR prioritises collection of quantitative data and that gives the study more weight. This strategy was chosen not because this researcher favours a quantitative method or wanted the qualitative method to be secondary. This researcher envisaged the preliminary analysis of the quantitative data would assist him make a more informed decision thus included questions in the second stage of the research that were not in the initial provisional list. The strategy also helped this researcher to identify the research participants that were interested in participating in the qualitative phase of this study.

Creswell (2009) asserts that the sequential explanatory strategy:

...is characterised by the collection and analysis of quantitative data in a first phase of research, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in a second phase that builds on the results of the initial quantitative results. Weight typically is given to the quantitative data, and the mixing of the data occurs when the initial quantitative results *informs* the secondary qualitative data collection. Thus, the two forms are separate but connected (p. 211).

Sosu *et al.* (2008) state that the sequential explanatory strategy is 'particularly useful for elaborating on or expanding findings of one method by another. One of the main strategies of this procedure is using a quantitative approach to test theories, followed by a qualitative method that involves a detailed exploration with a few individuals' (p. 172). In regard to sequential explanatory frameworks, Creswell (2009) concurs with Sosu *et al.* (2008).

Creswell (2009) points out that 'a sequential explanatory design is typically used to explain and interpret quantitative results by collecting and analysing follow-up qualitative data' (p. 211). In brief, the sequential exploration strategy is a good example of methodological triangulation.

Triangulation of data improves the credibility of findings and interpretations of findings.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that 'the technique of *triangulation* is the third mode of improving the probability that findings and interpretations will be found credible' (p. 305). There are several types of triangulation including investigator, theory, methodological and design frame triangulation (Thomas, 2009). First, investigator triangulation refers to using more than one person in interpreting and analysing findings. Second, theory triangulation refers to using more than one theoretical framework. Thirdly, methodological triangulation implies that more than one data collection method is used. Finally, design frame triangulation entails using more than one design frame, for instance, collective use of a case study and a longitudinal study.

The conceptual framework of triangulation seems to support the notion of systems theory, which posits that the real world is not solid and simple, but is stratified and complex. When we use

different methods we get an opportunity to continue to discover complex strata (layers) that help to explain the behaviour and composition of other strata. We use various methods to discover information at different levels of the phenomenon of social reality. Quantitative data provides us with *breadth* and qualitative data provides us *depth* during an investigation.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that 'the concept of triangulation by different methods thus can imply either different data collection modes (interview, questionnaire, observation, testing) or different designs' (p. 307). However, they also critique the concept of triangulation by pointing out that it works well within a conventionalist paradigm rather than a naturalistic paradigm. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that:

...if the design is emergent, as in a naturalist study, it would not be possible in advance to patch together multiple designs that had the property of warding off threats to which they might individually be exposed. The naturalist thus falls on different modes of data collection, using any that come logically to hand but depending most on qualitative methods (pp. 306 – 307).

The use of different investigators works well in a conventionalist study, but creates problems in a naturalistic study. This is because the design frame is emergent, its form relies on how an individual investigator interacts with the phenomenon rather than investigators corroborating with each other. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that 'the problem is identical to that of expecting replicability for the sake of establishing reliability' (p. 307). Lastly, the use of more than one theory as a concept of triangulation is something that is not acceptable to the naturalistic school of thought. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that facts are:

...theory-determined; they do not have an existence independent of the theory within whose framework they achieve coherence. If a given fact is "confirmable" within two theories, that finding may be more a function of the similarity of the theories than of the empirical meaningfulness of the fact (p. 307).

Different theories can be interconnected by many facts that they share, but that does not equate to a common pragmatic significance. Therefore, from a naturalistic perspective it is empirically and epistemologically void to use multiple theories as a triangulation technique.

Critical theory or pedagogy treats learners with respect and dignity, and embraces a democratic co-creation process for knowledge construction that does not view professionals as the sole experts. In other words, it is opposed to the positivist paradigm that treats mainstream professionals as experts whose primary function is to impart transferrable skills or knowledge to adult learners who are considered to know less or to be synonymous to empty vessels. In summary, it challenges the

dominant positivist position that might be embedded in the actions of policy makers, administrators, adult educators and non-teaching staff.

During the interviews and the entire research process, this researcher maintained positionality that displayed qualities of empathy and reflexivity. He was always conscious and bore in mind the perceived educational gap between the researcher and some research participants.

This subsection discussed the research methodology and strategy, and this researcher's positionality. The subsection that follows addresses mixed methods notation.

3.6.2 Mixed methods notation

The visual models of sequential explanatory and concurrent triangulation designs incorporate mixed methods notation as a way of aiding understanding. Mixed methods research uses conventional shorthand labels and symbols that are generally used by mixed methods researchers to communicate universal messages. In other words, visual models of strategies cannot be understood without a prior understanding of mixed methods notation. Creswell (2009) points out that mixed methods notation 'provides shorthand labels and symbols that convey important aspects of mixed methods research, and it provides a way that mixed methods researchers can easily communicate their procedures' (p. 209). The mixed methods notation that is explained below has been adapted from the works of Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), Morse (1991), and Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), all cited in Creswell (2009, p. 209), and are:

- A "+" indicates a simultaneous or concurrent form of data collection, with both quantitative and qualitative data collected at the same time.
- A "→" indicates a sequential form of data collection, with one form (e.g., qualitative data) building on the other (e.g. quantitative data).
- Capitalisation indicates a weight or priority on the quantitative or qualitative data, analysis, and interpretation in the study. In mixed methods study, the qualitative and quantitative data may be equally emphasised, or one may be more emphasised than the other. Capitalisation indicates that an approach or method is emphasized.
- "Quan" and "Qual" stand for *quantitative* and *qualitative*, respectively, and they use the same number of letters to indicate equality between the forms of data.
- A QUAN/qual notation indicates that the qualitative methods are embedded within a quantitative design.
- Boxes highlight the quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009, pp. 209 -210).

The visual models of mixed methods strategies also incorporate the specific data collection and analysis that has been used, that is, quantitative or qualitative. In addition, they include interpretation of procedures as a way of enhancing the reader's understanding. Creswell (2009) asserts that 'in this way, a figure has at least two elements: the general procedure of mixed methods being used and the more specific procedures of data collection, analysis and interpretation' (p. 210). The arrival of mixed methods on the research terrain has been met with stiff resistance from critics.

This subsection addressed mixed methods notation. The subsection below examines visual images of sequential explanatory and concurrent triangulation designs.

3.6.3 Visual models of mixed methods designs

The four factors that shape mixed methods strategies are timing, weight, mixing and theorising (Creswell, 2009; Creswell and Clark, 2007; Creswell *et al.*, 2003). When considering timing, research proposal developers need to consider beforehand whether collection of qualitative data will be done concurrently or sequentially. If sequential data collection is used, then it is also important to determine which dataset will be collected first. This study employed sequential data collection and quantitative data was collected first. The quantitative data informed the second stage of qualitative data elicitation. Focus group and one to one interview questions were reformulated based on the findings of the quantitative data (Creswell, 2007 and 2009, Robson, 2002; Thomas, 2009).

In general, the weighting and priority given to a data collection method depends on the researcher's discretion. The researcher's strength in either quantitative or qualitative analysis may also influence the selection. The research participants/subjects interests and response also influence the selection. This researcher gave more weight to the quantitative data collection because he wanted the first stage of the research to inform additional questions for the second stage. The first stage was also meant to help him to identify research participants would have volunteered to participate in the second stage. Research participants who took part in stage 2 of the research process were identified by filling out a Voluntary Consent form in which they voluntarily declared if they wanted to take part in a more detailed interview by writing their names and the course group in which they were enrolled. The Voluntary Consent form was completed separately so that the names and the class entered had no link with the questionnaires.

Mixing in a mixed methods strategy refers to the mixing of quantitative and qualitative research questions, and mixing of interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data. Creswell (2009) posits:

There are two different questions here: *When* does a researcher mix in a mixed method study? And *how* does mixing occur? The first question is much easier to answer than the second. Mixing of the two types of data may occur at several stages: the data collection

stage, the data analysis, interpretation, or at all the three stages. For proposal developers using mixed methods, it is important to discuss and present in a proposal when the mixing will occur (p. 207).

Quantitative and qualitative data was to a lesser extent mixed at the data collection and data analysis stages, this researcher chose to mix data at the *interpretation stage*. Creswell (2009) points:

Mixing means either that the qualitative and quantitative data are actually merged on one end of the continuum, and kept separate on the other end of the continuum, or combined in some way between these two extremes. The two data bases might be kept separate but connected; for example, in a two-phase project that begins with a quantitative phase, analysis of the data and its results can be used to identify participants for the qualitative data collection in a follow-up phase (p. 208).

The latter option was used in this study and the quantitative and qualitative data was kept separate but connected. The quantitative data collection method informed the quantitative phase as a result additional questions were formulated that were not envisaged before the quantitative phase and participants for the qualitative phase were identified. Creswell (2009) asserts that 'connected in mixed methods research means a mixing of the quantitative and qualitative research are connected between a data analysis of the first phase of research and the data collection of the second phase' (p. 208). Preliminary analysis of the quantitative data helped to modify and add some questions that were not envisaged before the quantitative phase.

Theorising or transforming perspectives is the final factor that shapes the mixed methods strategy. Creswell (2009) states:

It may be a theory from the social sciences (e.g., adoption theory, leadership theory, attribution theory) or a broad theoretical lens, such as an advocacy/participatory lens (e.g., gender, race, class...). All researchers bring theories, frameworks and hunches to their inquiries, and these theories may be made explicit in a mixed methods approach or be implicit and not mentioned (p. 208).

This study is researching on coaching, mentoring and training for sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership. The theories of coaching, mentoring and training, sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership are explicit in the research. The theories are explicit in the nature of research questions asked, selection of research participants, implications made from the study and the overarching perspectives of the study that the theories present.

In addition to the description of strategy used for the research, a visual model of the research strategy is shown below. The researcher chose a sequential explanatory strategy and its visual model developed by Creswell *et al.* (2003) is illustrated in Figure 3.3 below.

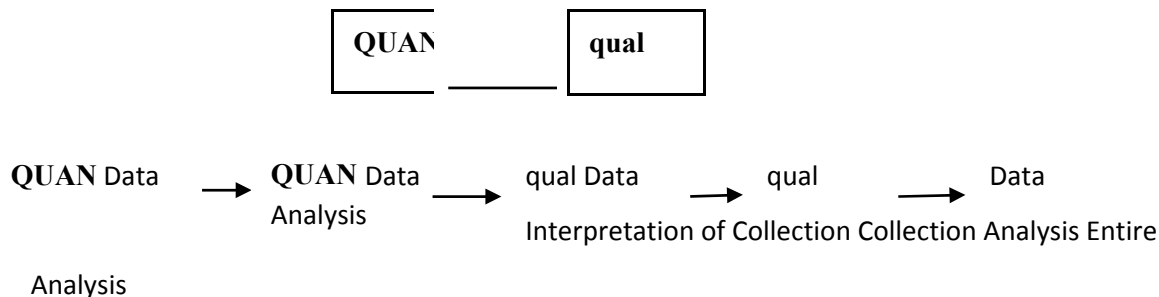


Figure 3.3: Sequential Explanatory Design

Source: Creswell *et al.* (2003)

Adapted from: Creswell (2009, p. 209)

Although questionnaires for students and teachers were overwhelmingly quantitative, a few open-ended qualitative questions were included to elicit more elaborate answers. This was a contingency strategy by the researcher, in case focus-group and one-to-one interviews had failed to materialise, then the researcher could rely on the completed questionnaires to adopt a concurrent triangulation strategy.

According to Creswell (2009), ‘in a concurrent triangulation approach, the researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently and then compares the two databases to determine if there is convergence, differences or some combination’ (p. 213). Comparing convergence, differences and some combination has been referred by other researchers ‘as *confirmation, disconfirmation, cross-validation, or corroboration*’ (Greene *et al.*, 1989; Morgan, 1989; Steckler *et al.* 1992, cited in Creswell, 2009). The concurrent triangulation design is shown on Figure 3.4.

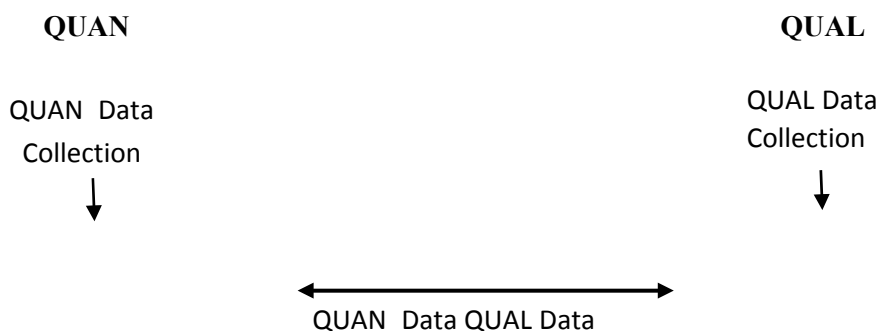


Figure 3.4: Concurrent Triangulation Design

Source: Creswell *et al.* (2003)

Adapted from: Creswell (2009, p. 209)

This study used the concurrent triangulation strategy when collecting data during the first stage of the research process. Students and teachers were asked to complete questionnaires in which quantitative and qualitative data was collected simultaneously but kept separate. The quantitative and qualitative datasets were analyzed separately and results correlated.

This subsection examined visual illustrations of sequential explanatory and concurrent triangulation strategies. The subsection that follows addresses critiques of mixed methods research.

3.6.4 Critiquing mixed methods approaches

Some critics, for instance, Howe (2004), Denzin and Lincoln (2008) and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) argue that the increasing use of qualitative methods in mixed methods research strategies has moved qualitative research from its natural habitat, which is the critical interpretivist perspective. Howe (2004) argues:

Mixed-methods experimentalism gives primacy to quantitative-experimental methods over qualitative-interpretive methods to determine “what works”, as if determining “what works” were somehow the self-certifying aim of educational research. “What works” is not an innocent notation.The desired outcomes are embraced (if not tacitly) as more valuable than other possible outcomes, and the question of their value is off the table for anyone except policy makers and researchers. In this way, the aim of determining “what works” is *technocratic* it focuses on the question of whether interventions are effective in achieving *given* outcomes (p. 54).

This researcher made fundamental decisions about the method and strategy that he was going to use based on their appropriateness for the study. Flick (2009) suggests that ‘determining the decision for or against qualitative or for or against quantitative methods...should be determined by the appropriateness of the method for the issue under study and the research questions’ (pp. 32 – 33). This researcher chose the mixed methods research and the sequential explanatory strategy. Scott and Sutton (2009) argue that ‘teaching is emotional, especially when teachers must change their practices. Past research on emotions and change in the general population has been predominantly quantitative. Research about teachers’ emotions, however has been predominantly

qualitative' (p. 151). This research about leadership in an educational context drew from both methods.

Contemporary mixed methods researchers are more diverse than their classical counterparts when it comes to employing mixed methods. They also employ mixed methods strategies that either give more weight to the qualitative method or give equal weight to both quantitative and qualitative methods. However, Flick (2009) argues that 'the problems in combining qualitative and quantitative research nevertheless have not yet been solved in a satisfying way' (p. 33). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) point out that mixed methods research strategies divide 'inquiry into a dichotomous categories: exploration versus confirmation' (p. 12). That makes the research process less democratic and dialogical. Second, instead of making the voices of marginalised research participants heard, mixed methods research strategies may silence them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008).

Lastly, mixed methods may also not give the researcher an opportunity to interpret *thick descriptions* that the researched use during interviews to describe their experiences. Thomas (2009) states that 'thick description refers to understanding a piece of behaviour – nod, word, a pause, etc., - in context, and using one's 'human knowing' to interpret it when one describes it'. In contrast, things that are reported without a deep understanding of their context are said to have 'thin description', for example, a wink, twitch and parody may mean different things in different cultures.

This researcher, however, took into consideration the manifestations of the high context and the low context cultural interactions. People in high-context cultures are more cautious in initial interactions and have a greater tendency to make assumptions based upon a stranger's cultural background than do people in low-context cultures. Rutledge (2011) reminds us that 'in an increasingly connected and interdependent world effective communication not only becomes more important but also much more difficult. One such difference is that of a high context culture versus a low context culture'. People in high-context cultures also ask more questions about a stranger's background, however, this information does not provide a greater degree of predictive certainty with respect to a stranger's future behaviour. Aneas and Sandin (2009) point out:

When we use the term "culture" it is important to bear in mind that culturally attributed social interaction processes are themselves the result of socially constructed processes. They are part of an individual-collective dialectic with multiple potential meanings, which are emergent and in constant reformulation from a wide variety of social and cultural perspectives.

Rutledge (2011) argues that 'it is often not dissimilar languages that cause the greatest problems but rather much more mundane and harder to detect cultural differences'. The findings of Prosser's (2009) study show 'that regardless of language or culture, human beings use the same qualifying and descriptive frameworks in allocating affective meanings of concepts involving attitudes, feelings, stereotypes, and values' (p. 2). Of course, the point is that in an age of diversity these cultural differences are just as likely to appear across a desk as they are across borders. We can no longer assume a common geographic location guarantees a common heritage.

Mixed methods researchers (MMR) subscribe to either the *substantive theory stance* or *complementary strengths stance*. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010) assert:

Because the two stances are almost polar opposites, a schism exists among practitioners of MMR on the importance of paradigms (or conceptual stances, to use the language employed in this section) in terms of how research is practical in the real world settings. This schism exists between individuals who might be called methods oriented as opposed to those who are conceptually oriented (pp. 14 – 15).

In addition to methodological fundamentalism (evidence-based practice), some of the factors that seem to contribute to the erosion of the critical interpretive framework include influential educational researchers that are increasingly buying into the conceptual framework of mixed methods. It appears influential educational researchers might be doing that as a way of maintaining a truce in what is a polarised political climate that manifests itself within and between the two camps of qualitative and quantitative research. Flick (2009) points out that 'mixed-methodology approaches are interested in pragmatic combination of qualitative and quantitative research. This shall end paradigm wars of earlier times' (p. 32). Influential educational researchers might also be siding with the mixed methods movement as a result of becoming aware of the immense pressure that is characterised by ripple effects of postmodernism. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) point out that in North America qualitative research cuts across a multifaceted historical field that covers *eight distinct historical moments*. They say these historical moments are:

...the *traditional* (1900 – 1950); the *modernist*, or golden age (1950 – 1970); *blurred genres* (1970 – 1986); the *crisis representation* (1986 – 1990); the *postmodern*, a period of experimental and new ethnographies (1990 – 1995); *post-experimental inquiry* (1995 – 2000); the *methodologically contested present* (2000 – 2004); and the *fractured future*, which is now (2005 –) (p. 3).

The successive waves of epistemological theorisation show that the moments overlap and from 2005 to date we have been in the fractured future. A table summarising the characteristics that distinguish historical moments is in Appendix U.

Some of the problems that exist in mixed methods research might be a result of political tensions between qualitative and quantitative research and the influence of postmodernism has had an effect on influencing educational researchers to switch to mixed methods approaches. These tensions between qualitative and quantitative research include those addressed by (Bryman, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003 and 2010).

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) assert that ‘the scientifically-based research (SBR) movement initiated in recent years by the National Research Council (NRC) has created a hostile political environment for qualitative research’ (p. 11). Denzin and Lincoln further state that the political tensions are ‘connected to the federal legislation known as the No Child Left Behind Act 2001’ (p. 11). The SBR movement advocates for an evidence-based epistemology that employs a rigorous, systematic and objective methodology in order to generate knowledge that is characterised by reliability and validity. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) argue:

Under such a framework, qualitative research becomes suspect. Qualitative research does not require well-defined variables or causal models. The observations and measurements of qualitative scholars are not based on subjects’ random assignment to experimental groups.

Qualitative researchers do not generate “hard evidence” using such methods (p. 11).

It is also part of human condition to want to be associated with a stronger alliance. The surrender of influential educational researchers is a worrying development that if not handled properly it may reverse the gains that have over the years been achieved by the critical interpretive fraternity.

This thesis addresses the problems of postmodernism and political hostility by being premised in the fractured future as hypothesised by Denzin and Lincoln (2008) and explained in detail on Appendix U. The fractured future is the contemporary historical moment that seeks to challenge methodological hostilities that emanates from evidence-based scientific research.

The fractured future advocates for moral and ethical considerations in research, critical interpretivism and democracy. Proponents of the fractured future condemn discrimination on the basis of race, gender and class. Lastly, the fractured future advocates for freedom and peace around the world, recognises the sovereignty of nation states and challenges bad practices that are sometimes disguised in the globalisation project.

The complicated historical background that consists of eight historical moments means that any definition of qualitative research must be within that presupposition. Therefore, qualitative research has various definitions in each of the moments. However, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) propose a generic definition and state that:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 4).

Activities that take place during the qualitative research process facilitate the researcher to interact with the researched, unit of analysis and environment, and the outcome results in creation of knowledge that makes it possible for the world to be viewed in a new or different perspective.

This subsection addressed critiques of mixed methods research. The subsection that follows examines the sampling strategy employed by this researcher.

3.6.5 Sampling strategy

This researcher reached out to research participants by engaging in *purposive sampling*, which can be categorised as a non-probability sample. Robson (2002) states that ‘the principle of selection in purposive sampling is the researcher’s judgement as to typicality or interest. A sample is built up which enables the researcher to satisfy her specific needs in a project’ (p. 265). Furthermore, Robson (2002) points out:

The various types of sampling plan are usually divided into ones based on *probability samples* (where the probability the selection of each respondent is known), and on *nonprobability samples* (where it isn’t known). In probability sampling, statistical inferences about the population can be made from the responses of the sample. For this reason, probability sampling is sometimes referred to as *representative sampling*. The sample is taken as representative of the population (p. 261).

On the other hand, a researcher cannot make statistical inferences from non-probability samples including the purposive sampling that has been used in this study.

This subsection examined the sampling strategy that was employed by this researcher. The entire section addressed qualitative procedures. The next section discusses data analysis.

3.7 Data Analysis

This researcher collected data through questionnaires, focus group and one-to-one interviews, and by reviewing Irish policy documents written about the VTOS programme. Singleton and

Straits (2005) asserts that 'the analysis of available data takes as many forms as the data themselves. In part, the type of analysis is a function of research purposes and research design', (p. 364). In addition, Ritchie and Spencer (1994) state:

Qualitative data analysis is essentially about detection, and the tasks of defining, categorising, theorising, explaining, exploring and mapping are fundamental to the analyst's role. The methods used for qualitative analysis therefore need to facilitate such detection, and to be a form which allows certain functions to be performed. These functions may vary depending on the research question being addressed (p.176).

Functions performed in a research study include defining concepts, creating typologies, finding associations, and seeking explanations⁵.

The layout of the write-up of this study adopted a linear approach starting with the data collection, presentation of findings, analysis and discussion. Thomas (2009) state that in a study that adopts a linear approach 'the presentation of your *findings*, with little in the way of commentary, will precede the *analysis*, which will precede the *discussion*' (p. 227). However, in a more interpretative research it is not practical to keep the parts discrete. Thomas (2009) points out that this is because 'all the time you will be testing out emerging findings against your thoughts. All the time you will be validating or rejecting your findings against the body of knowledge that you already possess by virtue of your own experience and your reading' (p. 227). Theoretically the study adopted a linear approach, but in practice analysis and discussion were not kept as separate parts.

Most traditional qualitative approaches incorporate certain aspects of a general inductive approach when analysing data (Creswell, 2007 and 2009; Thomas, 2006; Thomas, 2009; Ritchie and Spencer, 1994; Robson, 2002). However, Thomas (2006) states that some researchers do that without giving a specific label to the analysis strategy.

This section explored the view that analysis of qualitative data took many forms as the data themselves. In addition, the section also discussed that the analysis of data is partly influenced by the purposes of the research and the research design. The section also defined qualitative research and explained that it is not practical to keep interpretive research linear or as discrete parts. Lastly, the section posited that most traditional qualitative research methods encompass general inductive analysis approaches. The section that follows addresses the general inductive analysis.

⁵ Defining concepts includes understanding internal structures, mapping the range, nature and dynamics of phenomena. Creating typologies includes categorising different types of attitude, behaviours, motivations, etc. Finding associations between experiences and attitudes, between attitudes and behaviours, between circumstances and motivations, etc., is another function that is performed. Another function is seeking explicit or explicit explanation, developing new ideas, theories or categories (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994).

3.8 General inductive analysis

The general inductive approach is convenient and appealing to social science researchers that have no strong leanings to natural sciences. That is because it is brief, easy to explain and non-technical. Thomas (2006) points out that 'although the general inductive approach is not as strong as some other analytic strategies for theory or model development, it does provide a simple, straightforward approach for deriving findings in the context of focused evaluation questions' (p. 237). It was on the basis of the aforementioned that this study adopted a general inductive analysis strategy. In addition, Thomas (2006) states:

The inductive approach is a systematic procedure for analysing qualitative data where the analysis is guided by specific objectives...*inductive analysis* refers to approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher (p. 238).

Inductive analysis involves collection and analysis of data leading to the emergence of a theory. On the other hand, deductive analysis involves working from a known theory to prove that what is stated in the theory is correct. Thomas (2006) states that '*deductive analysis* refers to data analyses that set out to test whether data are consistent with prior assumptions, theories, or hypotheses identified or constructed by an investigator' (p. 238). Deductive data analysis strategies are used in hypothesis testing and experimental research and they ignore emerging themes partly because the research design has no allowance for flexibility. In other words, deductive approaches employ rigid research designs, whereas the general inductive approach employs a flexible design.

This researcher developed themes and categories by repeatedly reading and studying transcripts. This process helped the researcher to interpret meanings within the texts and to develop an understanding of how they connected with meanings which emerged in the other transcripts and also with the objectives of the research. Thomas (2006) points out that one of the theoretical perspectives that underpin the use of general inductive approach is that:

Data analysis is guided by the evaluation objectives, which identify domains and topics to be investigated. The analysis is carried out through multiple readings and interpretations of the raw data, the inductive component. Although the findings are influenced by the evaluation objectives or questions outlined by the researcher, the findings arise directly from the analysis of the raw data, not from a priori expectations or models. The evaluation objectives provide a focus or domain of relevance for conducting the analysis, not a set of expectations about specific findings (p. 239).

The categories which emerged are an outcome of the coding and have five main features. The five main features include the category label, category description, text or data associated with the

category, links and the type of model in which the category is embedded⁶. Thomas (2006) identifies a number of the steps underlying the development of the general inductive analysis approach.

These are:

1. To condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format.
2. To establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data and to ensure these links are both transparent (able to be demonstrated to others) and defensible (justifiable given the objectives of the research).
3. To develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or process which are evident in the text (raw data) (p. 238).

These steps are also found in other descriptive qualitative analysis approaches. Figure 3.5 below illustrates the coding process that was used for the inductive analysis of qualitative data. The subsection that follows discusses the coding process during the general inductive analysis.

3.8.1 The Coding Process in Inductive Analysis

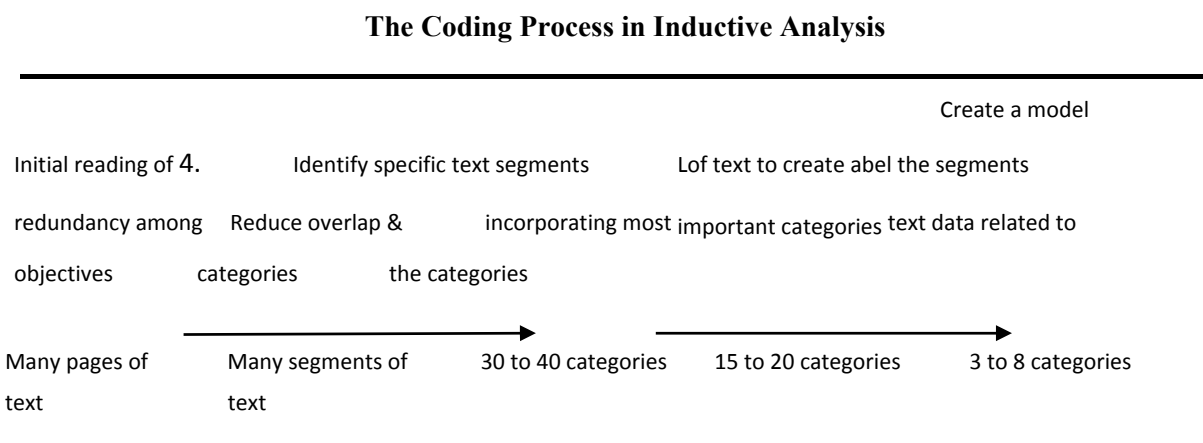


Figure 3.5 The Coding Process in Inductive Analysis

Source: Creswell (2002, p. 266)

Adapted from Thomas (2006, p. 242)

The transcripts were read and studied repeatedly, and then a coding frame was developed as illustrated in Figure 3.5 above. If new codes emerged, the coding frame was changed and the

⁶ Label for category refers to a word or short phrase used to refer to category. Description of category refers to description of the meaning of category including key characteristics, scope and limitations. Text and data associated with category refers to examples of text coded into category that illustrates meanings, associations and perspectives associated with the category. Links – each category may have links or relationships with other categories. Type of model in which category is embedded – the category system may be incorporated in a model, theory or framework (Thomas, 2009).

transcripts reread and reworked according to the new coding frame. This approach was used to develop categories, which were then conceptualised into broad themes. In order for themes (categories) to emerge, reading and studying of transcripts was done in a rigorous and systematic manner. A diagrammatical illustration of emerging themes and categories was developed as a way of enhancing understanding. Similarities and differences across subgroups were identified. This researcher explored similarities and differences in data collected from teachers and students, teachers and the Co-ordinator, students and the Co-ordinator, individual teachers, and individual students.

This subsection discussed the coding process employed during the general inductive analysis.

The subsection that follows compares different descriptive data analysis approaches.

3.8.2 Comparing qualitative data analysis approaches

The general inductive data analysis has some similarities with other descriptive qualitative data analysis approaches. Table 3.2 shows a comparison of the general inductive analysis with other qualitative analysis approaches.

	General inductive approach	Grounded theory	Discourse analysis	Phenomenology
Analytic strategies and questions	What are the core meanings evident in the text, relevant to evaluation or research objectives?	To generate or discover theory using open and axial coding and theoretical sampling	Concerned with talk and texts as social practices and their rhetorical or argumentative organisation	Seeks to uncover the meaning that lives within experience and to convey felt understanding in words
Outcome of analysis	Themes or categories most relevant to research objectives identified	A theory that includes themes or categories	Multiple meanings of language and text identified and described	A description of lived experiences
Presentation of findings	Description of most important themes	Description of theory that includes core themes	Descriptive account of multiple meanings in text	A coherent story or narrative about the experience

Table 3.2: Comparisons of qualitative data analysis approaches

Adapted from Thomas (2006, p. 241)

The general inductive approach has similarities with grounded theory as indicated in Table 3.2.

However, the difference between the two is that the general inductive approach does not explicitly

break up the process of coding into distinct stages of open and axial coding. The general inductive approach builds its theory by limiting itself only to the presentation and description of the most important emerging themes or categories. Discourse analysis provides a detailed explanation of the standpoint and rhetoric that manifests itself in the wording of text. Phenomenology is qualitative approach that seeks to understand the meaning-making of people with a shared experience, for example, marginalisation, and the research conveys that experience in words.

This subsection discussed similarities and differences among descriptive qualitative data analysis approaches. The subsection that follows addresses the development of the framework.

3.8.3 Developing the 'Framework' as an analytic tool

When carrying out inductive analysis, categories are developed into a framework or model, which is a summary derived from raw data. It does this by identifying emerging themes and processes.

Ritchie and Spencer (1994) point out:

‘Framework’ is an analytical process which involves a number of distinct though highly interconnected stages. Although the process is presented as following a particular order – indeed some stages do logically precede others – there is no implication that ‘Framework’ is a purely mechanical process, a foolproof recipe with a guaranteed outcome (p. 177).

‘Framework’ facilitates the development of the aims and outputs of detection in qualitative research and the tasks of defining, categorising, theorising, explaining, exploring and mapping.

The general inductive analysis is also known as the ‘Framework’ and is a systematic and rigorous process. Ritchie and Spencer (1994) state that although ‘Framework’ or general inductive approach is rigorous, ‘systematic and disciplined, it relies on the creativity and conceptual ability of the analyst to determine meaning, salience and connections’ (p. 177). This researcher used his discretion to determine which data is important or qualifies to be analysed. As a result, it is possible for different researchers to produce different findings from similar data.

The general inductive approach improves validity of findings by using a number of techniques that are also used in other types of qualitative analysis (Thomas, 2006). These include replication, comparison with findings from previous research, triangulation, feedback from participants and others with a vested interest in the study (Thomas, 2006). This researcher shared interview transcripts with the Co-ordinator and teachers who participated in the study as way of eliminating any misrepresentations but did not share emergent themes. Interview transcripts with the students were not shared because some of the students had completed their studies and left the Adult Education Centre.

The Framework or general inductive analysis is designed in such a manner that it displays qualities of strength. Ritchie and Spencer (1994) assert that the strength 'is that by following a well-defined procedure, it is possible to reconsider and rework ideas precisely because the analytical process has been documented and is therefore accessible' (p. 177). Ritchie and Spencer (1994) also state that the coding process 'involves a systematic process of sifting, charting, and sorting material according to key issues and themes' (p. 177). This researcher rigorously and systematically read through data several times depending on its complexity. He also reviewed emerging themes by following a well-defined coding process.

This section defined the general inductive data analysis, and compared it with deductive data analysis. The section also theorised that the general inductive data analysis is guided by the objectives of the study, which identifies topics to be investigated. General inductive data analysis involves multiple readings and interpretations of raw data and coding is done through multiple readings and interpretations which lead to the emergence of categories.

Furthermore, the section posited that the general inductive data analysis has some similarities with other descriptive qualitative data analysis approaches. The section also explored the development of the 'Framework'. The section that follows examines the content analysis.

3.9 Content analysis

The general inductive analysis evolved from Miles and Huberman's (1994) content analysis, but Thomas (2006) asserts that the new version is more detailed. Thomas (2006) states that 'although the general inductive approach is consistent with Miles and Huberman's analytic framework, it differs in providing a more detailed set of procedures for analyzing and reporting qualitative data (data reduction and display) than is provided in their description' (p. 239). The procedure is more detailed because it clarifies 'the data reduction process by describing a set of procedures for creating meaning in complex data through the development of summary themes or categories from the raw data' (Thomas, 2006, p. 239). These procedures are evident in several descriptive qualitative data analyses including grounded theory, discourse analysis and phenomenology. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that '*data reduction* refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions' (p. 10). Data reduction occurs throughout the lifecycle of a qualitative research project.

Data overload and retrieval are some of the dilemmas that researchers may encounter during the data collection and the data analysis stage of the study. Data overload is when a researcher is overwhelmed by the large amount of collected data. The dilemma of data retrieval happens owing

to a researcher's failure to identify or tag key data within the mountains of data that would have been collected. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that 'within the mass of data, you may not know – or may not have tagged – the pieces that matter the most for the purposes of your study' (p. 56) and may be left out during the analysis process. The dilemma of data retrieval is embedded in the dilemma of data overload.

The dilemmas of data overload and data retrieval could have been avoided if this researcher could have started data condensation and analysis in the early stages of data collection. However, in the case of this study all seven one-to-one and focus group interviews were done in one day. The congested interview programme did not allow each interview session to be immediately followed by data condensation and analysis. As a result, this researcher had a huge volume of data that was collected in one day. The approach where data collection is accompanied by corresponding condensation and analysis involves coding and iterative reflection and in this instance it was not possible.

Data analysis consists of three activities that simultaneously take place during and after data collection. Miles and Huberman (1994) assert that 'the three streams – data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verifying are interwoven before, during and after data collection in parallel form, to make up the domain called "analysis" (pp. 11 – 12). Reduction of data is important because human beings can easily process small chunks of information.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), 'humans are not powerful as processors of large amounts of information; our cognitive tendency is to reduce complex information into selective and simplified gestalts or easily understood configurations' (p. 11). This researcher started with data collection, and reduced the volume of data during data reduction. In the process of data reduction, data can sometimes be filtered, distilled, paraphrased and summarised without the researcher being consciously aware reduction is happening (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The data that was left out after data reduction was not discarded because of the need to revisit it at a later stage during the research process.

Mobile phone, computer and television screens, and printouts are some form of information displays that are common in everyday life. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), 'generically, a display is an organised, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action' (p. 11). In this study, this researcher used charts, tables and figures to display information.

From the onset of data collection, this researcher ascribed meanings, explanations, patterns, configurations, frequency of emerging themes to data. Although these ideas were taken lightly in the early stages of data collection, they were revisited as the research progressed resulted in some of them being discarded and others being taken more seriously. This researcher maintained both

openness and scepticism, which resulted in some of the initial conclusions being discarded while some increasingly became explicit and grounded. In other words, conclusions were constantly being verified. Miles and Huberman (1994) assert that ‘the meaning emerging from the data have to be *tested* for their plausibility, their sturdiness, their “confirmability” – that is, their validity’ (p. 11). This researcher did not draw the final conclusions until the research process was completed. Figure 3.6 illustrates the interaction of data collection, data reduction, and data display and conclusion drawing/verification during the lifecycle of the research process.

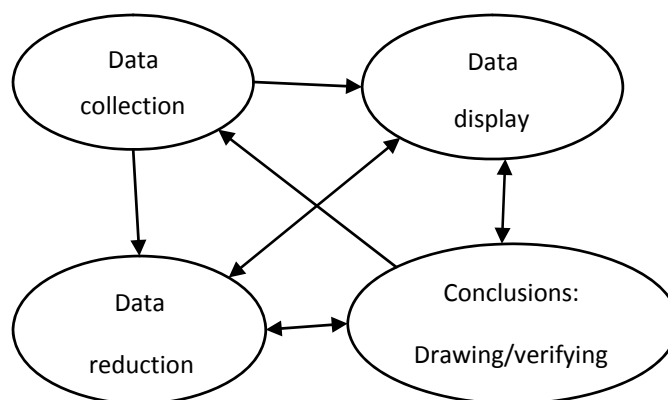


Figure 3.6: Components of data analysis: Interactive model

Adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 12)

This subsection discussed that Thomas’ (2006) general inductive analysis evolved from Miles and Huberman’s (1994) content analysis. The content analysis is designed to help tackle the dilemmas of data overload and data retrieval.

As already discussed in section 3.7 above, data analysis involves coding. The two stages of coding are open (initial) coding and axial (focused) coding. The subsection that follows discusses open coding.

3.9.1 Open coding

The coding of data during data reduction generates ideas about what should go into the matrix of data display. Analyse of data collected during the interviews led to the emergence of common

themes. Axial coding allowed the clustering of theoretically linked themes into categories and sub-categories. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that:

Coding is analysis. To review a set of field notes, transcribed or synthesised, and to dissect them meaningfully, while keeping the relations between the parts intact, is the stuff of analysis. This part of analysis involves how you differentiate and combine the data you have retrieved and the reflections you make about this information (p. 56).

Coding is an exercise in which a qualitative analyst organises raw data into conceptual categories. Each code is effectively a category or 'bin' into which a piece of data is placed. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), '*codes* are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are usually attached to 'chunks' of varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting' (p. 56). A code can be in a simple format such as a category label or can be more complex, for instance, in the form of a metaphor.

Open coding involves carefully reading data so that statements including words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs relating to the secondary and primary research questions are identified and assigned a code or category. During axial coding, the qualitative analyst rereads the qualitative data, and searches for words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs that might fit into any of the categories established during the first stage of coding. If need arises, further codes that were not identified in the first stage are established.

Miles and Huberman (1994) state that a fairly standard set of analytic activities arranged in a general order of sequence are as follows:

- Data are collected and made into text (e.g., field notes, transcripts, etc.).
- Codes are analytically developed or inductively identified in the data and affixed to sets of notes or transcript pages.
- Codes are transformed into categorical labels or themes.
- Materials are sorted by these categories, identifying similar phrases, patterns, relationships, and commonalities or disparities.
- Sorted materials are examined to isolate meaningful patterns and processes
- Identified patterns are considered in light of previous research and theories, and a small set of generalisations are established (p. 240).

During the open coding stage, this researcher analysed the data to identify statements that fitted into codes/themes that were related to the secondary and primary research questions. Strands

were established from the identified themes. The initial coding was followed by axial coding, which is discussed in the subsection that follows.

3.9.2 Axial coding

This researcher reread interview transcripts to search for statements that might fit into any of the categories established during the first stage of open coding. Axial coding uses or identifies the most frequent or significant codes from the interview transcripts. The Table 3.3 shows how the sub-categories and the category emerged.

Initial Coding	Axial Coding – Sub-categories	Category
Being tense and naïve. Struggle and lack confidence. You need to go through it first. 2/3 of students need mentoring	<i>Anxiety</i>	<i>Real Self</i>
Some students have the potential. Taking responsibility for their own actions.	<i>Demotivation</i>	
Leadership approach is client-centred. Empowerment through leadership. Good Adult Education Guidance Service. Striking a balance between product and process. Striking a balance between academic and practical subjects.	<i>Humanistic</i>	
Good repertoire sponsors and potential employers.	<i>Good public relations</i>	
Gaining confidence. Empowerment. Assign students to do tasks. Gain confidence from guidance by leaders. Imparting transferrable skills to peers. Transforming talents into skills.	<i>Change</i>	

Lack of funding. Lack of supports. Cutbacks. Non-availability of the majority of staff. Sharing of facilities with other programmes.	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Transforming self</i>
Enjoy the journey/process. Easing of pressure on students. Going on fieldtrips	<i>Enjoyment</i>	

Table 3.3: Axial coding

This phase of coding involved testing findings against reviewed literature, experiential knowledge and the thoughts of this researcher. The research process involved shuttling back and forth between written transcripts, listening to audio-taped interviews, notes entered on journals and sometimes emailing and phoning research participants for clarifications. Therefore, in practice the research process was not linear and straightforward. This researcher validated his findings on the basis of the body knowledge that he already had or that he had gained through reading reviewed literature.

This subsection discussed axial coding, and the former progressed to theoretical coding. At the theoretical coding stage, sub-categories were interwoven into three main categories. The subsection that follows examines theoretical coding.

3.9.3 Theoretical coding

During the theoretical coding stage, sub-categories were interwoven, which gave rise to three major categories. These were the Real Self, Transforming Self and Ideal Self. This researcher is of the opinion that these categories capture the identities that research participants identified with during the data collection stage of the study. The Real Self describes research participants' understanding of who they are or where they were at the time of the study. The Transforming Self describes the transition from the Real Self to the Ideal Self. The transition is most effective and sustainable when students understand the process of change and the steps they have to go through (Grant, 2011; Norcross *et al.*, 2011). The Ideal Self describes what the students aspire to be or who they want to be or where they want to be.

Other themes that came out strongly during the interviews included striking a balance between 'product and process', and 'academic and practical subjects', and 'core and non-core subjects'.

Table 3.4 illustrates how sub-categories were interwoven into three main categories of the Real Self, Transforming Self and Ideal Self.

Core concepts	Real Self	Transforming Self	Ideal Self
Axial coding	<p>Anxiety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feeling tense and timid ➤ Struggling and lack of confidence ➤ Need for guidance and training ➤ Need for mentoring <p>Demotivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Non-participatory ➤ Failure to take responsibility <p>Client-centred approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong relationships ➤ psycho-political empowerment ➤ Professional and emotional support ➤ Balancing qualifications and process ➤ Balancing academic and practical <p>Good public relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Good repertoire with key stakeholders 	<p>Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Gain confidence in the second year ➤ Delegation of duty ➤ Revised self-concept ➤ Coaching, mentoring & training ➤ Inactive to active state <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Funding ➤ Supports ➤ Rooms ➤ Staff <p>Enjoyment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Incorporation of noncore subjects ➤ Visiting places of interest ➤ Two-year programme 	<p>Confidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Interpersonal & intrapersonal ➤ Academic ➤ Career <p>Guidance and Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Counselling ➤ Coaching, mentoring or training <p>Active participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Key stakeholders ➤ Immediate community <p>Enabling environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Internal ➤ External <p>Motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Intrinsic ➤ Extrinsic <p>Revised paradigms and self concept</p>

Table 3.4: Theoretical coding

The core concepts of Real Self, Transforming Self and Ideal Self shown in Table 3.4 above are discussed in detail in Chapter 5, which analyses and discusses findings. This section examined theoretical coding. The section that follows explores data collection during fieldwork.

3.10 Data Collection

The core purpose of this section is to outline the collection of data during the fieldwork phase of the research process. The section will do this by explaining the diverse methods used in collecting primary and secondary data during the fieldwork phase of the research study. Primary data collection involved completion of questionnaires, focus group interviews and one-to-one interviews. Secondary data collection included a review of a wide range of key Irish policy documents written about the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS).

The focus of data collection in this embedded single-case study was to investigate whether the VTOS Adult Education Centre located in Ireland uses sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership approaches within its structures. That required multiple methods of primary and secondary data collection including filling out of questionnaires, focus group interviews, and one-to-one interviews and a review of a diverse range of vital Irish policy documents written about VTOS. This researcher set a timeline for the fieldwork, but it was not adhered to due to challenges encountered in obtaining access to a research site.

Four teachers and eighty students were recruited to complete questionnaires that elicited quantitative and qualitative answers. The section that follows discusses presentation of data from questionnaires that were completed by students.

3.11 Presentation of data from questionnaires filled out by students

Both Stage 1 Questionnaire for Students (Appendix D) and Stage 1 Questionnaire for Teachers/Tutors (Appendix C) included Likert-type scales, closed items and a few open-ended items. This section presents quantitative findings based on the questionnaires that were completed by students. The section also presents findings from open-ended items that were incorporated on the questionnaires completed by students.

Out of 80 students, 35 completed the questionnaires, and 28 of them were females and 6 were males. One respondent never filled out that section of the questionnaire that prompted the research participants to indicate sex. Twenty-four (24) respondents were first years, 9 were second years and 2 were third years. The subsection that follows explores the age group distribution of respondents.

3.11.1 Respondents' age group distribution

This researcher took into consideration that a question that asked for the age group of research participants was likely not to infringe on their privacy compared to the one that asked for a specific age. Generally, people are more comfortable to say they are in their 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's, *et cetera*. However, one research participant did not specify her/his age group. The information sheet advised research participants to skip certain questions that they felt not comfortable to answer. However, it was not clear if the participant was comfortable with the question or simply forgot to answer it.

The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) catered for students who were out of employment and needed to be re-skilled or up-skilled in order to return to work or they needed to acquire new skills in order to enter the labour market for the first time. The summary of quantitative results is illustrated in the bar chart in Figure 3.7 below.

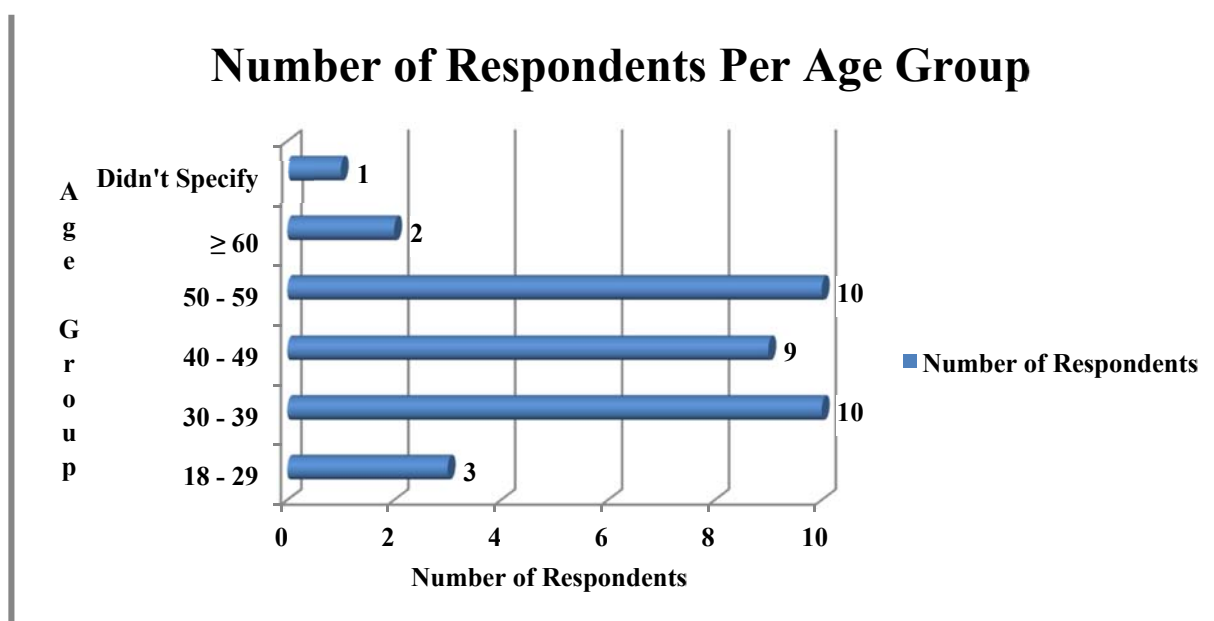


Figure 3.7: Number of Respondents per Age Group

The above bar chart reflected that there were few respondents who were in the age group of 18 – 29 years, that is, 3 out of 35 (9%) are in that age group. The VTOS programme enrolled students who were aged 21 years or more. Ideally, the age group of 21 – 29 years could have been substituted for 18 – 29 years when the study shifted from Adult Literacy and Basic Education Service to VTOS, but that was overlooked when questions were modified to be in line with the new research site.

Based on 35 respondents that responded to the questionnaires, there were 2 respondents (6%) that are in the ≥ 60 age group. The most likely reason why there were fewer people that were 60 years or more was because policy makers appeared to be of the view that there is no need to acquire job skills when one was very close to the retirement age or after retirement. VTOS courses are considered to be a labour activation measure. The Co. Wexford Vocational Educational Committee states on its website that:

In 1993, VTOS set up in Bellefield Enniscorthy. It is situated in the G.A.A. Complex. It is a further education course especially for adults between the ages of 21 and 60. It is especially suited for people who have had a negative experience of education through no fault of their own.

It therefore meant that over 60s were officially not supposed to enrol in VTOS courses.

However, most websites do not say anything about the age limit.

This subsection explored the age group distribution of respondents. The subsection that follows examines the distribution of students doing specific courses.

3.11.2 Distribution of students doing specific courses

Research participants were asked to indicate the course that they were enrolled in at the time of the study and the level of that course. The pie chart in Figure 3.8 below is a summary of the distribution of students doing specific courses at the Adult Education Centre in Ireland.

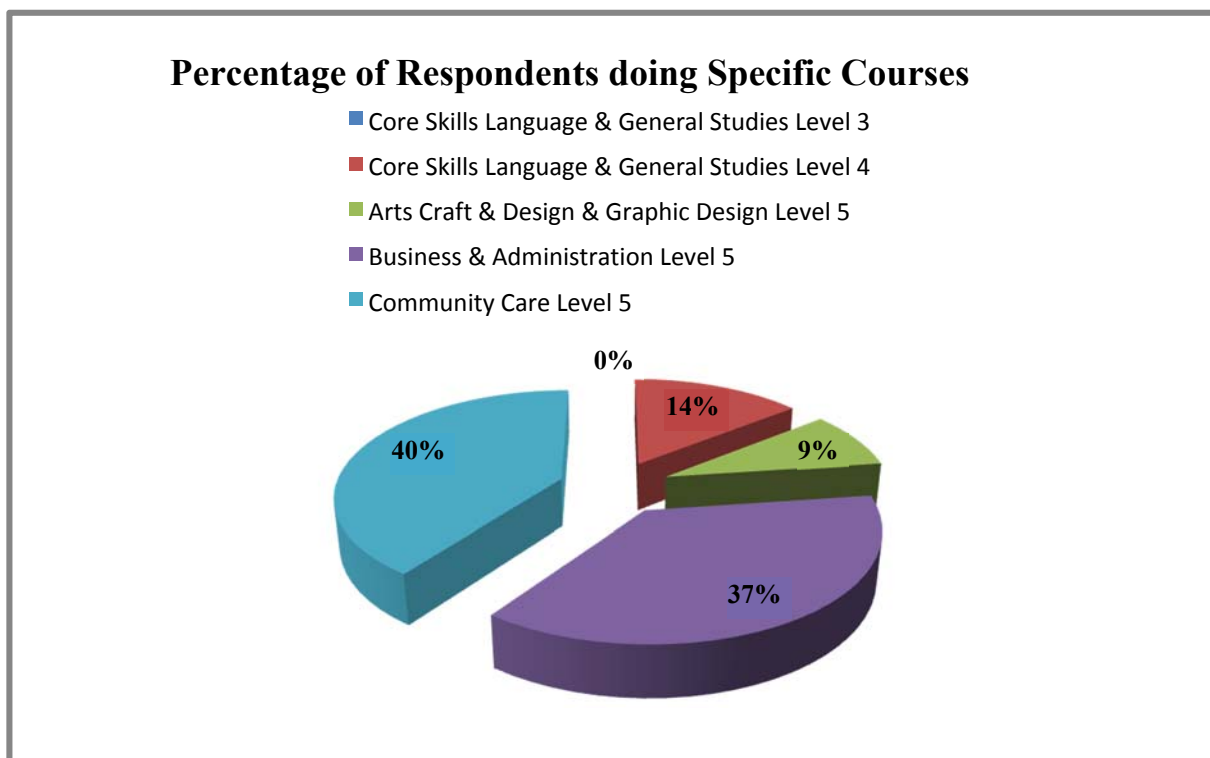


Figure 3.8: Percentage of Respondents doing Specific Courses

On the one hand, Community Care Level 5 at 40%, and Business and Administration Level 5 at 37%, had the highest number of respondents who filled out the questionnaires. On the other hand, Core Skills Language and General Studies Level 4 at 14%, Arts Craft and Design and Graphic Design Level 5 at 9%, had the lowest number of respondents.

9 students were enrolled in the Core Skills Language and General Studies Levels 3 and 4 courses, and five of them completed the questionnaires, which was a return rate of 56%. Conversely, 21 students were doing the Arts Craft and Design and Graphic Design Level 5, and 3 filled out the questionnaires, a return rate of 14%. The majority of the students who chose to take part in focus group interviews were supervised by teachers who participated in one-to-one interviews. This was evident because research participants filled out a Voluntary Consent form in which they entered their names and the specific classes that they were enrolled in.

The VTOS courses at an Adult Education Centre in Ireland are offered as a full-time two-year programme to unemployed adults aged 21 years or more. In contrast, some of the same courses are offered over a one-year period by colleges of further education. The qualifying criterion to enrol on VTOS courses was on the basis of being in receipt of a social welfare payment. Priority, however, was given to those who have been in Long-Term Unemployment (LTU) and to those with lower level of education.

The age restriction poses some constraints on potential participants in VTOS programmes.

Powell *et al.* (2003) argue that 'specific age requirements limit a definition's usefulness. Instead of an adult being defined by age, any person participating in post-compulsory education could instead be considered an adult learner' (p. 39). Powell *et al.* (2003) propose a flexible and broad definition of that captures the parameters of the adult education 'concept in a way meaningful to people in very different settings' (p. 39) and which could be applicable in all European countries.

This subsection examined the distribution of students doing specific courses. The subsection that follows investigates how respondents rate their literacy tasks.

3.11.3 Rating literacy tasks

Research participants were asked to rate literacy (Department of Education and Science, 1997, 1998 and 2000; DES, 2010; Hargreaves, 2003; Kirsch, 2001; NALA, 2007; The Teaching Council, 2014) tasks by ticking relevant numbered boxes on a Likert-type scale, with 1 being incompetent and 5 being very competent. The literacy tasks that research participants were asked about included more than the famous traditional literacy skills of reading and writing. They also included numeracy and computer literacy.

The majority of respondents claimed to operate at a high level of the literacy scale. They mainly ticked boxes 4 to 5, with 5 being rated as very competent. The bar chart in Figure 3.9 summarises the findings on performance level of students on various literacy tasks.

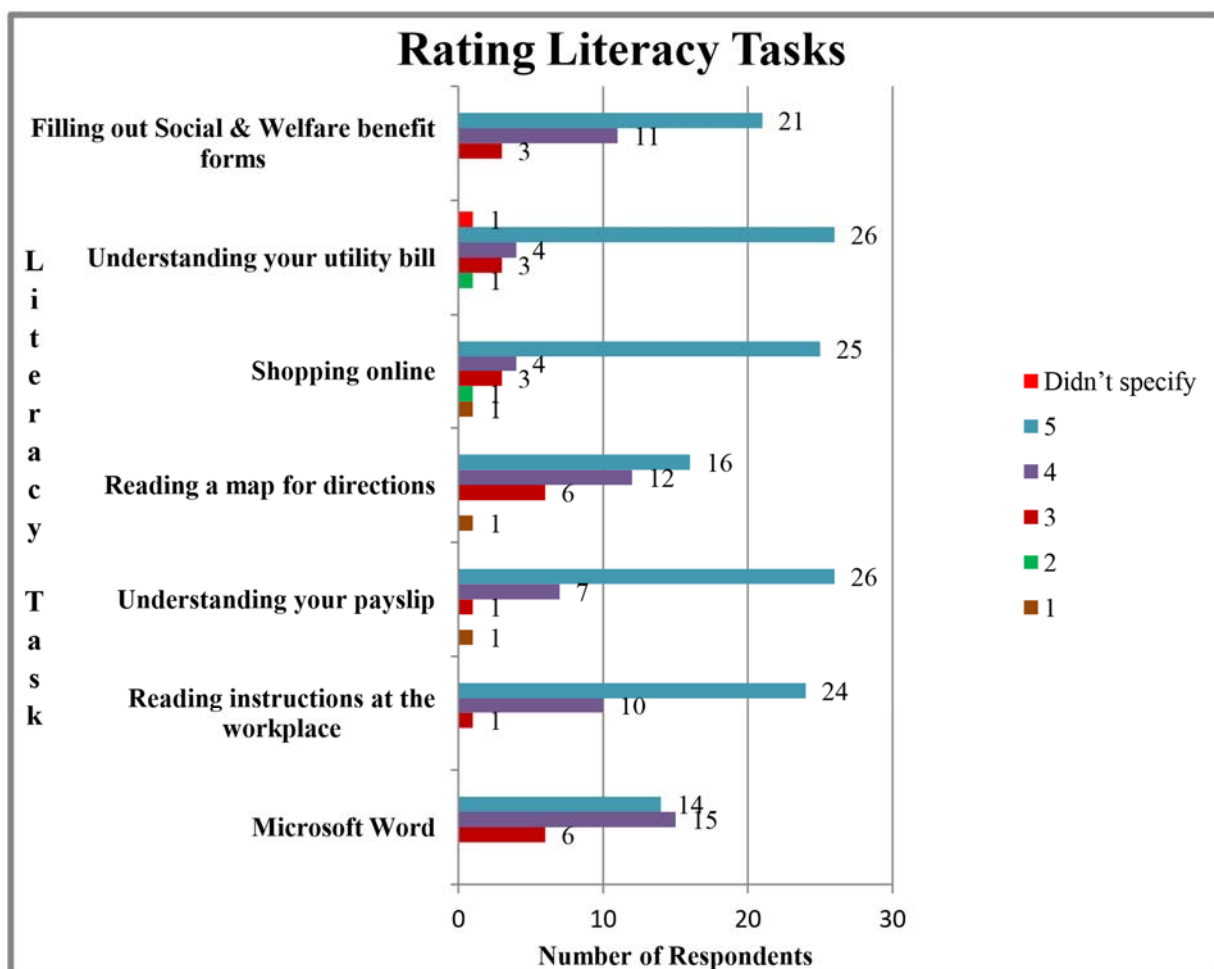


Figure 3.9: Rating Literacy Tasks

Respondents were asked to rate their competences in filling out Social Welfare & Benefit forms, 1 being incompetent and 5 being very competent. The majority, 21 out of 35 rated themselves to be in category 5. The seconded highest number (11) rated themselves to be in category 4. When asked about their literacy levels on understanding their Utility Bills, 26 and 4 ticked categories 5 and 4 respectively.

Respondents were interviewed about their ability to shop online, 25 and 4 respectively ticked categories 5 and 4. When they were asked about their proficiency in reading maps for directions, 16 and 12 respectively entered categories 5 and 4. 26 and 7 respectively chose categories 5 and 4. When asked about reading instructions at the workplace 24 and 10 respectively rated themselves to be in categories 5 and 4. 14 and 15 stated that they were respectively in categories 5 and 4 on computer literacy in using Microsoft Word.

This subsection investigated how respondents rated their literacy tasks. The subsection that follows examines the respondents' main sources of news about what is happening in their surroundings.

3.11.4 Main sources of news about what is happening

As a corroboration strategy to the question that rated literacy tasks, research participants were asked to list three main sources of news that inform them about what was happening in their surroundings. Figure 3.10 below illustrates what they said.

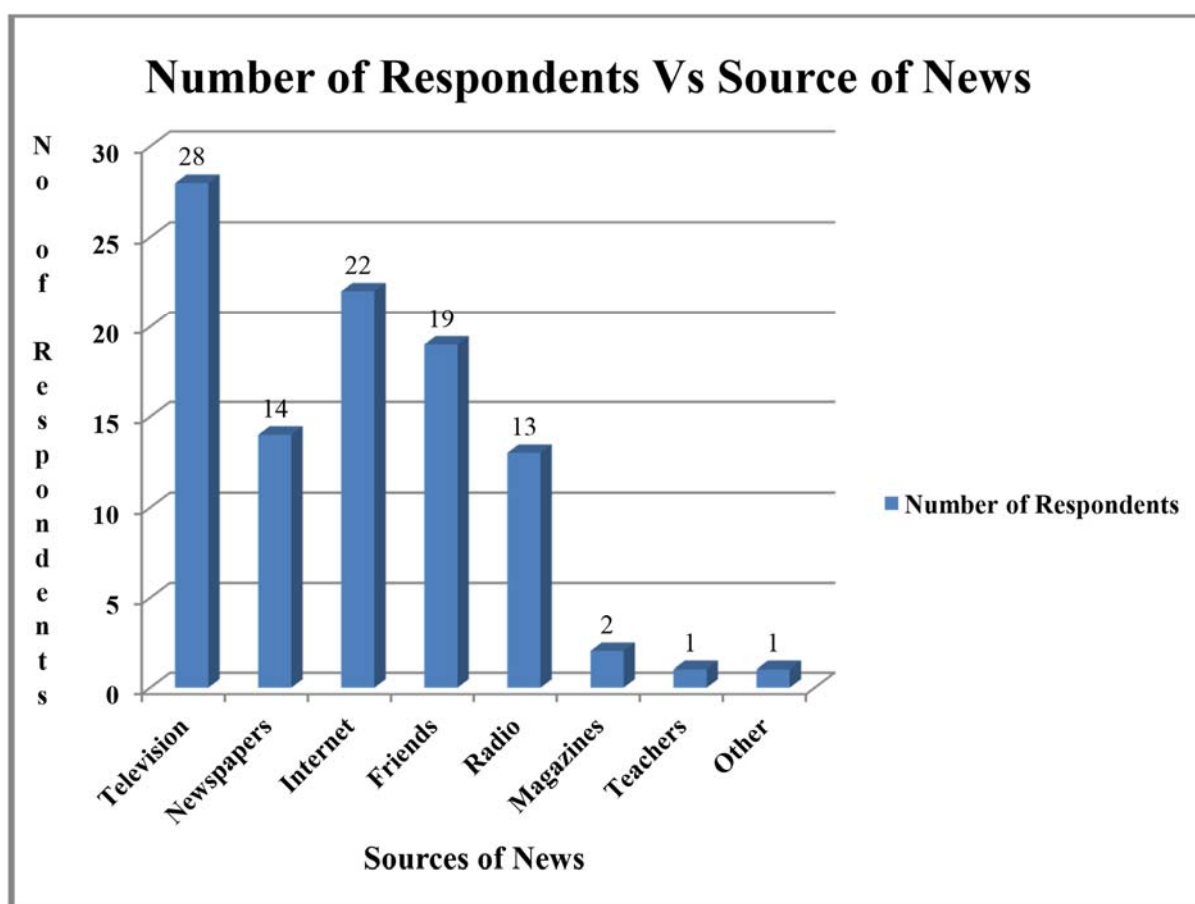


Figure 3.10: Respondents versus Sources of News

The column chart in Figure 3.10 above reflects that 28 respondents rely on television, 22 on the Internet, 19 rely on friends, 14 on newspapers and 13 rely on radio as main sources of news about what is happening in their surroundings. 2 respondents rely on magazines and 1 relies on teachers as main sources of news. One respondent depended on the 'Other' for news, which when further prompted to specify, it was stated as the 'workplace'.

This subsection examined the respondents' main sources of news about what was happening in their surroundings. The subsection that follows investigates how respondents rate personal development and study skills.

3.11.5 Rating personal development and study skills

There is evidence that numeracy and literacy enhances participation in social, economic, political, and cultural and health aspects of life (Department of Education and Science, 1997, 1998 and 2000; Department of Education and Skills, 2010; Naidoo, 2005; Powell *et al.*, 2003; Starratt, 2001; Walters, 2008). Department of Education and Science (1997) states that 'involvement in literacy activity is also associated with involvement non-literacy activities including attendance at plays, films, and concerts as well as participating in community organisations' (p. x). Therefore, numeracy and literacy (Department of Education and Science, 1997, 1998 and 2000; DES, 2010; Hargreaves, 2003; Kirsch, 2001; NALA, 2007; The Teaching Council, 2014) boosts self-confidence and self-esteem to participate in other activities that are not related to numeracy and literacy. Research participants were asked to rank the four skills of numeracy, reading, writing and interpersonal skills on a scale 1 to 4, 1 being the least important to them and 4 being most important. They were directed to use each numerical value once, that is, rate the skills in an order in which they were important to them. The column chart in Figure 3.11 illustrates how respondents rate personal development and study skills.

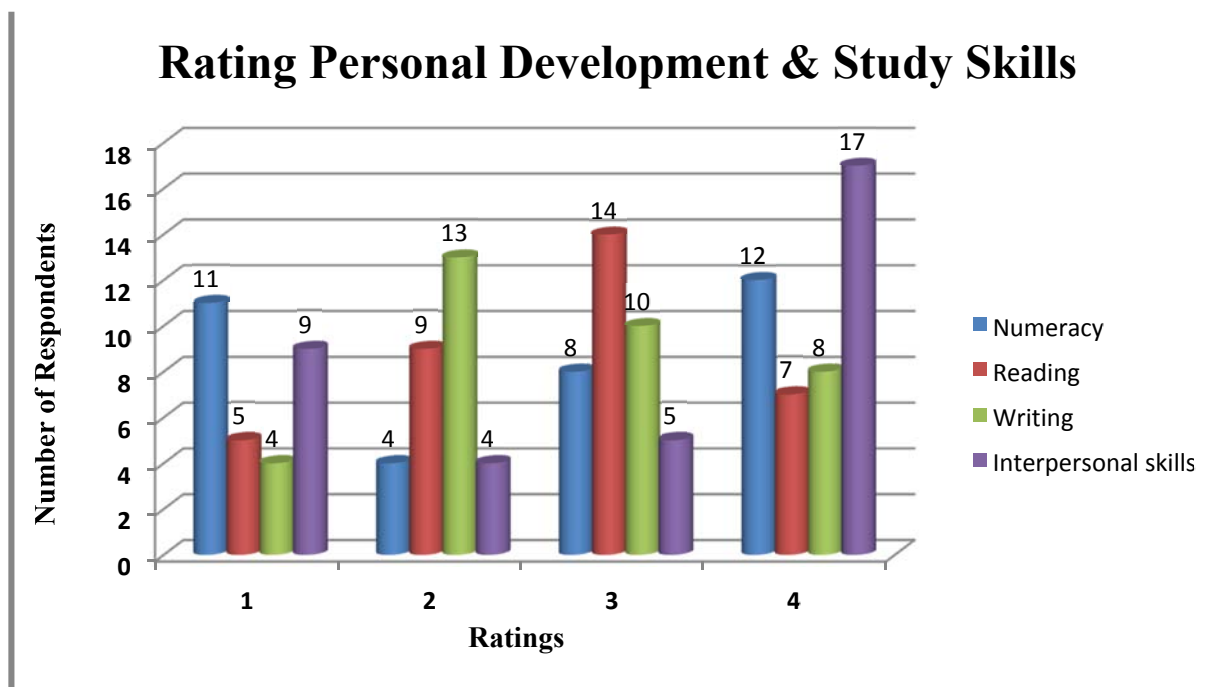


Figure 3.11: Rating Personal Development and Study Skills

The column chart above shows that in the 4th category (most important), the numbers of respondents who entered a score of 4 in specific skills were: interpersonal skills (17), numeracy (12), writing (8) and reading (7). In the 3rd category (more important), the numbers of respondents who chose a score of 3 were: reading (14), writing (10), numeracy (8) and interpersonal skills (5). In the 2nd category (important), the numbers of respondents who entered a score of 2 were: writing (13), reading (9), numeracy (4) and interpersonal skills (4). Finally, in the 1st category (least important), the numbers of respondents who chose a score of 1 were: numeracy (11), interpersonal skills (9), reading (5) and writing (4).

This subsection investigated how respondents rate personal development and study skills. The subsection that follows explores how respondents rate the amount and quality support that they get from their staff members and peers.

3.11.6 Rating amount and quality of support

Research participants were asked to rate the amount and quality of support that they got from peers, administration and teaching staff. The column chart in Figure 3.12 below is a summary of their responses.

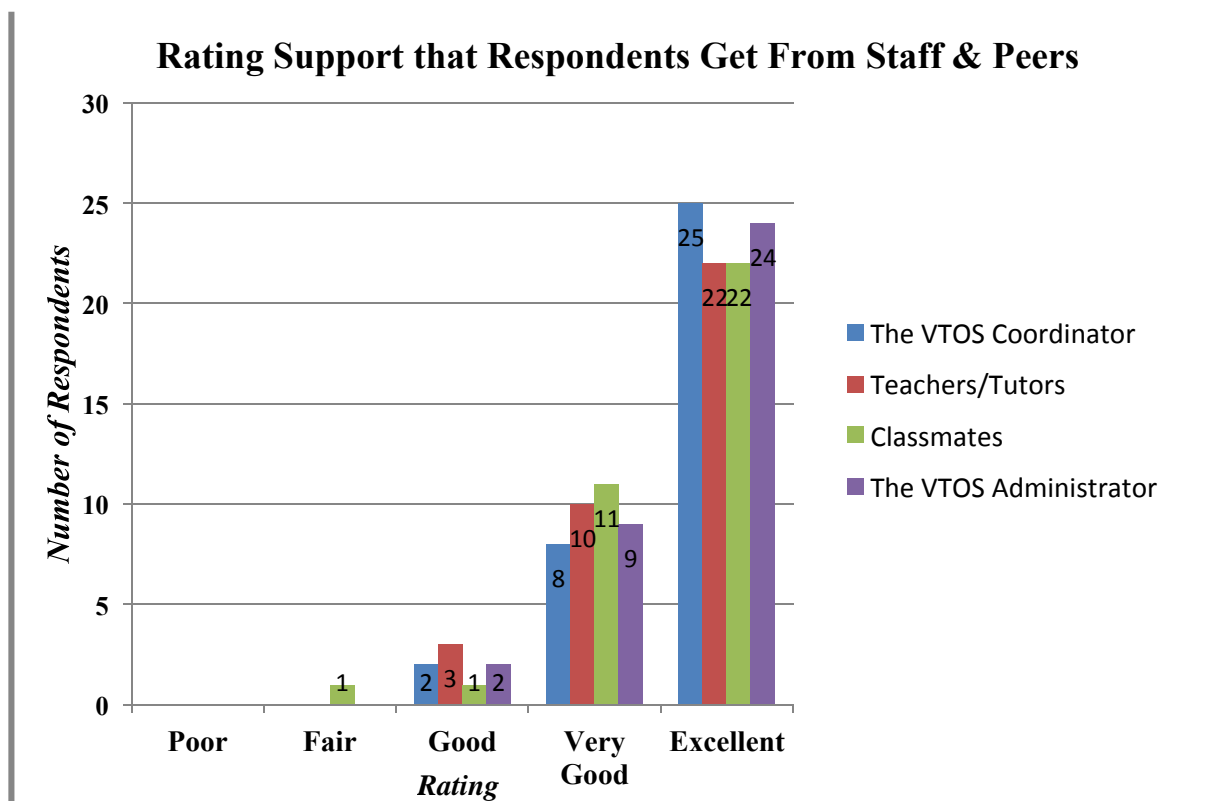


Figure 3.12: Rating Support that Respondents Get from Staff and Peers

Respondents rated highly the support that they got from peers, administration and teaching staff. Eight (8) respondents delivered a ‘Very Good’ rating for the Co-ordinator, 9 for the Administrator, 10 for teachers and 11 for classmates. Twenty-two (22) respondents rated as ‘Excellent’ the support that they got from teachers, 22 did the same for classmates, 24 for the Administrator and 25 for the Co-ordinator.

This subsection explored how respondents rated the amount and quality of support that they got from their staff members and peers. The subsection below investigates whether the VTOS programme meets the objectives of respondents or not.

3.11.7 Rating to establish if the VTOS meets objectives of respondents

Research participants were interviewed to establish if the VTOS programme was helping them to meet the objectives that motivated them to enrol on the course that they were doing.

They were given options to tick boxes with inscriptions, ‘Strongly disagree, Disagree,

Unsure, and Agree and Strongly agree’. The responses that were given by respondents are illustrated in a pie chart in Figure 3.13 below.

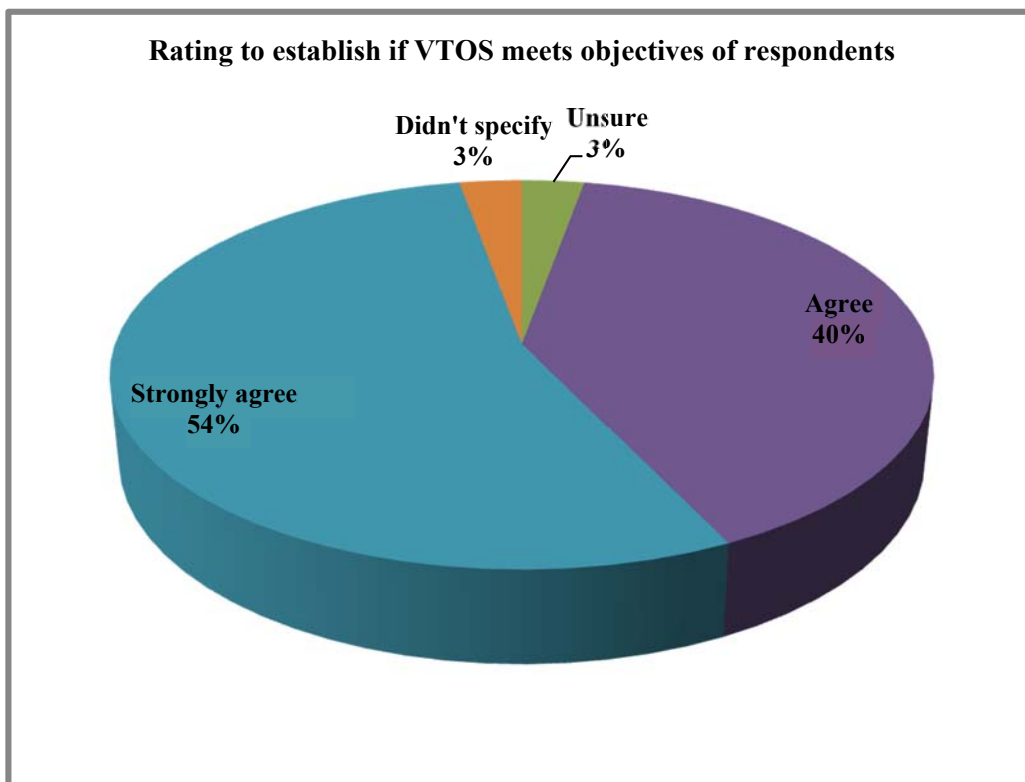


Figure 3.13: Rating to establish if VTOS meets objectives of respondents

Figure 3.13 above shows that 54% of the respondents strongly agreed and 40% agreed that the VTOS programme was meeting their objectives. Therefore, at least 94% of the respondents agreed that their expectations were being met.

This subsection investigated whether the VTOS programme met the objectives of respondents or not. The subsection that follows examines the factors that influenced respondents to enrol on the VTOS programme.

3.11.8 Factors that influenced respondents to enrol on the VTOS programme

In order to elicit information about what influenced research participants to enrol in the VTOS programme, an open ended question was asked. The question was, 'What made you to decide to enrol for a VTOS course?' The following were the *common themes* that emerged from the responses of respondents: Vocational and professional (up-skill, re-skill and new skills), Affective and social (intrapersonal and interpersonal) and further education and communication (VTOS, Post Leaving Cert & third level courses).

The majority of the respondents, twenty-three out of thirty-five (66%) primarily cited that they enrolled in the courses in order to up-skill, re-skill or to gain new skills. Below are some of their responses:

1st Response: 'I want to get new skills and try out another job, pursuing a different path than the one I had'.

2nd Response: 'I took voluntary redundancy from my job in 2012 and wanted to up-skill especially in the area of computers and office administration. I looked at courses and VTOS suited my requirements'.

3rd Response: 'I enrolled in this VTOS course in order to up-skill and in turn widen my prospects in job opportunities and also because I love working with computers'.

4th Response: 'Interested in re-skilling and studying Social Care. I would love to work in any capacity within any section of Community Care'.

5th Response: 'I took redundancy and realised my skills especially in computers were obsolete. It also extended my payments for a further year. I have learned so many new skills in this course, which will greatly improve my chances of employment compared to when I left my job 2 years ago'.

Secondly, five respondents (14.29%) stated that they decided to enrol in the VTOS programme because they wanted to enhance their affective and social dimensions (Department of Social Protection, 2010). The following are some of the responses from respondents in that category:

1st Response: 'To get more knowledge and to interact with people and socialise'.

2nd Response: 'I wanted to have something to do with my day. I was unemployed and wasn't occupied so when a person who went to school here told me about enrolling in a course myself, I was happy to apply and to be accepted was great for me'.

3rd Response: 'I decided to enrol for a VTOS course because I wanted to increase my knowledge. It makes me more confident'.

Lastly, seven respondents (20%) said they were primarily motivated to enrol in the VTOS programme in order to further their education since they had a low level of education. This was because for various reasons that made them to leave school or the education system early. Some of the respondents spoke English as a second language and their proficiency is low. Therefore, they wanted to improve their communication or proficiency in spoken and written English language. Communication in the English language increases the chances of getting employed or re-employed. The following are some of the responses from respondents that fall in that category:

1st Response: 'I left school at an early age and I wanted to update my skills and education. It's a great way to learn subjects again and the teachers are more helpful'.

2nd Response: 'I wanted to further my education because I had taken 4 years out to raise my family. When I finished school, I walked straight into a job, so didn't complete third level'.

3rd Response: 'I enrolled to continue the education, which I felt I had lost out in due to marrying early and bringing up four children'.

In summary, the three main emerging themes that inspired respondents to enrol in VTOS courses were re-skilling, up-skilling and acquisition of new skills; personal development and personal satisfaction; and return back to education after having left school or the education system early. These themes and subthemes were investigated in detail during focus group interviews.

This subsection examined the factors that influenced respondents to enrol on specific courses on the VTOS programme. The entire section presented data based on questionnaires completed by students. This study employed sequential data collection and quantitative data was collected first. The quantitative data informed the second stage of qualitative data elicitation. Focus group and one-to-one interview questions were reformulated based on the findings of the quantitative data (Creswell, 2007 and 2009, Robson, 2002; Thomas, 2009). The section that follows addresses presentation of data based on questionnaires filled out by teachers.

3.12 Presentation of data from questionnaires filled out by teachers

This section presents quantitative data informed by questionnaires completed by teachers. The subsection also presents qualitative data from open-ended items that were incorporated in the questionnaires that were completed by teachers.

During the drafting stage of questionnaires, this researcher was not sure whether to refer to the staff members that supervised classes at the VTOS Adult Education as teachers or tutors. The VTOS Co-ordinator stated in an email sent to this researcher in February 2014 that in order to teach on the VTOS programme, Memo V7 or 32/92 directed that one must be a fully qualified teacher. Historically, there had been some people who taught at the Centre and who did not meet that criterion. The VTOS Co-ordinator also stated that one tutor at the time of the carrying out the study was doing a degree, but had relevant qualifications in the subject area taught.

Four teachers who taught classes that completed the questionnaires in Stage 1 were approached to participate in the study. However, three out of four all in the age group of 50 – 59 years and with more than ten years of working experience completed the questionnaires. As a result, the return/response rate was 75%, and all the respondents were female. Two of the teachers had Higher Diploma in Education qualifications and other subject specific qualifications that qualify them to teach in Irish second level educational institutions and core subjects in the VTOS programme.

Two open-ended questions were incorporated in the questionnaires. Research participants were interviewed to establish whether they applied leadership skills during the course of executing their teaching duties and if they equipped their students with leadership skills. The responses from all the three respondents were that they used leadership approaches when executing their duties and that they equipped their students with leadership skills. The two open-ended questions were numbered 9 and 11 in Stage 1 Questionnaire for Teachers or Tutors were all preceded by questions that elicited 'Yes' or 'No' answers. The open-ended questions were as follows:

9. If you use leadership skills, what type of leadership skills do you use?

11. If you do equip your students with leadership skills, how do you do that?

In response to Question 10, teachers discussed the leadership skills that they used during the course of executing their duties. Some of the responses were very short, but were transcribed verbatim as they appeared on the completed questionnaires. Below are the responses from the three teachers, Amanda, Bianca and Connie, which are not their real names.

Amanda: 'Group leadership skills'.

Bianca: 'Offer guidance, encouragement, freedom to speak in an open environment'.

Connie: 'Provide tuition and subject knowledge, followed by practical applications of material studied. Encouraging students to recognise possibilities from within their own life experiences use I.T. or legal expertise'.

The Competing Values Framework (CVF) posits that leaders in an organisation use transformational roles (mentor, facilitator, innovator and broker) and exercise a certain degree of flexibility when dealing with human relations (Belason and Frank, 2010; Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Helfrich *et al.*, 2007; Zaft *et al.* 2009; Yardley and Neal, 2007). It can be concluded that the teachers mainly use facilitator and innovative roles when supervising their students. Bianca to a certain degree uses a mentor role to offer guidance and encourage freedom of expression. During one-to-one interviews she spoke strongly about failure to implement a mentoring programme at the education institution.

When respondents were asked how they equipped their students with leadership skills, the following were their responses:

Amanda: 'Set them group tasks, leaders emerge. Sometimes nominate heads. Pick names from a hat so that all students get an opportunity to lead a task or session'. Amanda upholds the characteristics of a facilitator. A facilitator acknowledges personal needs, develops people,

practices participation and teambuilding, focuses on consensus building, manages conflict and encourages participative decision-making ((Zaft *et al.*, 2009).

Bianca: ‘Encourage adapting prior learning to current learning. Open and supportive environment – no question is ever “stupid” – encourage a voice and ideas’. This also shows that Bianca embraces the principles of a mentor. A mentor acknowledges personal needs, develops people, and is caring empathetic (Zaft *et al.*, 2009).

Connie: ‘By drawing on their prior work/social lives, students can create/submit work where software principles or legal principles may be applied to their own chosen scenarios. It makes the student the “expert” on the problem and the solution. Students are more confident when bringing solutions to bear on events within their own experience’. Connie is guided by the philosophy of an innovator. An innovator inspires, anticipates clients’ needs, initiates significant changes, new ideas, experiments, problem solves and is adaptable (Zaft *et al.*, 2009).

This section presented data based on questionnaires filled out by teachers. The following section presents data based on focus group and one-to-one interviews.

3.13 Presentation of data from focus group and one-to-one interviews

This section addresses how primary and secondary data was collected during the fieldwork stage of the research. The section also presents data from focus group and one-to-one interviews.

Twenty-three students, three teachers and the VTOS Co-ordinator participated in the more detailed qualitative stage of the research process. The profiles of research participants were summarised into a table format in Appendix V.

This subheadings that follow are a presentation of qualitative data that was collected during the focus group and one-to-one interviews. In order to facilitate a coherent and articulate outline, data collection and presentation of data (with few comments), the write-up will adopt a linear approach.

The VTOS Co-ordinator set up an interview venue in a block that was detached from the main complex. As a result, the venue was quiet and disruptions were kept to a minimal. The room was spacious and well-ventilated. It was easy to adjust sitting arrangements in a manner that suited the sizes of various focus groups.

The primary research question asked was: *How and in what ways does the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) of an Education Training Board (ETB) in Ireland transfer sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership skills to teachers/tutors in order to improve service delivery to adult learners?* The secondary research questions were as follows:

1. How is sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership in the field of adult education defined by policy-makers, the VTOS Coordinator, adult educators and learners?
2. What are the benefits and challenges that the policy-makers and adult educators encounter in their quest to transfer sustainable, transformational or distributed leadership skills?
3. What do students say about the quality of support that they receive from the Administrator, Coordinator, teachers/tutors and peers?
4. How and in what ways do teachers/tutors transfer leadership skills to adult learners?
5. Do teachers/tutors think leadership skills were embedded in the curriculum of course(s) that they did when they trained as educators?
6. How important do adult learners think the skills of numeracy, reading, writing and interpersonal skills are to their personal lives?
7. Do adult learners think the VTOS courses that they are doing are helping them to achieve their objectives?

Out of 35 respondents who completed the questionnaires, 23 indicated on the Voluntary Consent Form that they would like to take part in the qualitative phase of the interview process. This researcher initially thought that scheduling interviews when the end of year examinations and assessments had already taken place was likely to negatively affect attendance. However, students had a 100% turn out for the focus group interviews. Three teachers availed of the one-to-one interviews and one failed to participate because she had an urgent family issue to attend to. The Centre Co-ordinator also participated in an individual interview.

The students were grouped mainly in accordance with the programmes for their courses. That was because the Centre Co-ordinator felt that some of the students were not going to contribute freely and confidently if they were put in groups that had members that they were not familiar with. Focus Group One had 11 participants, Focus Group Two had 8 participants and Focus Group Three had 4 participants. All interviews were all held in one day on the 29th of May 2014 between 9.30 am and 16.30 pm. The first interview below was with the first focus group. The subsection that follows explores discussions with the first focus group.

3.13.1 Interview with the first focus group

This researcher introduced himself before recording the interviews and explained that the research was about leadership. He also explained about confidentiality issues and informed consent. In all focus groups interviews, the Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form were read to the students before students voluntarily signed the Informed Consent Form.

As a way of protecting the anonymity of focus group participants, responses were ascribed to as *Responses 1, 2, 3, 4...* in an ascending numerical order. The first focus group interview proceedings went on as reflected below:

This researcher first made sure all research participants were settled and relaxed.

Interviewer: "Once more, I would like to thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this research. It took me a long time to find a research site and willing research participants. I therefore value your participation. [Pause] My first question is: How and in what ways do your teachers/tutors equip you with leadership skills?"

Response 1: "It shows you how to do it, that is, step by step. It gives you confidence by showing you how do it, especially for people who have been out of education for a number of years. You would be a bit apprehensive about things like computers".

Response 2: "I think leadership skills will be more used when imparting transferrable skills to first years. I would be a first year and those guys are second years. They would have led us by example or given us structures...somebody to go to, you know, in the peer support kind of a way".

Response 3: "It encourages students who are coming to the course to learn from others, which does help them to excel. Because...in a way, their tutor will be empowering the second years to be leaders to teach and help the first years".

Response 4: "If you are a second year student now, you can pick out a student that wants to be ahead of others. You can see it...the leadership coming through the first years...you can see it".

The above responses suggested that leadership skills helped to give students confidence in what they were doing. It also indicated that in order to exercise leadership skills you needed to first learn them, for instance, second years learn leadership in the first year in order to give guidance to the first years.

Response 5: "Some prefer to be mentored as individuals, while some prefer to be mentored as a group".

Response 6: "In any group, you have got individuals that are good in various things. In our group, you know, we had (name withheld) that was really good in computers, other students used to approach him if they needed any help to do with computers. We didn't have an appointed leader...various students were leaders in areas that they were good at and could share what they knew".

Interviewer: “Yes, that’s what I realised as well, especially with computers, people will be at different levels even when they are doing the same course”.

Response 7: “People need to be open too to being helped and say, if you can do it please show me”.

Response 8: “We all have different talents as a group. We pool our strengths together as a group. So we all different, you know, so that is great...kind of comrades”. [Laughs]

The last four responses indicated that students were aware that they had got different learning styles. They were also aware that their talents and skills are varied. They also pointed out that in their education institution leaders within course groups emerged and were not appointed.

Interviewer: “So how many first years would be here? (Four focus group members raised their hands). It’s interesting that we have this combination during our discussion, you know. It’s interesting that the first years are sort of appreciating the help that they get from the second years. It’s also sort of encouraging because if I were interviewing each group separately, probably some of these things wouldn’t be coming up”.

Response 9: “If you are in the first year, you are tense you are naïve...you are no gonna ask how to do things in a different structure. You need to go through it first, and by second year then you have the confidence to go through structures and all of that, and that transfers to first years as well. In a natural environment, you always get different personalities that will come to the front, anyway”.

The above quotation indicated that most students lacked confidence and self-esteem at the time they enrolled for courses and throughout the first year. They gained confidence after getting assistance from teachers, classmates and Second Years.

Response 10: “I think there is one other thing about our group in particular. Say we might all have a deadline for an assignment. Some of us may be finished before that, there’s no race to do it. There was like...Oh! Do you need a hand with this? We all helped each other. There is no I am gonna get this, I am gonna do this better. We didn’t have that as a group. We didn’t have competition against each other”.

The above respondent indicated that the education institution encourages an environment in which students do not compete against each other or one another but they used collaborative approaches. Principles of sustainable leadership encourage collaboration rather than competition.

Response 11: “One thing before I came here now...trying to help or not trying to help, I would have probably had the confidence to say, I know this, I’ll help you. But, through the first year getting to know things and we were able to revise our opinions without feeling that way”.

The respondent implied that when they acquired new knowledge and skills it helped them to revise their opinions about the knowledge they had before they started specific courses.

Response 12: “I think we empowered each other though”. “We did yah”. [To a loud approval from others]

Response 13: “Not necessarily tutors, because the tutors although they are good at the end of the day they are here for so many hours a week and we are here for a stretch of three hours. So if we need to ask somebody something instead of asking someone that might be here once a week, we gonna ask each other”.

The last two responses reflected that students spent more time helping each other or one another compared to getting help from the teachers. This was because the allocation of hours to teachers did not make it possible for them to be at the Adult Education Centre throughout the working week. They did other teaching in other education institutions in the neighbourhood.

Interviewer: “Yes, you have a valid point, but the expectation is that it is the tutors that are expected to facilitate and encourage peer support in order for it to take place”.

Response 14: “I think tutors as well as students learn every year...every year with different groups, and what is required, and what students need. They revise their opinions on what they need and how to do it. I think the tutors learn from us as well, as well as us learning from them”.

Interviewer: “Yes, I think you are right. Obviously, when people of your age group come back to education...” [Respondent 19 interjects and catches this researcher off-guard].

Response 15: “I think now you are saying we are old”. [Loud burst of laughter from other participants]

This researcher got a bit uncomfortable about the possibility of having caused discomfort to participants in the manner he had expressed himself.

Interviewer: “Sorry, what I meant to say is that since you are adult students you have experiential knowledge. You come back to education with skills, competences and knowledge that you will have gained through life experiences”.

The respondent sensed that this researcher was somehow uncomfortable with the gaffe that he had made.

Response 16: "I am joking!" [Burst into laughter and again joined by other participants].

Interviewer: "I know, I know".

It is true that teachers and students learn from each other. During teaching, training, mentoring and coaching; the teacher, trainer, mentor and coach learns as much out of the relationship as the student, trainee, mentee and coachee because of what is referred to as the boomerang effect. When the teacher, trainer, mentor and coach gives advice or expresses ideas or when they s/he questions, they gain more insight and understanding of the issue under discussion (Ilesanmi, 2011).

Response 17: "It comes to a point where we are speaking (not audible). ...within the first months that we were into our class, the first thing she said (teacher) is that we bring life skills and that we shouldn't be over-awed by this education system, but we are kind of better than that. So we may not have been in education for years and years, but what we have gained in life that's very important for her to facilitate her teaching in class...and I thought that is very encouraging, you know, because we are all catered for".

Response 18: "But, they do say it's a joy for them to teach adults...as like there's no messing..."
[Conversation becomes general]

The focus group members were part of a class that is supervised by Ayanda. It showed that acknowledging that students bring experiential knowledge to the learning process had a positive effect in boosting confidence and self-esteem.

Interviewer: "Thank you very much for your contributions. Our discussion is intellectually stimulating. I never thought you will have so much to contribute on the topic. I thought that the mention of the term, leadership, might scare people away and that you may probably say that leadership has nothing to do with you since you are doing a Community Care course. In contrast, you seem to have a good grasp on the subject even though you are not doing a leadership course. The fact is that leadership is actually embedded in the course that you are doing".

The researcher acknowledged that course groups employed approaches of distributed leadership when supporting one another. Fellow students acted as informal leaders and helped to guide others and share knowledge on certain aspects of learning in which they were more knowledgeable. Another respondent who had been quiet for most of the time burst into life.

Response 19: "...education systems...have deviated from time to time and from period to period to accommodate bigger interests of people, if you like, and so sometimes I have an issue with education systems. That is because all that they do is to make is to make you a good participant in their particular systems in order for you to reach their objectives rather than your own. Education is too sensitive to me, which means you acquire knowledge from everywhere and you encompass all cultures and all nationalities, not just specifically a Western culture...and so sometimes I've an issue with a lot of that in the sense that what they do is teach disjuncture hoops and pick the best ones and the rest are discarded".

The above respondent gave a twist to the discussion and moved away from the consensus that existed about students being equipped with leadership skills by their teachers. In fact, he seemed to be aligned to radical and critical way of thinking. The issue that he raised has been highlighted in the past by radical thinkers and they have referred to it as the hidden curriculum (Giddens, 2006; Haralambos *et al.*, 2004; McLaren, 2002; Tovey and Share, 2003). McLaren (2002) points out that:

The hidden curriculum deals with the tacit ways in which knowledge and behaviour get constructed, outside the usual course materials and formally scheduled lessons. It is a part of the bureaucratic and managerial "press" of the school – two combined forces by which students are induced to comply with dominant ideology and social practices related to authority, behaviour, and morality (p. 212).

The respondent who contributed Response 16 above continued with his criticality in the response below.

Response 20: "...within the Christian Brothers...there were nuns, you know, leadership wasn't encouraged. You sat down, and you did as you were told...leadership went to the guy who did as he was told".

The respondent wanted to contrast what used to happen when the Irish education system was primarily under the Catholic Church and what was happening during the time of the study. He tacitly underscored that in the past students would not have participated in a research process on leadership skills. Therefore, what was happening then was a huge paradigm shift.

Interviewer: "So far, we have said something about how our peers and teachers/tutors use leadership skills to support us. What about the Co-ordinator and the Administrator?"

Response 21: “The Co-ordinator works above and beyond to keep students on their courses. The Department of Social Welfare⁷ wanted me to get off the course but Daisy (not real name) did everything to keep me on the course and encouraged me to keep appealing (against the decision made by Department of Social Welfare)”.

Interviewer: “Hmmm...so there are cases when the Department of Social Welfare may say you are no longer supposed to be on the course?”

Response 22: “I was on a certain social welfare payment and I had to come out of it because there was a two-year limit. I went on a supplementary payment and I was not allowed to do the course. Job Seeker’s wouldn’t give me a payment, so (name withheld) worked on that. I was three months short of the two-year course, but (name withheld) did everything to keep me in education”.

Response 23: “She is someone that inspires you, and she leads by example. Thank God, I’ll.

She fights your corner, you know. She gives you something to inspire you to go through that”.

Response 24: “The three of us here asked here for references a couple of weeks ago. She gave us individual references. She went over our personal capabilities and qualities and everything, and she took so much time. She took the whole afternoon just giving one overall reference. She’s just fantastic, she’s so personal, so kind a person, and she went back, you know, as I say, on our qualities individually...and she is so busy”.

Response 25: “She knows the students...she knows you, like she knows how many children I have, she knows the name of the baby”.

Response 26: “Can I just add something?” *Interviewer:* “Yes, you are welcome”.

Response 27: “First of all, I am content with what she (the other speaker) has just said. Daisy deals with everyone equally, and she doesn’t judge you as well. She’s really...really supportive in every area like when you go to her it doesn’t depend on whatever situation you might be in. She is just...I don’t know...she is really amazing...she wants everyone to do well. She just wants to support you. She gets to where you are going and encourages you. She wouldn’t make you feel unwelcome. She will welcome you. You will talk to her like...like a friend”.

⁷ The Department of Social Welfare is now known as the Department of Social Protection, but during conversations people sometimes revert to the old name.

Response 28: "...she is an inspiration for the VTOS here. Unfortunately, she cannot do more without more funding. The funding has been cut right, left and centre. She is trying to produce programmes for everybody to get the more out it".

Responses 21 to 28 gave a glowing picture about Daisy's work, and that she positively intervened on behalf of the students against certain decisions taken by the Department of Social Protection. Respondents also said that she was an inspiration and role model that led by example. She helped her students when they needed references despite that some of the information required took a long time to put together. In addition, Daisy knew students that learn at the Adult Education Centre very well, and sometimes she knew how many children some students had and the names of some of their children. That showed that there was a small social distance between her and students, and that she employed student-centred approaches and offered pastoral care and welfare to students. She also used community development principles of equality and being non-judgemental. She was friendly, had an open door policy and knew the potential of various students, and she supported and encouraged them. She played an important role in running the institution. Unfortunately, her work was curtailed by lack of funding. Zaft *et al.* (2009) who are advocates of the CVF theorises that the role of the co-ordinator is to clarify policies, expects accurate work, controls project and monitors progress. A co-ordinator also develops measures, checkpoints, brings order, plans schedules, and provides stability, controls, and continuity. Helfrich *et al.* (2007) point out the CVF organisational culture offers a flexible internal environment with a team culture, which is characterised by cohesion, high morale, focus on human resource development and mutual support.

Response 29: "We must not forget Ethel. Other respondents: "Oh Ethel!"

Interviewer: "Is she the Centre Administrator? *Response 27:* "Yes". [In unison]

Response 30: "For two years, I have never seen her without a smile. She is always...I call her "Smiley". She is fantastic". [Laughter from other research participants]

Response 31: "She is so efficient...so patient now".

Response 32: "Yah, she's patient".

Response 33: "She gives attention to everyone. You can go to her up to ten times a day. She's always willing to listen too. Actually, she is so calm".

The above responses indicate that the attitudes and qualities of administration staff are dictated by the policy of the institution rather individual characteristics. Ethel, the Centre Administrator, is portrayed by students as welcoming, smiley and fantastic. She was also described as efficient, patient and that she adhered to equality principles, attentive, having an open door policy, willing to listen and calm.

This researcher observed that a particular research participant had not contributed during the discussion. He tried to get the concerned research participant on board.

Interviewer: "Would you like to chip in as well?"

Response 34: "I really enjoyed the two years I spent here. It was a big experience".

This researcher thanked the respondent and realised that all semi-structured interview questions had been covered in one way or the other.

Interviewer: "I appreciate that you decided to come and participate in this research process at a time when you had finished your examinations and no longer attending lessons. We have almost covered all the questions that I had prepared, have you got anything else to add?"

Response 35: "I would say I think leadership skills aren't always something that can be taught. I think it is a natural ability in some people, you know, naturally it comes out of them. Other people can learn it...but parts of it wouldn't be as good as natural ability. You can be taught how to control certain skills. Some people can walk into a group and realise nobody is taking charge and they will pick up the reins and organise something, you know. I think in any group of people you will always find somebody who will always have to be a leader. You might end up in a group of people where they are slightly stronger than the group they are in.

I think it's a natural ability, and in certain situations it's called into play. I think that way it's a personality trait".

The above respondent raised an important point that had been debated by leadership scholars for a long time. The argument was on whether leaders are born and/or nurtured. Leadership academics have expressed different views and the debates are ongoing and inconclusive. The respondent pointed out that leadership was natural rather than nurtured and Connie agreed with her and stated that there are people who have got innate qualities to become leaders.

Interviewer: "Yes, yes...thank you very much, anything else?"

Response 36: "With education you never stop learning. This place or environment has encouraged that in me as well. You never know everything, you know".

Interviewer: "Yes, yes...the truth is that these days you cannot say I've this qualification that's the end of it. It used to be the case in the past, but now you have to re-skill and upskill". [Interjection]

Response 37: "Maintenance of your education".

Interviewer: "Yes, yes...you have to manage your career because of changes brought about by technology and other things". [Another interjection]

Response 38: "You need also to upgrade after a period of time".

Interviewer: "Yes, yes...you need to learn how to learn, instead of just sitting back and say I've a qualification".

When one respondent stated that with education you never stop learning, what came to mind was that in order not to stop learning one needs to have the 'learn how to learn' skills or lifelong learning skills (Department of Education and Science, 1998 and 2000; Figel', 2008; Powell *et al.*, 2003; Walters, 2008). Career management is pertinent in both knowledge-based economies and high technology industrial sectors because of the rapid changes that occur within them which need the workforce to continuously up-skill and re-skill.

Response 39: "It helps the brain, you know, it keeps the brain ticking over and active. Even if you didn't work after this, it gives you an interest in other things, like computers, for instance, to learn how to use them and to use the Internet. Even if you didn't work after this course and if you had your laptop, the world is opened up to you, you know, what is going on in the world and different cultures, and learn that as well...and I mean you can go learning at home, which is brilliant".

What the respondent meant in the above quotation was that learning was intellectually stimulating and keeps the brain active. Research has shown that mastering skills of literacy including computer skills has some social benefits (Department of Education and Science, 1997, 1998 and 2000; DES, 2010; Hargreaves, 2003; Kirsch, 2001; NALA, 2007; The Teaching Council, 2014). People who are computer literate can learn a lot about other cultures, traditions and what is happening around them.

Response 40: "For me, I think this course boosts confidence. I wouldn't have had the education before, just through the learning that I have had I would have more confidence now".

The above respondent reiterated that learning boosts confidence and self-esteem.

Response 41: "Can I just say something?" *Interviewer:* "Yes".

Response 42: “What education does to you as an adult is that it upgrades you...it could relate to adults because it actually updates them to do certain things with their children and with other adults as well [that they wouldn’t do if they had no education]. It gives you pathways in case you might want to further your education. You might want to go to third level or to do something else in life. I think it’s really good...That actually encourages me to further my education...so coming back to education as an adult is good because we did that willingly. (Interruptions of approval from other participants)...It wasn’t forced on us, unlike when you were younger your father and mother had to force you. (Interjection: “You had to go”.)...but if you are willing to do it yourself it’s a different way”.

The respondent implied that learning broadens our horizons and improves the quality of interaction that we had with children and other adults. That was because learning helped us to acquire interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. The chances of pursuing education routes were enhanced by acquisition of people skills and the ‘learn how to learn’ skills.

Interviewer: “Thank you very much. It takes a lot of time to find a group like yours that is committed, motivated and prepared to help someone gain knowledge”.

Response 43: “We did something like that as well in our research...and some of us might be going further as well. We might need something like this.... It’s experience as well”.

The last response came from a respondent who appeared determined to pursue an education progression route. She showed empathy and pointed out that she felt there was a need to help this research to do his research as that might help them to gain experience to also do a research project in future.

This interviewer: “Yes, it’s experience. Thank you very much”.

Respondents: “Thank you too”.

The duration of the interview with the first focus group was for 28 minutes 51 seconds. The interview that follows is with one of the teachers.

3.13.2 One-to-one interview with Ayanda (a teacher)

This researcher introduced himself to the research participant(s) and explained confidentiality issues before tape recording proceedings. He also gave research participant(s) the Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form to read before signing the latter. After all the formalities had been done, this researcher asked the research participant(s) for permission to record the interview. In order to protect the anonymity of the research participant, the first teacher to be interviewed

was referred to as *Ayanda* throughout the interview and the research process. The other two teachers were referred to as *Bianca* and *Connie*, the VTOS Co-ordinator as *Daisy* and the VTOS Administrator as *Ellen*.

Interviewer: "To start with, the Centre Co-ordinator at some stage told me that the staff members that supervise students here at the Centre are teachers rather than tutors, what do you make of that?"

Ayanda seemed not to have been expecting that line of questioning probably because it wasn't in the prepared list of questions. Nonetheless, she answered.

Ayanda: "I don't know. There is a bit of a dilemma about that question. I always considered myself a tutor, but I suppose I went back and did my degree there a couple of years ago, because when I came to work in the Adult Education Service, initially I didn't have a degree.

I didn't...because that wasn't a requirement eleven years ago...I didn't have a degree. So I subsequently went back and did my degree, so now on my payslip it tells me I am a teacher.

[Laughs] So I don't know".

Interviewer: "Anyway, it works almost the same way".

Ayanda: "Yes, I feel in adult education you probably are more of a tutor rather than a teacher...when you work with adults".

Ayanda: "Yah, that's the kind of cap...that I feel you are more supporting people to learn rather than actually teaching them everything...That's how I see it".

Supervisors of VTOS courses were in the past known as Community Education Facilitators (Circular letter 45/02, Memo V7 or Circular 32/92), and at the time the study was carried out they were referred to as teachers (The Teaching Council, 2014).

Interviewer: "OK...OK, [Nodding the head] that's how you see it. OK, if I may ask the first question that's from the list of questions that I had prepared?"

Ayanda: "Yah, OK".

Interviewer: "Do you think leadership skills were embedded in the curriculum of course(s) that you did when you trained as a teacher?"

Ayanda: "Well, I suppose definitely when I did my training, which is very recently, because I only completed my degree two years ago. I did a good degree in Community and Family Studies. So it was kind of around community education. I would have done two subjects or modules. One would

have been at leadership skills, and one would have group dynamics...and all that. So there was a strong emphasis on sort of leadership, and identifying leaders in a group and supporting the skills of people coming to the fore. So I would say there was a strong emphasis on it in my course”.

Interviewer: “OK, you mentioned something about identifying leaders in groups”.

Ayanda: “Absolutely, because I learnt a lot about that”.

Ayanda was the only teacher who openly agreed that the course she did to train as a teacher was embedded with leadership. Other teachers who trained about two to three decades ago stated that leadership skills were not included in the curricula of their courses. They stated that in the past there was no emphasis in leadership skills, but during the time of the study there was.

Interviewer: “With the groups that you are dealing with here, let’s say when first years come in or enrol on a course, would it be easy for you to identify potential leaders?”

Ayanda: “I could yah...very quickly, and I think that people kind of come to the fore...very quickly. I find that if I give students little tasks to do in a classroom situation, you see leaders emerge. Unlike...not all leaders are good, because some leaders just take over. There can be a negative side. You have to kind of see that some leaders are very...sort of can lead by getting everybody involved, but some leaders just want all...you know what I mean...it’s my way.

[Soft laughter] So there’s difference that comes to the fore”.

Ayanda stated that she could easily identify potential leaders after giving students some tasks to do. However, she argued that there was a possibility that some of the emerging leaders might want to employ authoritarian instead of collaborative approaches. Therefore, it was the role of the teacher to realign leaders that had adopted authoritarian approaches.

Interviewer: “So would you say that amongst the groups that you deal with you, do you have a leader, say, in the mould of a prefect, class/group representative, team leader or classroom monitor?”

Ayanda: “That’s interesting because sometimes that happens...without my imposition and at other times it doesn’t happen. But, you know, there’s some that are a bit more vocal and that kind of looks after the rest. They ask the awkward questions or they are posturing. There’s usually somebody that emerges that kind of way”.

Interviewer: “Yes, yes...and then sort of gains respect from the class and that way assumes a leadership role?”

Ayanda appears determined to clearly explain the issue of how informal leaders emerge.

Interviewer: "I think with adults...it's a confidence thing, if you have confidence to ask questions...Sometimes when adults come back to education that's probably the biggest thing that they lack...confidence. So it's the person maybe sometimes that has the confidence to ask questions, you know...ask all the awkward questions or sort of sort out the issues and whatever, you know what I mean. We don't sort of formally call anybody a leader".

Interviewer: "Yes, yes...OK, but they informally emerge as leaders? [Research participant nods] How and when do you use leadership skills during the course of executing your teaching duties?"

Ayanda: "I think I do it quite a bit. I guess...especially the Care students do quite a lot of tasks. You know what I mean, not necessarily writing tasks, so I kind of...you know, do a lot of small group work, and I find that when you get them to achieve tasks like that, leaders emerge. You know what I mean. I also try as well to change the group up as much as I can, because I think people can become a bit complacent if they work together for long time. You know what I mean".

Ayanda restated what was mentioned in the first focus group that informal leaders emerged and there were no appointed leaders. She also stated that those that usually emerged as informal leaders were the ones that were a bit more vocal and that kind of looked after the rest. In addition, she stated that those that emerged as informal leaders were usually the ones that asked the awkward questions or were the posturing type.

This researcher had not clearly understood Ayanda's explanation about changing group members resulting in him asking the question that follows.

Interviewer: "Do you mean you keep students in the same groups throughout the course?"

Ayanda explained that instead she did the opposite and vividly explained below.

Ayanda: "No, no, I try not to...because sometimes I feel that people develop better...they may work better in a different group. They might be in this group, but may not be getting to work to their full potential, but if they work with somebody else they might, you know.

I can see sometimes that it's important to change people".

Ayanda understands facilitation of group dynamics and processes, and emerged as a strong advocate of the same during interviews. She emphasised that it was beneficial to move members from one group to another because some group members might benefit best in a different group.

Interviewer: "OK...therefore, it's important to change people".

Ayanda: "Sometimes I think it is also important to say, John you are in charge this week...to try and give people...a bit of responsibility. With group tasks, you know, sometimes one or two people do all the work, and the rest kind of do not bother, whereas if you give a bit of responsibility, it's a bit better".

Ayanda also explained that she gave group members responsibility to lead the group on a rotational basis. She further explained that if other members were not given responsibility they relied a lot on those who did most of the work leading and as a result developed a dependency syndrome.

Interviewer: "We have really covered a lot of ground with the few questions that we have discussed. Tell me about the positive experiences that you think leadership skills bring to the learning environment".

Ayanda: "I think the positive thing that it brings is that it's really good for people's confidence. I think skills and talents emerge that you mightn't have been aware of. You know that people emerge with talents and skills you mightn't recognise that they had, you know what I mean. That's really positive because...you know. You may find in a group there're three people that are really good with computers, they may do great stuff. And that there're three that are good with contacting people outside. But then, there're two people that are really good at taking care of everything, and there's somebody really good in household stuff...cleaning the room. You know what I mean. I think the great thing is that people sort of...their skills get to see them at work. And they may not be the skills that are particular in the subject that you are teaching, but those kinds of skills are kind of...you know...the really skills that are important".

Ayanda repeated what was cited in the first focus group interview and she pointed out that leadership was helpful in boosting the confidence of learners. In addition, she stated that leadership facilitated transformation of raw talents into skills, and that some of the talents and skills that emerged might not be the ones that you thought people had. Ayanda also mentioned that informal leaders that emerged led in areas in which they are gifted with talents and skills.

Interviewer: "Yes...yes. You might find that those complementary skills act as glue that keeps the group together".

Ayanda: "Exactly...and the tasks done, you know. You may need to be careful, you know. Some people are very good at attention to detail. So like there are the things that people have and they emerge, you know what I mean. And I suppose that's what makes people unique as well, isn't it?"

Interviewer: "Yes, it is".

Ayanda: "It shows...their individuality".

Ayanda agreed that the complementary skills of group members and tasks done were important for the group to function as a unit. She pointed out that when a group was given tasks to do, as facilitator she realised that some group members, for instance, were very good at attention to detail. This showed that people are by nature unique. In addition, she asserted that it was therefore paramount for group members to have a chance to show both their collective and individual skills. The CVF has an emphasis on human development, pursuance of individual and team goals, commitment to the overall goals and objectives of the organisation, relationships between employees and shared objectives (Belason and Frank, 2010; Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Helfrich *et al.*, 2007; Zaft *et al.* 2009; Yardley and Neal, 2007).

Interviewer: "OK, OK...Please tell me about the negative experiences that you gone through when trying to incorporate leadership skills in your teaching approaches".

Ayanda: "Absolutely, I've seen one or two negative experiences. Again, I suppose...where somebody just holds control and don't appear to delegate to the group, and then people kind of fall, lose interest, or they feel inferior and that can have a negative effect as well. So...like my role would be to change that group up or to change tasks. Because...some people just want...you know...I do this my way. I am not ready to engage with that".

Interviewer: "Yes, yes...being not collaborative for whatever reason".

Ayanda: "So that can have a negative effect on other people in the group, because you lose interest if people don't want you to do anything or say anything or produce anything. I think that's very important to watch that, to make sure it doesn't happen".

Ayanda said that negative experiences of leadership that she had gone through when trying to incorporate leadership skills in her teaching approaches was that some people were authoritarian held on to power and were controlling. Such people did not delegate to the group, and that usually resulted in other people kind of falling, losing interest, or feeling inferior.

Interviewer: "Do you think your leadership approaches are more inclined towards distributed leadership?"

Ayanda: "Yah...definitely. I like that...I like that".

This researcher asked Ayanda if her leadership approaches were inclined towards distributed leadership after realising that she had spent a significant amount of time during the interview discussing collaboration and delegation of tasks or duties. Ayanda concurred that she was in favour of distributed leadership approaches.

Interviewer: “Do you mean you like the approach whereby power or authority is distributed among individuals rather the one-person- or a few-people-take-it-all approach?”

Ayanda: “I do...I do...because I worked a lot in the community. I’ve worked a lot of my life in the voluntary and community sector. This is the big issue personally I see with people in the voluntary sector. They are great people, they want to achieve great things, but there’re often a lot of power issues”.

Interviewer: “Yes, power issues”.

Ayanda: “And I hate power issues. They kind of...upset me...power issues...because, you know. If you working, running a service whatever, with power issues, you upset a lot of people, you disenfranchise a lot of people”.

Interviewer: “Yes...yes”.

Ayanda: “Probably, a lot of really good people”.

Interviewer: “Yes...yes. I think it results in nonparticipation, because people would rather stay away than be involved in a group or organisation that has power issues”. Ayanda then points out, “Yah, yah...power issues...are very dangerous”.

Interviewer: “I have been involved with community and voluntary organisations, and I think some of the things you raised resonate with my experiences”.

Ayanda: “It’s the core of community...if you can keep a community project and kind of empower as many people in that project. When the power goes to one or two people, you disenfranchise the rest. They just want to get out, but it is the biggest challenge, absolutely, in government, in family...” [Laughs]

Ayanda pointed out that power issues and empowerment were problematic in voluntary and community organisations. Belasen and Frank (2010) state that an important advantage of using the CVF is that interpersonal conflicts associated with turf issues, status, and power can be avoided in favour of developing a constructive dialogue and encouraging positive learning (p. 282). Power is the invisible cement that keeps the public realm together (Arendt, 1958).

Voluntary, community organisations and the adult education sector are predominantly staffed with female employees, but the top leadership may be dominated by males. Therefore, sometimes issues of power and empowerment manifests themselves in leadership resulting in gender inequalities (Collins, 2000; Hooks, 2000; Tovey and Share, 2003). At the time of carrying out the research, the Adult Education Centre had a total number of twelve teachers, three of them are males and nine are females. Both the VTOS Co-ordinator and VTOS Administrator are females.

Interviewer: "Yes...yes...yes. It seems to be the biggest challenge. Suppose that you were in charge and could make some changes to the VTOS programme, what are the changes that would be in your top priority list?"

Ayanda: "If I were the boss... [Laughs and jokes]...I can't see myself taking over from Daisy.

[Some words not audible] I suppose I think it's a very good programme. There are a lot of very positive things on the programme. I suppose in the last few years we've been very driven by the FETAC qualification. And I suppose although that is very important, I wish we should kind of have a little bit less of the end product and enjoy the journey if it's more worth, you know what I mean".

Interviewer: "Oh yes. Enjoy the process rather the product".

Ayanda: "Yah, I think that's important, and you know. We are so focussed on the end product. Like...I suppose what I am saying is obviously that my responsibility is around people who are going to work in Care, and probably it mightn't be the person that gets the best FETAC results would be the best carer, you know what I mean".

Interviewer: "Yes, yes".

Ayanda pointed out that as a way of improving the VTOS programme, there was a need to acquire the FETAC Level 5 qualification (product) as well as enjoy the journey (process) (Botes and van Rensburg, 2000).

This researcher immediately took advantage of the topic on the process versus the product and made connections with what he had discussed earlier on with members of the first focus group which was supervised by Ayanda.

Interviewer: "It's good that I am having this interview with you immediately after having had one with a focus group that consisted of students under your supervision. One research participant in that focus group told me that they take two years to do a FETAC Level 5 course. I thought it was advantageous compared to colleges of further education where the same course takes one year. I

experienced that because a close relative did a Community Care course with a College of Further Education”.

Ayanda: “My daughter did that as well, and there’s very little room to develop the person”.

Interviewer: “But, don’t you think that the fact that your students are doing the same course in two years instead of one year that gives you a bit of leeway to develop the person?”

Ayanda: “Yah, it does”. This raises another scenario, “I think FÁS delivers the same course in more or less a year, which is even worse than the one year it takes to deliver it in colleges of further education”.

After the interviews, this researcher checked information on the FÁS FETAC Level 5 courses.

The Ireland’s EU Structural Funds Programme (2013) states that FETAC Level 5 Certificate in Healthcare Support is:

...targeted at school leavers, unemployed people and mature applicants who are interested in working as a member of a care team and pursuing a career as a Care Assistant in the Care of the Older Person sector. [...] The duration of the Care Assistant (Care for the Elderly) Traineeship programme is 36 weeks. The Traineeship consists of 16 weeks off-the-job training with FÁS, 15 weeks integrated training (3 days per week with FÁS and 2 days per week with a host employer) and 5 weeks on-the-job training with a host employer.

The duration of training was equivalent to an academic year, which was in contrast to what this researcher initially thought. However, work placement arrangements were different from those that were in place in most VTOS programmes and in courses delivered by colleges of further education.

Ayanda: “It is good. Two years is very good. We are lucky to have two years”.

Interviewer: “Initially, I couldn’t understand when students indicated on their Voluntary Consent Forms that they were either in Year 1 or Year 2. That was because I always assumed that FETAC Level 5 courses take one year to complete”. Possibly as a way of making this researcher realise why there are differences in the duration of courses delivered by different education institutions, Ayanda highlights the following.

Ayanda: "I think we are still fortunate that people or adults that come back to education are not judged the same way as young people, which are shoved into Post Leaving Certificate courses. So I think that's how we are having a leeway to do the same course in two years. Hopefully, they won't change it".

Interviewer: "Yes, during this era of cutbacks when there are funding issues, you never know. Policy-makers may think two years is rather long and decide revise the period of training downwards".

Ayanda: "You have to remember that some, say, and I am not picking the men. For instance, some of these that are probably doing Community Care now would have worked in the construction industry for, say, thirty-eight years. So they do need some time to sort of hone their skills and work in Community Care, don't they?"

Interviewer: "Yes, they do".

Ayanda: "It's not something they can learn in a year and run out and do, you know. It's a complete change of direction in one's life".

Interviewer: "In my case, when I got laid off my job in the construction industry, I chose to do a course in Community Education and Development. I found it difficult to adjust and start enjoying the course. I even thought that maybe the course was not for me".

Ayanda: "Yah it takes time. You know you are sending out these people to do the most intimate things with people. Wash them, change them and dress them, you know what I mean".

Interviewer: "Yes, yes, it's emotionally involving".

Ayanda: "Yah, yah, you need to hone skills, won't you? If you are used to working with concrete blocks, you know what I mean. Now, you are going to be doing intimate things with people...It's a really good programme here. I am kind of happy with what I've, but you always want better. You always want more".

Ayanda explained that the reason why their courses took two years instead of one year as was the case with colleges of further education was because the majority of adults that enrol in VTOS courses come back to education after having been away from education for a long time. In contrast, most students who enrolled for courses in colleges of further education might be coming straight from the Leaving Certificate.

Interviewer: "If you were involved in recruiting students to the VTOS programme, what would you say are the outstanding qualities of your organisation?"

Ayanda: "I think the outstanding quality of this particular organisation that I work for is that we really care about our students. ...that...you know, no matter what challenges we do our utmost to support everybody and we kind of realise that adults learn differently and some are flying it and more struggle and more need other supports. So I think we are people-centred, and I think that's what I like about it...that we really care. And I suppose having two years with students gives you that time to develop those relationships as well. You know, you can really develop very strong relationships over two years".

Ayanda said that her organisation reflected better practice in the adult education sector by offering pastoral care and welfare to its students through client-centred approaches. That was despite that the organisation had a lot of challenges. She also said that offering two-year courses gave teachers and students an opportunity to develop very strong relationships. Strong relationships are one of the characteristics of a Professional Learning Community (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Hord, 1997; Wenger, 2012).

Interviewer: "OK...OK, yes you can develop strong relationships over two years".

Ayanda: "So I think I would say they would be the things that are really good. We do care for our students. We make every effort to give them the best that we can. If we can put extra support, we do. We've very good Career Guidance Service that will counsel as the student progresses. So there are a lot of really good things, I think here".

Ayanda also pointed out that they made every effort to give their students the best they could and that if they could put support they did. Furthermore, she pointed out the Adult Education Guidance Service offered counselling services to students throughout the duration of the course.

Interviewer: "Yes, yes, and how many of you are in your team? I mean how many members of staff are on the Community Care course".

Ayanda: "I suppose in Community Care there're three of us. There would be three of us, yah.

I think I would be kind of a team leader in that. That I would work very closely then with Career Guidance as well. So I also work...in a different centre as well. So I don't work all my time here. I am only here for two days actually...nine hours a week here".

Interviewer: "OK, OK, and the other centre also offers VTOS programmes?"

Ayanda: "It's also a VTOS centre and there I am responsible for doing FETAC Level 5 Child Care, so that's what I bring to the students there. So I do the Child Care there, and do the Community Care here, yah".

Interviewer: "Yes, the two courses seem to overlap".

Ayanda: "Yes, they do overlap...the same with the other centre, we've a smaller group of students, we've a smaller team, but we work very well together. Just interested in students progressing and...looking after them and giving them a chance. I absolutely love the work that I do".

Ayanda explained that there were three teachers that supervise the Community Care courses and that she was the team leader. The term 'team leader' and working closely with the Adult Education Guidance Service also reflected that Ayanda identified herself with teamwork and collaborative approaches. She also mentioned that she only worked at the Adult Education Centre for two days and for nine hours in each week and that she worked in a different education setting as well.

Interviewer: "OK, just to add something that was not in my original list of questions. I realise that courses that have something to do with care and health usually have a Human Growth and Development module. How important do you think is that module for the development of your students?"

Ayanda: "I think it is vital...I think you have to kind of understand yourself and where you come from, and what fears, worries and prejudices...whatever of these you have, because we all have them. I think when you can kind of take a close look at that and you can look at yourself.... I think anything that kind of make students look at themselves...they develop.

Even though it's difficult, you know, there is development. And I think that's...really important for students to...like some students might never work in Care. I have to say in the group that you met today, maybe not everyone. But, there's a particular student in that group that is not suitable to work in Care".

Interviewer: "Yes...yes, but they might use the course as a progression pathway/route to do a third level course".

Ayanda: "Absolutely, and the student realises now that working in Care is probably not exactly what suits him, but if the student goes out to third level, he'll use the knowledge that he would have gained and be brilliant at research, you know. He has his set of skills, but caring for somebody is really not for him...you know what. So if he doesn't do a subject such as Human Growth Development and Psychology, he might find it hard to decide if a career in

Community Care is for him or not. I think that's what makes him realise that intimate caring for somebody is not really into him and doing work placement as well".

Although Ayanda seemed to treat the Human Growth and Development, and Psychology as two separate modules, the former was part of Psychology. Nonetheless, what the research participant was discussing was in sync with what this researcher had asked.

Interviewer: "Yes, yes, so the work placement component is also important because it makes students to realise what to expect in the real world of care work".

Ayanda: "Absolutely".

Interviewer: "...and then they can make crucial decisions there and then than leave it till it's too late?"

Ayanda: "It is vital...and I've sort of pushed and shoved around with (name withheld), and now we've got to a place whereby students go on a day release so that they are out working a day a week if we can possibly organise it, because I think that..." [Interjection]

Interviewer: "...So do you mean to say instead of doing placement in block maybe towards the end of the course, doing it one day a week throughout the greater part of the course helps them to assimilate it better, and that also helps them to make informed decisions in the early stages of the course?"

Ayanda: "I think it's vital...it's a better way. When you push students out to do a block placement for ten days, they just tear out and do it. They are just trying to get the module done. When students go out one day a week for the whole nine months, it's kind of gentle and gradual, you know".

Interviewer: "Yes...yes, instead of taking the whole weight in a short time, taking it gradual might help them. I think another scenario might be that doing work placement in block may result in students having misconceptions about the care service. The work placement may, for instance, coincide with days when there are hard or difficult situations that are being dealt with. However, spreading out work placement may help students experience good and bad days, and therefore make a better judgement on whether they are suitable to work in care or not".

Ayanda: "Yes, it does. Yes, they may realise there are better days...different days, different clients. And employers to...be fair, we've a good rapport with local employers and they prefer students on a day a week in the Care, because it's sometimes difficult to plan to have something ready for somebody to do in ten days".

Interviewer: "Yes, yes, the students come from different education institutions at times at almost the same time...." [Interjection]

Ayanda: "Yah...yah".

Interviewer: "...which makes supervision somehow difficult?"

Ayanda: "It is impossible...and if somebody goes one day a week, the employer knows they are coming, and they can kind of rely on them, and give them real experience. So I like that...but I caused a lot of trouble, but I got it. [Laughs] Anyway, I think I've said loads, have I?"

Ayanda pointed out that, it was better to do work placement one day a week throughout the greater part of the course rather than do it in block maybe towards the end of the course. The former helped students to assimilate knowledge gradually and also assisted them to make informed decisions in the early stages on whether they were comfortable with the practicalities of the course or career. The latter may result in students developing misconceptions about the career. In addition, Ayanda pointed out that pushing students out to do a block placement for ten days, made them to just tear out and do it, and that they just tried to get the module done. She also said that when students went out one day a week for the whole nine months, it was kind of gentle and gradual.

Ayanda also stated that doing work placement once a week made it easier for work placement sponsors to plan and schedule work for the trainee student compared to planning and scheduling work for a block ten-week period. Furthermore, Ayanda said that they had a good rapport with work placement sponsors and that they preferred students who were on a one day a week placement. Lastly, another disadvantage of an in-block 10-day work placement was that most education institutions do it at almost the same time, which made it difficult for work placement sponsors to comfortably deal with the influx of trainees.

Interviewer: "You have said loads, but it's not an issue. You know, it's really interesting when I come across a lot of information...it's really interesting. What else would you like to say that might not have been covered by my questions? There may be certain other things that happen in Community Care that have elements of coaching, mentoring and training for leadership".

Ayanda: "Okay. I suppose to work...to really physically leave here after two years with your award, you know. I suppose you definitely do need some type of leadership to go into work in Care. You need to have developed strong confidence in your own ability. Obviously, you have to get certain skills. We give the students, Patient Handling, First Aid and any other things they can get, like to help them along the journey. But definitely, you know, to work in that kind of intimate care with

people, you really need to have kind of strong confidence in yourself, to be kind of aware of your ability. ...and obviously you have got to learn on the job again. You know, it does require a form of leadership within yourself. It does yah”.

Interviewer: “Yes, I really think carers initiate most of the things that they do. They can’t have supervisors around all the time. They have to decide there and then how to deal with a particular issue. Sometimes there is no time to go to the office to ask about how to handle a specific situation....” [Interjection]

Ayanda further developed the idea that this researcher had initiated.

Ayanda: “...somebody with epileptic seizure...you do need...I think you need a certain amount of leadership to go out there yourself to take initiatives to deal with circumstances, you know what I mean. Yah, you will be supported, but you have to be standing on your two feet and say Jesus, I’ve to do this. There’s a big demand in that kind of work to have these kinds of leadership skills. I think so, anyway”.

Ayanda said that carers needed leadership skills because in most cases they work independently or without close supervision. They needed confidence in order to believe in themselves and what they can do. Ayanda also stated that care work was very demanding and therefore carers needed leadership skills in order to initiate certain decisions.

Interviewer: “I think we’ve to bring our discussion to an end. Thank you for granting me the interview”.

Ayanda: “You are welcome”.

Interviewer: “You helped me a lot. Your group was also very fantastic. They actively participated”.

Ayanda: “They are a fabulous group...they are a fabulous group. I’ve enjoyed with them. I’ve had so much with that group for the past two years, and yet you know theories in students have developed. And I’ve to say they are probably the kindest and most caring bunch of students that I’ve ever had. They have looked after everybody in the group, you know, the weaker and those that lack confidence. They have taken social care of each other that really shows...They are just a fabulous group. I am really proud of them”. [Laughs]

It was good to know that students doing a Community Care course offer one another social care, which was a good starting point for a long journey on their professional careers. This researcher finally wound down the discussion.

Interviewer: "Yes, yes...thank you very much".

Ayanda: "Thank you too. Good luck with your research".

Interviewer: "Thank you. I hope everything will go according to plan".

The interview process with the first teacher lasted 34 minutes 34 seconds, and after that the second focus group was interviewed.

3.13.3 Interview with the second focus group

This researcher introduced himself prior to recording the interviews and thanked research participants for taking part in the first and second stages of the research process. He also explained the confidential issues before he read the Information Sheet to the whole group. He then distributed the Informed Consent Forms and advised participants that they could only sign the forms if they were happy to participate in the interview. Three of the eight research participants delayed joining the group because they were in the room next door and were unaware that the focus group interview session had started.

This researcher thought it would be a good idea while waiting for the other research participants to explain the background of the study before embarking on the prepared questions. During the explanation, this researcher shared his experiences as a student in the non-formal education sector in the former British colony of Rhodesia before Zimbabwe gained independence. The researcher also explained the almost no-existence of progression routes to tertiary training and third level education and that the non-formal education sector still encountered a lot of challenges including the lack of resources and classes including that they were supervised entirely by untrained mentors. Lastly, this researcher explained that his educational background influenced his decision to undertake the research in the Irish nonformal education sector. This researcher then decided to embark to commence the focus group interview session before the other research participants joined the group.

Interviewer: "How and in what ways do your teachers/tutors equip you with leadership skills?"

Response 1: "We get the knowledge, that is, and we go to any office and teach other people what we have been taught, that's more of leadership skills".

The respondent most likely gave an example of going to another office because the focus group was drawn from students who were doing the Business and Administration course.

Interviewer: "Yes, we sometimes use leadership skills pass on what we have learnt, because we'll actually be passing on transferrable skills to other people".

Response 2: "We just do some work experience, where I was, they used Microsoft 2003 and we do 2010. So if I worked somewhere where they go handy with the newer system, I'll be able to...show them.... So that's formal, it's not real leadership, is it?"

Interviewer: "OK, OK".

Response 3: "...generally leadership is different...they have a subject that would be like subject of leadership that is actually taught...but that cannot be forever because not everybody can be a leader, you know...but those that believe...they just do it".

Response 4: "...leadership is relevant. I suppose if you are at the work place and if practice being done is incorrect, that is, if you have leadership skills you can stand up and say look that is being done incorrectly. That would be leadership skills in my eyes where you will assume responsibility and recognise that something is being done incorrectly and correct it".

The respondents somehow indicated that they used leadership skills but were not explicit on how they used them.

Interviewer: "Do you sometimes have a situation when you offer peer support?"

Response 5: "We do...we do. If a colleague...eh...We've all experienced if we give it we get it. If we know something and a colleague doesn't know it, we help them. In reverse, if I don't know something I'll also inform a colleague. That was the...set up from day one. There is no such thing as better than or equal to".

Interviewer: "Yes, yes. OK, which I also think..." [Interjection]

Response 6: "...we would rather get help from fellow students than...than bother our teacher".

The first focus group also stated that students who needed help got it mainly from their peers rather than from teachers because teachers work in other education settings and as a result were not at the Adult Education Centre all time. It was also apparent that the focus group members did not give credit to their teachers for first equipping their peers with leadership skills that they used when helping other students. There was a possibility that some of the students enrolled on specific courses had already acquired leadership skills at the workplace before they started doing specific courses.

Interviewer: "I think even the peer-to-peer support has an element of leadership, you know, because when helping your peer you must have some kind of leadership approach, otherwise the person you are helping might be put off".

Response 7: "You need to do it in a manner that you bring something different at different times. Bring each other up to scratch".

Interviewer: "Yes, I was saying to the other focus group that when I first went back to education here in Ireland, I had come from an education system that was rather very competitive. Students grabbed it all. I then realised that in the new course that I was doing there was a lot of emphasis on group work, team work and collaboration in general".

Response 8: "It isn't like that here".

Response 9: "No, no, no. We move together here".

Interviewer: "OK".

Responses reflected that the VTOS Centre encouraged teamwork and collaborative approaches instead of competition. Those are characteristics of sustainable leadership.

Response 10: "I think that there is a decent structure here, isn't it?"

Response 11: "The environment here is a decent structure".

Response 12: "...we are mature students..." [Interjection from Interviewer]

Interviewer: "Yes, yes".

Response 13: "...so we are back to up-skill what we learnt...you know. We are not starting from scratch".

A 'decent structure' and 'we are mature' meant that there was a good organisational culture in which students displayed traits maturity by not competing against one another. The response 'we are back to up-skill what we learnt... We are not starting from scratch', indirectly referred to the fact that competition is for children or young people and that they were different because they already had experiential knowledge.

Interviewer: "Could you please explain to me about how leadership is distributed in your class?"

Response 14: "Do you mean leadership in the form of taking responsibility or as a role model?"

Interviewer: "I mean in the form of taking responsibility".

Response 15: "I would say in different modules there would be different people you would be going to".

Interviewer: "OK, so in different modules, there would be different people that you would approach for assistance?"

Response 16: "In Bookkeeping, for example, if you don't know anything about something, you will be going to her, ask for advice or something like that ...but sometimes in other cases they will come to me to ask. It depends, in every different subject; there are different people and different circumstances. But I wouldn't really call that leadership, more like giving them a hand".

The focus group concurred with what was mentioned by another focus group earlier on and by Ayanda that students got assistance in various modules from different people. In other words, informal leaders emerged and led course groups in various modules that they were good at.

Response 17: "No...but that is not leadership".

Response 18: "...about real leadership there's no such thing..."

Responses 17 and 18 confirmed that some research participants were not sure what constitute leadership.

After ten minutes since the recorded session had begun, three late comers that this researcher had been expecting knocked at the door. They explained that they have been in another room oblivious that the focus group interview session had already started. This researcher offered the late comers seats, and introduced himself and briefly explained about the study and confidentiality issues. He then handed each of them an Information Sheet and an Informed Consent Form. This researcher continued with the discussion with other focus group members while the late comers read through the documentation. After they had signed the Informed Consent Forms, they joined the rest of the focus group members. One of the late comers contributed significantly to the discussion after they had joined the rest of the focus group.

Interviewer: "...what I meant to say is that when we were doing formal education we used to have, for instance, a class prefect..." [Interjection]

Response 19: "Yah, yah that would be leadership".

Interviewer: "...but it depends. You may have a class monitor, a class representative, but at the same time there are situations when the power of leadership is more or less evenly distributed, that is, if you know something you rise up to the challenge".

Response 20: "There's no appointed leader".

Response 21: "There's no need of one, so".

Interviewer: "It depends on how people choose..." [Interjection]

Response 22: "...so far there hasn't been any need for one, group representative or whatever".

The second focus group corroborated what was highlighted by the first focus group and Ayanda that there were no appointed leaders, and that informal leaders emerged among course group members.

Interviewer: "OK, OK. Please tell me why you think it is important to equip students with leadership skills?"

Response 23: "Yes..." [Interruption]

Response 24: "...just like those who are capable of doing that unless they are equipped with those skills they might miss their chance to...to, you know like...sometimes opportunities might come. You know like if he's not prepared for that he'll say no, no, I am afraid to take that position or something like that. He might lose good opportunity because of that. Like some people would be equipped with those skills but never use them. It's not in them".

Interviewer: "Yes, yes, they may never use them".

The respondent highlighted that there was a possibility there were other people who had the potential to become leaders but failed to achieve because they were not equipped with the relevant skills. Therefore, lack of leadership skills meant that they might lose out when chances to lead became available. The respondent was of the view that leaders were nurtured and not born (Goleman *et al.* (2002). On the other hand, the respondent pointed out that those who believed that leadership was not for them may decline leadership positions even when they were presented with the opportunity. The respondent also pointed out that other people could be equipped with leadership skills but never got an opportunity to use them.

Response 25: "But, you know the way that in every job there are terms and conditions of service that are in compliance with rules and regulations, and I think that if you have leadership skills you will obey and comply with those rules and regulations. I think in every workplace you are advised and encouraged to be compliant...and act in line with rules and regulations...that's where leadership skills are important".

Interviewer: "Tell me about a practical situation(s) in which leadership skills have helped you to achieve your goals".

Response 26: "...but, I suppose when we go for work experience, when you have someone beside you who is going to show you the lines at work...what is encouraged to be done..."

It was pertinent during work placement for a trainee to be under the supervision of someone who has the requisite knowledge, skills and competences in the area that the trainee was studying for.

Interviewer: "Yes, I suppose that could help you to achieve your goals. What else could help you to achieve your goals?"

Response 27: "I see here we are kind of in a very protective environment really, which is very good to us. I think all of that would be relevant to our government...The standards of institutions in our country are in a shocking state because there's no proper leadership. But, I don't think that would apply to us here. We are in a learning environment where there's a programme devised for us. We follow suit, and between ourselves if we can ask each other and we help each other out. So I don't know of any practical situation".

The respondent who made the above contribution asserted that education is a regulated enterprise that did not need teachers and students to acquire leadership skills. Furthermore, she stated that in a learning environment the programme was designed for the students who simply followed suit. She also believed that leadership was only applicable in government departments and other statutory bodies. Lastly, she believed that students did not need leadership skills in order to offer peer support.

Interviewer: "What I mean is a role played by teachers/tutors, the Co-ordinator and the Administrator. How do their roles help you to achieve your goals?"

The preceding question made the respondent who contributed Response 27 to change her opinion and she then gave Response 28 below.

Response 28: "Oh, they are! OK, yah, most helpful...very helpful, very encouraging roles". [Other respondents agree with her]

Interviewer: "Suppose you had five minutes to talk about coaching, training and mentoring, what would you say?"

Response 29: "Maybe you should recognise that in class people don't have the same level of skills. Some might know more than others, like when we started a computer class, some people in our class knew a lot. So when coaching someone you should take into account that not everyone is in the same standard".

It is usually the case with computer skills that students are at different levels when they commence computer classes. The respondent pointed out that it was therefore important when they were offering one another peer support to take into account that not everyone was at the same level. The theme also came up during the first focus group discussions and during the one-to-one interview with one of the teachers, Connie. Connie said that the huge gaps levelled out by the time students reached the second year.

Response 30: "You should also be patient with people who might not pick things up as quickly as others. Some people pick things up much more quickly. Some people pick things up not much so quicker...also...I think candour is important in coaching, and not just talking all the time. I also think it's important to let the students do, not that the tutor does it all the time on the blackboard. That's you get bored, but students get more involved and they learn it quicker...what else?"

Interviewer: "It is fine...anything else?"

Response 31: "It should be more than lecture-type speeches. For me, handouts do nothing. I don't even look at them. What I know is what I hear, and what I see, that's it!"

The above respondent pointed out that students offering peer support were supposed to use interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence (Altuntas and Akyil, 2011; Grant, 2011; Hargreaves, 2004) in order to have an understanding that some people were prone to grasp things faster than others. As a result, they needed to be patient with students who might be slow in picking up things. It was also important for the student and teacher offering support to give individual and group tasks instead of just talking and writing on the board without giving something practical to do. When students were not given tasks, they get bored and disengage with the lesson. In contrast, students get motivated and display creativity when given tasks and therefore learn faster. The CVF hypothesises an emphasis on people skills, support for team members, peer support, teamwork, creativity, and individual and collective goals (Belason and Frank, 2010; Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Helfrich *et al.*, 2007; Zaft *et al.* 2009; Yardley and Neal, 2007).

Response 32: "What about practice?"

Response 33: "It works for me like in Bookkeeping and Computers that kind of thing, whereas on theoretical skills...or knowledge...I'll be more...like learning through my ears. ...see even like here I don't even write things down because if I hear them I remember them, if I read it, I don't..."

Interviewer: "Yes, yes".

Response 34: "Well, there is no course that will be perfect for everyone".

Interviewer: "Yes, yes".

Response 35: "Thank God teachers know that...and they get as much as they can for everyone".

Interviewer: "OK, because learning styles are different, anyway". [A couple of respondents agree with that assertion]

The respondent who said that he relied on his ears and did not write notes during lessons was the odd one out and his views conflicted with those of other focus group members. He also argued that he remembered everything that he listened to and did not remember anything that he read.

Response 36: "So it's always important to remember that if you are taught something whatever and take it to your heart, and then in four or five months if I've forgotten, I found my notes were very helpful. You'll forget it, unless if you have a good memory like that gentleman over there. But, I don't, and it's the notes then that stood to me. If in some classes I don't get notes, I am lost, without handouts I won't remember".

Other respondents: "Yah, yah, yah".

In contrast to the respondent that relied on listening rather than writing notes or revision, the majority of respondents were in agreement that they relied on their notes in order to remember what they had learnt. It was evident that learning styles are different (Jarvis, 2004; Knowles and Shepherd, 2005).

Interviewer: "Do you think you are getting adequate support from your Co-ordinator, teachers/tutors and peers that assist you to achieve your objectives? We've already talked about the support you get from peers".

Respondents agreed, and this researcher continued with the discussion.

Interviewer: "But, what about the support that you get from teachers/tutors, are you happy with it?"

Response 37: "Yes, yes, more than helpful". [In unison]

Interviewer: "More than helpful, right. OK and what about the Co-ordinator? What would you say about her?"

Response 38: "She's very helpful, very friendly, and very open, you don't feel intimidated, her door is always open and you can go to her at any stage. Eh, I guess it's very important if you feel that you can't approach somebody or that they will give out to you for wasting their time as they are so busy, you don't get that. She's very, very approachable...then you can bring up any subject on whatever is bothering you, so she's a very nice person, yah".

Interviewer: "OK...OK". [Nods his head]

Response 39: "She goes that extra bit, and she's interested in everyone's welfare...She's interested in everyone's welfare. She doesn't have a set of rules for every one (treats each case on its merit) because one student in our class didn't really like the subjects, which she started off doing, and she met with the Co-ordinator, and the Co-ordinator discussed her best options. Then she moved to different modules here and she's much happier then. So...eh...she wants you to get on. She just doesn't have the same vision for everyone (has different visions for different people). She has a broad spectrum".

The views of the second focus group about the qualities and attributes of Daisy, the VTOS Co-ordinator, reinforced what the first focus group had already said.

Interviewer: "OK, OK. Suppose you were in charge of the VTOS programme, what changes would you make in order to make the programme more effective in delivering services to students?"

Response 40: "I think it's handy to say I don't want Spanish now, I want to do Cooking. It's just good to have kind of a bit of noncore subjects to do because it's kind of so intense at times. If we have a bit of fun it kind of balances the week out. We used to cook on Fridays, and very much after a heavy few days of the week, and then on a Friday you go there. It's a Friday evening, you wind down and you do the cooking and it's very entertaining and we all enjoyed it. If it's busy, busy, busy, you tend to kind of ...er...heh! While the kind of fun in subjects...mean the Spanish is kind of something different. It's very entertaining, to go abroad on holidays was handy...ah...you catch up with that kind of noncore subject. Some kind of social subject, the way we call it, some bit of fun, a little bit of fun, entertainment in a week. It will encourage people to come more often I think, if there's some bit of fun".

This interviewer: "OK, OK. So you mean non-examined subjects?" *Response 41:*

"Yah, it just makes that interesting and people need that".

Response 42: "It takes off pressure".

Response 43: "It does...It does. It's just a different subject that you wouldn't normally do. It wasn't Payroll, Bookkeeping, Excel, Database...all figures, all sums. This was something very different, to learn a language is very interesting".

Respondents repeated what Ayanda had already said about the importance of striking a balance between the core and non-core subjects or between the product and the process as it made the learning experience more enjoyable (Botes and van Rensburg, 2000). Learning other European languages had an important social dimension when students went on holiday or when they participated in student exchange programmes such as Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig (Figel, 2008; Powell *et al.*, 2003).

Interviewer: "I realise that most FETAC Level 5 courses offered by colleges of further education are done in one year. Therefore, don't you think that the fact that you do your course in two years allows you some flexibility to do noncore subjects or social subjects as you prefer to call them?"

Response 44: "Yah, but that's one thing I've noticed. The subjects weren't crammed. You didn't have to get everything within two hours, but it was spread over to take a bit of pressure off you. It was spread over a nice period of time".

Interviewer: "Yah, I understand. But, I still feel that two years gives you some bit of flexibility to accommodate non-core subjects. From your experience, what do you think?"

Response 45: "We do more choice, yah. You kind of know where you are going for the next two years, and you kind of feel secure in that fact and you learn a lot more. I was very happy with the two years. I would do three years, if I had to do three. One year is very short".

Respondents stated that studying their courses over two years helped to ease congestion in their programme and therefore relieved pressure on them. In addition, they agreed that the two-year programme allowed them flexibility to incorporate non-core subjects. They also stated that two years gave them the opportunity to comfortably settle in to do their studies.

Interviewer: "I've discussed all the questions that I had prepared for this interview. Do you have anything else to share?"

Response 46: "I think maybe the four-hour Bookkeeping class from 9 am to 1 pm on Tuesday morning to afternoon, I found that a bit intensive. That's because we did not know the subject prior to enrolling on the course. I would have thought that the fact it is Business and Administration course that it would have been better if we had two spilt classes for Business, say, maybe Tuesday and Thursday mornings as opposed to one four-hour class on Tuesday. We had to get in a lot and there was a lot in it. I think it might be more beneficial if it was spilt over two days".

Interviewer: "Yes, yes, to have it spilt over two days".

Response 47: "Yah, a four-hour class in any subject is too long".

The issue of a four-hour Bookkeeping class was discussed with Daisy, the Co-ordinator, and she agreed that she was aware of the problem but that lack of room space and the allocation of teaching hours was an impediment. Most respondents concurred that it was problematic to do four in one block in any subject except one research who was at odds with the rest who stated that it made no difference to him. It was the same respondent that had stated earlier on that his memory relied on listening rather than writing notes and reading.

Interviewer: "Anything else?"

Response 48: "I want just to compliment the college here that we are fortunate to have this opportunity to up-skill ourselves. You know we are learning a lot in IT...stuff that..." [Final words are not clearly audible on the tape].

Respondents appeared anxious that the question about the two-year duration of training for the courses may probably lead to outcomes or recommendations of the study that may influence policy makers to slash the training period to less than two years. The response below explicitly showed those concerns and weighed in possibly to make sure that the inevitable doesn't happen.

Response 49: "We need the two years because with computers, we start off at Level 4 and next year we'll be going to Level 6. So I mean we need the two years".

Interviewer: "Yes, I understand. I only asked about the two years because before making preparations for these interviews I believed that it takes one year to study a FETAC Level 5 course. However, from experience I also think that spreading the course over two years is beneficial".

This researcher was aware that as an Adult Educator and Community Development practitioner there were ethics, ethos and principles that guide him to participate in research that was humanistic or that did not worsen the plight of marginalised groups.

Response 50: "You've got probably more time to practise and stuff like that".

Response 51: “Anyway, in general, I wouldn’t mind if we kept slightly busier and in two years we do Level 6 altogether”.

There were murmurs in protest to the above response which could be heard coming from other research participants who were begrudgingly complaining about the bravado of the respondent. Again, it was the same student who had views that conflicted with the rest of the focus group members.

This researcher wrapped up the discussions with the following closing remarks after realising that there were no more contributions.

Interviewer: “Thank you very much for attending the interview process. I greatly appreciate your contributions, especially considering that the interviews came at a time when you had already written your examinations or finished all your assessments”.

Respondents: “Thank you too”.

The interview process with the second focus group was for 30 minutes 54 seconds. The next interview process is with one of the teachers, Bianca.

3.13.4 One-to-one interview with Bianca (a teacher)

This researcher explained confidentiality issues before commencing with the recording of the interview. He gave the respondent the Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form for her to read before signing the latter. The second teacher to attend the interview was referred to as *Bianca* throughout this study. The tape recorded interview process went as indicated below:

Interviewer: “My name is Rabson and I originally come from Zimbabwe. I’ve been living in Ireland for the past 12 years. I was with Daisy at Mary I College at some stage, and got introduced to this education institution through her. Things were not working for me in other areas...” [Interjection]

Bianca: “Yah, she’s great!”

Interviewer: “...and then I thought I would rather look for Daisy down here. Thank you very much for choosing to participate in the research process...” [Interjection]

Bianca: “Not at all, not at all. No problem”.

Interviewer: “It will really be of great benefit to me. In any case, I think you are familiar with what my research is all about. To start with, I would like to know if leadership skills were embedded in the curriculum of the course that you did when you trained as a teacher.”

Bianca: “Eh, okay, I trained way back in the eighties and I would have done my course in Maynooth. It would be an H Dip in Ed⁸, which would give you an idea of how to teach. But as to whether it...leadership skills...maybe not. You were trained to teach and impart information, and...develop it as you go along. And working now, the various courses that I’ve done along the years and particularly working on adult education, there’s more emphasis on leadership, you know...and...eh, am I answering your question alright?” *Interviewer:* “Yes, yes”.

Bianca: “If I’ve gone off the point, let me know”.

Interviewer: “Anyway, so far you are doing fine...you seem to be answering OK. Please feel comfortable and answer the questions the best way you can. It’s not that you have to give me the answers that I am interested in”.

Bianca stated that she trained as a teacher in the 1980s and that during that time training courses for teachers did not include topics on leadership skills. Conversely, Ayanda who upskilled by doing a degree course two years ago asserted that topics on leadership skills were very prominent.

Bianca: “OK, OK...that’s a great thing. What I find now, being where I am because I am teaching adult education, which is totally different to a secondary school. Secondary school had teenagers and you had to deal with them in a different way. You had to get a curriculum done and you had to do so much with as to impart leadership skills to them and you know...and you have to do a bit of mentoring as well. You have to check your kids and more so serve as mentors. But, when you are dealing with adults, it’s especially different in that you are watching them and seeing how they are going...and you are in contact with them more because we are on more or less an even...an even keel. See, it’s...how do I say it? We’re around the same level; they’re adults, I am an adult. They are coming to learn, I am giving them information, and I am showing them how to do it. We tend to sit down and talk to them, more...eh...on an adult level...and therefore, you know, you can...I suppose, yes, there’s more leadership skills involved in that. They would come from many directions and you showing them what they can and cannot do”.

Bianca pointed out that she used different teaching approaches to teach secondary school students compared to the ones she used when dealing with adults. Furthermore, she stated that she employed mentoring when she supervised secondary school students, but that she was not using mentoring skills when teaching adults. She also said that adult learning was selfdirected and more independent and that adults needed guidance rather than close supervision (Jarvis, 2004; Knowles and Shepherd, 2005). In addition, Bianca said that teachers tended to sit down with adult learners and discuss issues as equals on a one-to-one basis. Lastly, Bianca pointed out that there were more

⁸ H Dip in Ed refers to a Higher Diploma in Education is a postgraduate teaching course in Ireland.

leadership skills involved in the supervision of adults because their experiential knowledge-base is more diverse (Jarvis, 2004; Knowles and Shepherd, 2005).

Interviewer: "But, do you think the demand for leadership skills is different now compared to what used to be the case at the time when you trained as a teacher?"

Bianca: "Oh, much...much...that's thirty years...that's in the eighties...that's thirty years ago. Most definitely!"

Interviewer: "OK, OK".

Bianca: "It has. There's more emphasis on people becoming their own person and learning to do things...and that is good at developing staff. I mean a leader in what they do or being able to help somebody".

Bianca agreed that there was more emphasis during the time of the study for teachers and students to acquire leadership skills compared to what was the case three decades ago. Bianca also stated that leadership skills have become necessary in recent years because there was a shift to embracing student-centred approaches.

Interviewer: "OK. Thank you. How and when do you use leadership skills during the course of executing your teaching duties? I think you have already said something about it, maybe you may have something more to say about it especially where it pertains to adult education".

Bianca: "Yah, it's different. For me, a lot of group work...a lot of group work. You have to, you know, you put a group together in small groups of six to eight people, and you look at people who decide they are going to lead the group, and you can see the rest of the group looking at them. So you have to kind of...you let them do it for a bit and you let them see where it's going. Then the person will realise this is more than they can do, and you say why. [...] so yes it does. It does come into...especially with group work. They have to be able to work as a group and they have to decide who will...not somebody in charge, but as somebody who will take down what's going to happen. So that's a running operation in place rather than just you know sure, if it happens it happens".

Bianca asserted that leadership skills were important in putting groups together, managing and supervising them.

Interviewer: "Okay. Tell me about the positive experiences that you think leadership skills bring to the learning environment".

Bianca stated that positive experiences that leadership skills brought to the learning environment were dependent on pedagogical leanings of the educator.

Bianca: “There’s a positive, you know. There’s if you can...in approaching knowledge in that I’ve a class that I’ve to teach, and if in doing that I can bring in leadership skills to them in that I can say look this is what we need to do. How do you propose to do and how do you think we should do it. That way you get to think about it, and if they think about it long enough, you know, they will eventually come to it. You see this is adult education. It’s totally different to secondary schools. In secondary schools, is very much myself. I am the one that has to get everything done and I’ve to get the points. You are going into a class for 30 minutes and you go dah, dah, dah, dah, this is what you need to do and that’s it...and yes, there are some...you know, you can do it with them, but it’s an extra, whereas here in adult education, you can kind of sit back a bit, and watch what is happening, work with the group to develop skills, and yes we do it that way”.

Bianca stated that teachers used leadership skills when they supervised their classes. They also used leadership skills when they facilitated a dialogue with their students in order to find out what they proposed to do and how they thought they should do it. A good example that was given later by Bianca and also confirmed by Daisy was that when students came up with an idea of something that they wanted implemented, staff members usually asked them to outline what they wanted to do and how they thought the idea could be implemented. Belasen and Frank (2010) point out that ‘when managers play the mentor and facilitator roles, for example, they use a relational approach to communication that places emphasis on receivers’ insights and feedback’ (p. 283). The CVF recommends the mentor and facilitator roles when dealing with issues that are relational or to do with human resources.

In the middle of the interview, this researcher remembered that he never asked Bianca about the specific programme(s) or group of students that she supervised. Before that, this researcher had been thinking the respondent may be in charge of the Business Administration class, but thought it would be good idea to confirm from her.

Interviewer: “Excuse me, if I may draw you back a bit and clarify a few issues. Which group do you work with?”

Bianca: “I can be Level 4 or Level 5”. This researcher considered the answer rather incomplete.

Interviewer: “Is it the Business Administration group?”

Bianca: “No, I would be working with Level 4 Employability Skills group, and I would also have some work with a mixed group of Level 5’s and Local History”.

Interviewer: “OK, OK. So you sort of work across the spectrum”.

Bianca: “Yes, I work across the spectrum”.

Interviewer: "Therefore, you are not in a Community Care and any other specific group?"

"No, I am not...I am not. No".

Interviewer: "OK. OK".

Bianca: "I would be in the Employability Skills mostly".

Interviewer: "OK...Tell me about the negative experiences that you have gone through when trying to incorporate leadership skills in your teaching approaches".

Bianca: "Negative...I think sometimes that...eh...the people high up, you know, not necessarily that I am in an area where we have a person in charge of us. But, I mean people high up. If you decide to do something with a group, there is no part of paperwork involved in it, and in this country there's an awful lot. You have to take insurance, you can't take them out, you know. I've experienced that with Local History. I would have experienced that with that I would...eh. In the beginning, for the first few months you do half an hour to three quarters of an hour in class, and you take them out and go visit various places. I found out when going to various places owned by the Office of Public Works, they would ask for insurance. They want to know whether you have permission to come down and come in. Eh...that kind of has a negative impact on people, you know, that you would have involved in planning trips. It stops people from wanting to plan something. That's the only negative I put across..."

The issue of insurance cover was a factor that was influenced by the external environment of the education institution. Bianca pointed out that she encountered problems when she went out on fieldtrips with the Local History class when various sites owned by the Office of Public Works demanded insurance cover before they could grant them access. She also said that such negative experiences had an adverse effect on people who would have been involved in planning and that it stopped them from wanting to plan. The internal and external environment constitutes the social, political and economic systems. The CVF asserts that there is a complexity and tension of choices when dealing with the internal and external environment. A good example of complexity and tension of choices is when leadership and management have to adopt transformational roles (mentor, facilitator, innovator and broker) and exercise a certain degree of flexibility when dealing with human relations and open systems. On the other hand, it assumes transactional roles (monitor, co-ordinator, director and producer) and employs rigidity and control when dealing with internal processes and rational goals (Belasen and Frank, 2010).

Interviewer: "OK, Suppose that you were in charge and could make some changes to the VTOS programme, what are the changes that would be in your top priority list?"

Bianca seemed to be thinking of something about the changes that she could make.

Bianca: "If I were to make a change, I think we've a lot of students coming in. Some of them come in and are very sure of themselves, but that would be a third (1/3). The other two thirds (2/3), they...need something that kind of gives them confidence, you know. They need....and I think...where I worked before we always had mentors for our new members of staff when they started. Somebody worked with them, and when they were stuck, someone would show them. Eh...coming here, came at a great disadvantage in that the person in charge was relatively new. Therefore, it was very hard to settle in, but there were two teachers who took me on board. If anything could have happened, I think I could have walked...I could have left, you know. It was such a different system to work in. So I think if you have even student teachers...you need to mentor people. Nowadays you need to mentor people, because there's so much out there, to assist people is expected, anyway...So that now we have a group coming into us and they have been used to stuff being done for them. So they really need mentoring to kind of bring them up, you know what I mean. To prove...to themselves that it is possible".

Bianca was a strong promoter of the mentoring programme and she used the term 'mentor' a number of times during the interview. She regretted that the Adult Education Centre lacked a mentoring service that could cater for the needs of new students and staff members. In addition, she stated that about two-thirds of students needed mentoring sessions in order to boost their confidence and self-esteem.

Interviewer: "So do you mean that this could be a problem as far as the new students or new staff members are concerned?"

Bianca: "Well...it can work...I think if you don't explain to people what happens here, you know, somebody comes in...but I've to say everything is well explained here. You know exactly where you are, what you have to do, and you know what the outcome has to be. But there are places, I mean I've spoken where they have gotten to various places, but they didn't know where the staff-room was. They would have just found their classroom, you know.

Mentoring is really important nowadays. ...and I think people have to be sure of how to become a leader. It's not an innate part, it's not natural to us anymore, and I know some people are naturally born leaders and are good at it. But, there are other people out there that could be just as good, but they don't have the guidance to take them. Am I making sense or I've gone off the topic?"

Bianca pointed out that it was pertinent for the education institution to implement a mentoring programme otherwise what was happening then was that it was being assumed that new students and staff members knew how to access services yet in reality that was not the case. She reiterated that mentoring was an important aspect of contemporary life. Bianca also argued that leadership was no longer innate (Goleman *et al.* (2002) although there were few people that were naturally born leaders and that were good at it.

Interviewer: "Yes...yes. You are making a lot of sense...You are making sense. If you were involved in recruiting students to the VTOS programme, what would you say are the outstanding qualities of your organisation?"

Bianca: "I'll say this that this one is very people-centred. It's big into the person and, you know. They are placed into the programme, and you would drop by for five different courses in the year. The programmes include Community, Business Administration and Employability Skills. You look at the person coming in, you see where they are at, you know, what have they done, where have they gone in school, how far they have progressed, and then you fit them into a course that you think, and I might hate using the word, 'fit'. But you know, you say look maybe if you try this, this and this, and you know if they don't like it there's a possibility of turning around and saying to you, look I don't really like this subject, can I change? And you know insofar as it is possible, I would accommodate it. So I would say it would be very much accommodating to the majority of people. We've taken everyone, and I suppose we are accommodating all...That would be it, I suppose, accommodating them and to put them on a course that suits them, rather than me saying you are going to do English and History, and you are going to do Biology and Geography".

Bianca stated that her organisation was people-centred, and once the student had been enrolled in the programme there was a flexibility of dropping by for a different combination of subjects. The only limitation for dropping by for subjects would be the timetable, and if a student decided to substitute a subject that they did not like for another one, the staff members would consider their request.

Interviewer: "So you give them time...to..." [Interjection]

Bianca: "...we give them time to adjust".

Interviewer: "OK, OK, and the student would say, I am not happy with this subject, I would like to try something else".

Bianca: "Yes...try something else. It's like with the work experience programme, they have to have two weeks work experience and in September you mention work experience, they go ummh...You

mention it again, for example, in January, and then they enthusiastically say I want to work in printing or I would like to work whatever. When they come back they may say oh...my...God, no. But, they have the experience and they know now that that's not for them, and they have to rethink it...I think what we do is try to...help them...find where they want to go. If you can find a job that you are happy doing and that you love doing it every day, and then it's not a job, you know. It's something that you enjoy doing all the time, and I think that...maybe that's kind of an ideal to achieve. That's what I always say to a work experience group, you know, whatever you enjoy doing if you can find a job doing that to you, then it would be a job, something you enjoy".

Bianca explained that the Adult Education Centre did not push students into doing work experience when they were not ready to do so. If they realised that the student was not yet ready they delayed the work placement but kept the lines of communication open to facilitate dialogue. She stated that work placement helped students to make informed decisions on whether to continue with the course that they were enrolled in or to swap courses.

Interviewer: "Yes...yes. Okay". *Bianca:*

"Did I answer your question?"

Interviewer: "Yes, yes".

Interviewer: "The fact that here your courses are spread over two years compared to maybe to colleges of further education where FETAC Level 5 courses are done in one year, do you think is that helping your students in a certain way?"

Bianca: "I think it depends on the type of students you have...and I think for us an awful lot of our students are coming back to education, you know. I mean maybe they worked for 20 years in a factory, and then it closes down, but they went in with very little education, you know. They may have just done...in some cases they might have just the Group Certificate or Intermediate Certificate, which is the same as the Junior Cert now. So they may never have done a Leaving Cert, you know, or they came to work coming straight from Leaving Cert or some of them were made redundant because of recession. So I think our students are different, and some of them come back and their self-esteem and their self-confidence would have been wiped. If you worked for 20 years and went on a Friday and you are told that it's all gone. You know the effect of that on the person, maybe what we do is different to the colleges of further education...You would have been maybe doing the Leaving Cert, maybe not getting what they really wanted, and they go in there, and they are at a different stage. We would have people who have done two years with us and they got to do Level 6 there, but if talking to somebody who did it last year and is now in...doing a Level 6 there. He turned out and said if he had gone straight from losing his job to the College of Further Education, he would have left it. He said that but the two years showed him what he needed to do

and what was expected of him. So now he has the confidence, you know. He says if somebody said to him you can't do it, he would have turned out and said you are wrong, I know what I am doing, and I learnt all of that. So maybe it's a bit of...eh...safety net, you know".

Bianca argued that the duration of FETAC Level 5 courses was primarily influenced by the type of students that enrolled for courses in VTOS programmes and in the colleges of further education. The majority of students that enrol for courses in VTOS programmes were of low educational achievement or would have been out of education for a long period of time. As a result, she pointed out that the two-year programme for VTOS courses was justified. Some of the VTOS graduates progress to do FETAC Level 6 courses in colleges of further education after getting grounding by doing the VTOS Level 5 courses. If it was not for that grounding they would find Level 6 very challenging. In contrast, most of those who enrol in colleges of further education usually do so immediately after completing the Leaving Certificate examinations or would have been out of education for a short period of time.

Interviewer: "Maybe what you do here is equivalent to personal development courses that target a particular group of students in some third level institutions. Personal development courses may target students from marginalised backgrounds. Such courses help to boost the students' self-esteem and confidence. I also think maybe it's more relaxed here".

Bianca: "Yes, it's more relaxed here. I think that's what schools are missing, I know Rabson we're getting totally off the point, but it's coming back to coaching and mentoring. In schools, you are coaching them through five years so that they get so many points and go on, but nobody looks at the personality of the child that they are developing and that they are emotionally equipped to go on to college to do this...whereas, if you had a mentoring system...you know...I really think if you had a mentoring system there's an awful lot of...oh we are going off the point!"

Bianca agreed that VTOS courses are almost synonymous to personal development courses that equipped course participants with intrapersonal and interpersonal skills in order to gain self-esteem and confidence.

Bianca: "...even in primary schools. The primary school where my child went to school, and there is something I suggested when they were...I think that when my children (inaudible) junior infants. They enjoyed it, but I remember one of them saying because his elder brother came down to him every day at lunch time to see if he was okay, and he had his lunch and everything. He said, you know, the other friends would do it as well. He said that was better, than being on his own and the elder brother said what? I had nobody to do that, and I just thought you need it. So they introduced the mentoring system and the older students would come down to mentor the younger ones. I

think, you know, even in colleges they need the mentoring system as well. I think we really fail in the Irish system in that there's no mentoring...of students. I know we are talking about students, but we are basically talking about mentoring for leadership".

Interviewer: "Yes, yes, yes. You are OK".

Bianca stated that the primary school where her children went introduced the Big Brother Big Sister model of mentoring system after realising that it was beneficial. She also pointed out that there was a need to introduce a mentoring system even in colleges.

Bianca: "It is to do with the kind of educational system".

Interviewer: "Yes".

Bianca: "I think our mentoring system isn't what it should be. In future, if you take what they do in the English system. That seems to be a better".

Interviewer: "There's a better mentoring system there. Okay...eh".

Bianca: "What it is...eh...something that really needs to be looked at. But, yes we are...I consider us to be kind of a safety net...people need that, maybe so often you need it yourself...Something that you can just fall back on".

This researcher believed that the mentoring system could help the growing immigrant student population enrolled in education institutions to settle in. That is particularly so for students who had done part of their education in their countries of origin. The discussion about the need of a mentoring system for students that are enrolled in third level education institutions reminded this researcher how he sometimes struggled with certain aspects of the college learning environment. That was despite the fact that he first did a part-time evening Diploma course before enrolling on a mainstream college course.

Interviewer: "Thank you very much for your time and for assisting me with my research".

Respondent: "Thank you too".

The interview with the second teacher took 23 minutes 14 seconds. The interview that follows is with the third focus group.

3.13.5 Interview with the third focus group

The focus group consisted of four members that were exclusively put together by the Coordinator as a way of encouraging active participation. The Co-ordinator considered members of that particular focus group to be shy. As a result, she believed if they were put in a larger group or with people that they were not familiar with, they could find it difficult to contribute in a meaningful way. Three members of the group were recruited from the General Learning Skills class, and one member was recruited from the Graphic Design class.

In contrast to the Co-ordinator's assertion, during the interview the Graphic Design student turned out to be a very proficient and articulate speaker. This researcher believes that the Coordinator might have strategically chosen him to be part of the focus group mainly composed of shy members because his qualities could help to assist in coordinating the focus group. He lived up to those expectations and helped to coordinate dialogue between this researcher and the other three members.

As was the norm with all other focus groups, this researcher introduced himself, read the Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form and explained about confidentiality issues. In addition, he emphasised that participation was entirely voluntary, and reiterated that respondents were free not to answer questions that they felt not comfortable to answer. All the above procedures were done before recording the interviews. After research participants had signed the Informed Consent Forms, he asked for permission to tape record the interview.

Interviewer: "How and in what ways do your teachers/tutors equip you with leadership skills?"

Response 1: "I won't answer that question".

Interviewer: "OK, OK, you won't answer the question".

Surprisingly, Respondent 1 changes his mind and made the following comments.

Response 2: "You know, I'll tell you this. It is by default that your leadership improves because the teachers and tutors improve your self-confidence, which in turn...gives you better ability to express the leader within you...So that is the main way I think teachers and tutors equip you with leadership skills and improve your self-confidence".

Interviewer: "So you say it is by default...they don't directly teach you leadership skills, but somehow you acquire them?"

Response 3: "No, no, your leadership skills improve".

Interviewer: "OK...they improve".

The respondent changed his mind and proceeded to answer the question. He said that teachers and tutors did not directly equip them with leadership skills but improved their selfconfidence. The respondent also stated that the improved self-confidence gave students the ability to express the leader within them. In brief, the respondent pointed out that there was a positive correlation between the increase of confidence and the increase of leadership skills.

Response 4: "If you don't have any leadership skills you".

The above response implied that certain people are born with leadership skills, but those skills needed to be nurtured through training. The respondent also pointed out that those who are born without leadership skills could not acquire them through training.

Response 5: "I studied Graphic Design, I did not study leadership".

Interviewer: "So you are saying there are people who are born with leadership skills, and there are some who are born without leadership skills?"

Response 6: "Well, I can't speak for other people, but I can only speak for my leadership skills".

Interviewer: "OK, which you said improve".

Response 7: "Well, yes. Your capacity to express your leadership skills improves".

Response 8: "I agree".

Interviewer: "You say you agree".

Response 9: "Yes, I agree".

Interviewer: "Thank you for your contribution. Feel free to contribute..." [Interjection]

Response 10: "What's your name?"

Respondent 11: "Suzanna" (not real name).

Response 12: "I'll...I'll a little bit". This was in response to this researcher who had said that Suzanna should feel free to contribute.

Interviewer: "Yes, You should feel free to talk".

Interviewer: "Could you please explain to me about how leadership is distributed in your class?"

Response 13: "In my class, I am very conscious that we had a very balanced class. I think we had a really very good class".

Interviewer: "OK".

Response 14: "I would say that there was no leader, you know. There was no leader...There wasn't because it was about individual learning. So I didn't see any opportunity for people to lead...People were very helpful to each other, and supportive to each other, but there was no leadership within the class...from the student. I presume you mean the student".

Interviewer: "Yes...yes".

Response 15: "There was no student who led anything...they didn't lead anything at all. We didn't operate that way".

Interviewer: "But, you supported one another?"

Response 16: "I feel that we were quite a supportive class...yah. Now, I suppose when I think on it, if there were one or two times when students seemed unhappy, I would say there were one or two other students who calmed the situation down, maybe who said well hold on, let's wait".

Interviewer: "Would those students say maybe approach the authorities and say something about it even after calming the other students?"

Response 17: "No". *Interviewer:* "Do you mean they wouldn't take a formal role?"

Response 18: "No".

Response 19: "In my group is the same story because we have only 8 people in the group. It's a small group and everybody is friendly"

This focus group was the only one that stated that they neither had formal nor informal leaders in their course groups.

After exactly 5 minutes, two other members of the focus group who have been absent all along joined the group. The interview had started with two focus group members instead of four. This researcher introduced himself to the new arrivals, and explained that he had already read through

the Information Sheet and the Informed Consent Form to the other two research participants. He gave them the two documents and advised them to read through then sign the Informed Consent Form if they were happy to do so. This researcher also told them not to rush through the documents. In addition, he said they may alternatively first participate in the discussion and read and sign the documents later. However, this researcher also clarified that if at a later stage they decided to withdraw from the study, their contributions would not be factored into the study. The two respondents opted to first read through the Information Sheet and the Informed Consent Form and sign the latter. They did not take long to read through the documents and append their signatures because the two documents were more or less similar to the ones they had signed in the first stage of the research process.

Interviewer: "Do you think it is important to equip students with leadership skills?"

Response 20: "When they are going to work, they can speak up and...you know, be confident".

Interviewer: "Do you mean they stand up for themselves or that in order to tell that things are going well they have to know the difference between bad and good leadership?"

Response 21: "There is a difference between assertiveness and leadership".

Interviewer: "Do you think what she said has something to do with assertiveness rather than leadership?"

Response 22: "What's your name?"

Response 23: "Filda" (not real name).

Response 24: "When Filda said that leadership gives you the ability to speak up for yourself. I think that is assertiveness". [Other respondents say "Yes" in unison]

Response 25: "...and I am not sure...what assertiveness does certainly is to speak up for yourself, but leadership is a different thing to me...is to bring a group of people in a direction that you want them to go in...or maybe good leadership is bringing them to a place where...finding out where they want to go and bringing them, you know what I mean".

Interviewer: "Yes, yes".

Response 26: "The discussion has to happen what is the meaning of the different types of leadership. The more I get to think...I think different types of leadership bring people together to think where they want to go. It's a different process, and it requires a different set of skills".

Interviewer: "Yes. It's an interesting contribution".

The respondent said speaking up for oneself was assertiveness and not leadership. He further said that leadership was the ability to influence followers. Leadership is the ability to convince, aspire, convince, persuade and influence followers to work towards achieving certain goals and objectives (Julsuwan *et al.*, 2011; Lester, 2007).

Interviewer: "Tell me about practical situation(s) in which leadership skills have helped you to achieve your goals".

The question was followed by a bit of silence. When this researcher realised that, he clarified the question.

Interviewer: "It is not that the leadership would be necessarily in you. It would be someone's leadership skills that would have helped you to achieve your goals. Can you think of any situation or an example?" The explanation seemed to have done the trick.

Response 27: "I can think of loads...eh...within the Union⁹. I am a member of the Union.

They would have been a plenty of examples where leadership achieved...helped many to achieve their goals. In a different situation, I was working in a Cooperative where the leadership was very effective and helping us to achieve our goals".

The Trade Union Movement was a good example of an organisation that was staffed with people who used negotiation and facilitation skills to help members achieve their goals and objective.

Interviewer: "OK...anything else?" Again, there was silence.

Interviewer: "You have to feel free to talk. I mean it's not about English language, you know".

Response 28: "I've don't have enough English".

Interviewer: "No, it's not about having enough English...Let's say maybe in this education institution, would you think of a situation whereby leadership skills of particular individual(s)...It could be the Co-ordinator, a teacher/tutor...whose skills would have helped you to achieve your goals. Have you come across that?" Again, there was brief silence.

Response 29: "We were dealing with personal to personal skills case...with our teacher and she taught us how to speak out and all the different kinds of behaviours".

⁹ Union refers to the Trade Union movement.

Interviewer: "So the leadership of your teacher helped you..."

Response 30: "Yah".

The respondent pointed out that the training that they received from their teacher helped them to gain confidence and to speak out about things that affected their educational experience and livelihoods. The approach employed by the concerned teacher had characteristics of Freirean methodologies and philosophies. Elias (1994) points out that:

Freire's educational efforts are decidedly political. He is not an educator who sees intrinsic value in education for its own sake. What motivates him is realisation that people's lives in many parts of the world are impoverished. As an educator, Freire attempted to respond to this in the way he knew best, by involving the people in a process of critical reflection on their situation (p. 29).

The learning process needs to be structured in a manner that transforms the reasoning and worldview of the learner. Freire (1972) points out that 'conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth. Those who undergo it must take on a new form of existence; they can no longer remain as they were' (p. 37). Although transformation of the learner is desirable, it needs to be carefully managed and to coincide with what the learner has been promised. Failure to do that may result in raising the anxiety levels of the adult learner.

Interviewer: "OK". The researcher then moved on to the fifth question.

Interviewer: "Suppose you had five minutes to talk about coaching, training and mentoring, what would you say?"

Response 31: "The person has to know what they are talking about themselves to be able to put it across to other people, so that other people can learn it from that person. They have to be able to give out the subject they are talking about. They have to have knowledge of it, technology of it, and they have to be able to give it out so that people can pick it up, and take it on board".

Interviewer: "So you mean in order to mentor, coach and train, the person has to be knowledgeable of the subject area?"

Response 32: "Yes, I agree".

Response 33: "I also agree that it's very true that with coaching, training and mentoring you must have the knowledge of what you are trying to impart. Eh...is it a different stream coaching, training and mentoring, do you think...or trainer?"

Response 34: "Yah...coaching and training sounds like sports, or that kind of stuff...and mentoring sounds like classroom, you are a mentor...a teacher".

Response 35: "...and coaching?" *Response 36:* "Coaching sounds like a coach, you know...in different kinds of sport, that's what I think...when I read it".

The respondents pointed out that in order for someone to coach, mentor or train another person s/he has to be knowledgeable or an expert in the subject area. Coaching is bidirectional and participative designed to develop the coachee to the full (Bolt, 2000). Mentoring is when a protégé is learning from a more experienced senior person (Bolt, 2000). A trainer needs to have specific skills (Bolt, 2000) and training is the formal teaching of skills (Walmsley, 2005).

Interviewer: "Yes, yes, it's alright because the thing is we are not really...looking for right or wrong answer".

This researcher also thanked the actively participating respondent for being creative and for assisting in group facilitation. This researcher realised that his active participation and facilitative skills had helped other focus group members to gain confidence to participate in the discussions.

Interviewer: "How would you define coaching, mentoring and training?" This question was directed to the actively participating and articulate focus group member.

Response 36: "I suppose that they are very similar. I accept that mentoring probably...it means that you have to achieve the thing yourself. Now, ultimately you are...everybody achieves the thing themselves, but mentoring seems to me to be more of an individual thing between you and somebody else. Eh...coaching...you know training could be training as part of a team. You all run the same route every night. You are learning specific tasks. Eh...I think mentoring probably is...you are given information to achieve something yourself...assist you to achieve something yourself that is less defined. ...and coaching, similarly I suppose".

The respondent's definition of mentoring was very close to what had already been proffered by this researcher. He was also correct to assert that coaching and training were usually delivered to a group of trainees or a team.

Interviewer: "Do you think you are getting adequate support from your Co-ordinator, teachers/tutors and peers in order to achieve your objectives? Let's start with the Coordinator. Do you think you are getting enough support from her?"

Response 37: "Yah, enough...more than enough, she'll help you. You just come ask, and she straight away helps you".

Response 38: "She's always available in her office if you need to speak to her".

Response 39: "I would agree that they are very supportive, but I do think that their resources are limited. They are excellent tutors and a Co-ordinator, but I am aware that they have limits and their resources...you know what I mean. There would be things that they would prefer to do, but they don't have the funding". [Other respondents overwhelmingly agreed]

Respondents stated that they received adequate support from the VTOS Co-ordinator. That concurred with the results of the quantitative survey and with what was said by the other two focus groups. Respondents also asserted that the Co-ordinator was supportive and had an open door policy and other focus groups reinforced that. However, one of the respondents pointed out that although the administration and teaching staff were supportive they lacked resources in order to achieve their objectives. The VTOS Co-ordinator and teachers also cited lack of resources and supports during interviews.

Response 40: "But, if it's compared to my country, here they are fabulous".

Response 41: "What's your country?"

Response 42: "[name withheld, but it was a country in Eastern Europe]....Here, I am very happy. I really enjoy everything, completely everything. But, it's only compared to my country".

It was not surprising for an immigrant respondent to rate the quality of public services by comparing them with those offered by her country of origin. This researcher sometimes also benchmarked and judged the quality of service delivery here in Ireland in relation to his experiences in his country of origin. That in some occasions obviously resulted in discrepancies when rating the quality of services delivered to the public here in Ireland.

Interviewer: "I realise that in colleges of further education they do FETAC Level 5 courses within a year, and here you do the same courses in two years. Do you think that is in anyway helpful?"

Response 43: "I prefer two years because I don't want to end up in confusion. I didn't know some kind of stuff with computers before I came here. So I find that it helps to do the two years".

Interviewer: "So the two years gives you more time to acquire computer skills?"

Response 44: "Yes".

Interviewer: "You are probably using computer skills when writing assignments in other modules. Therefore, without computer skills it would be difficult to do those assignments".

Response 45: "Yes, we are".

The respondent stated that it was advantageous to do the course in two years because it gave them a degree of flexibility to do computer lessons in a more relaxed atmosphere. The respondent also pointed out that there were students who did not understand certain aspects about computer technology before they enrolled on the course. Respondents agreed that they used computer skills when writing assignments in other modules. All focus groups, teachers and the VTOS Co-ordinator were in favour of the two-year programme and not the one-year programme similar to that offered by colleges of further education.

This researcher then asked focus group members if they had anything else to contribute.

Response 46: "It is helpful...it's really helpful especially if you lose the job like me. ...I am busy. I improve my English. I improve my communication skills".

Interviewer: "So the two years have really helped you to do all that?"

Response 47: "Yes".

Response 48: "...you can choose subjects that you want to study...but if you want something...an extra subject from Business or Art you can speak with the Co-ordinator".

Interviewer: "So you have electives, that is, you can choose other subjects or modules from a different course?"

Response 49: "Yes...It makes life more interesting".

Interviewer: "Is that flexibility not possible in a one-year programme?"

Response 50: "No".

The fact that the respondents brought back the issue of the two-year programme showed the importance that they attributed to it. It may have been out of concern and uncertainty on whether the outcomes of the study might lead to a recommendation of the scrapping of the two-year programme. Ayanda, Bianca, Connie, Daisy and the other two focus groups also defended the two-year programme and stated that it had advantages.

Interviewer: "Suppose you were in charge of the VTOS programme, what changes would you make in order to make the programme more effective in delivering services to students?"

Response 51: "Right, to get an award you have to achieve 120 points. I would increase the amount of points for each subject, so that you will have to do fewer subjects to achieve the award. This would mean you could specialise. You could spend more time on the subjects that you choose".

This researcher sought clarification from the respondent on the issue of points. He explained that each subject or module was worth 20 points.

Interviewer: "So what it means is that you can't get a full award unless you have 120 points? That means that the number of modules that you would offer on your programmes will be less than those offered at the moment".

Response 52: "Yes, I would specialise...I would keep the option of doing more modules for less points, you know".

Interviewer: "Do you mean depending maybe on the weighting that you assign to each module, and one module could be either 20 or more points?"

Response 53: "Yes".

Interviewer: "So what you mean is that you find the current system rather unfair or biased in that it assigns the same points to all modules regardless of the fact that some are more difficult than others?"

Response 54: "Yes".

The argument that was raised by the above respondent had some logic and plausibility. The respondent's argument was based on that assigning more points to modules and doing less modules could give students the chance to specialise. The argument was also on the basis that certain modules were more difficult than others and yet they were assigned the same number of points. When this researcher discussed the issue with Daisy, the VTOS Co-ordinator, she agreed that the concerned respondent had a valid point. However, she pointed out that the Adult Education Centre had no jurisdiction over assessment and the quality assurance of courses. It was the remit of the Further Education Training Awards Council (FETAC). Daisy also clarified that each major award at Level 5 had eight core subjects.

Interviewer: "I understand you have to be unemployed for a certain period of time before you qualify to do a course on the programme, how long is that?"

Response 55: "Six months".

Respondent 56: "I don't know if it is six months or you simply have to be on a social welfare payment".

Interviewer: "Don't you come across people that are unemployed but not signing the unemployment register because their spouses might be working, but are interesting in registering for courses in the VTOS programme? However, they may be rejected on the basis that they are not in receipt of a social welfare payment".

Response 57: "But, that's unfair. I would change that...I would make it open to everybody...The fact that one's spouse is working doesn't mean that they can't contribute anything".

This researcher wanted to tease out the focus group members in order to find out how they felt about the exclusion on VTOS courses of potential applicants on the basis that they were not in receipt of a social welfare because their spouses were working. One respondent said that it was an unfair practice not to allow such potential applicants to enrol on VTOS courses and to contribute to the development of the country.

Interviewer: "Do you have anything else to add to the discussion?"

Response 58: "I would like to do Level 6 in the VTOS programme, and they only do Level 5. To do Level 6 now, I've to go to college or university. These tutors could easily teach Level 6...going to college or university has a cost factor, you know, and the tutors here are well able to teach Level 6".

This researcher thought that the respondent made the above contribution because of anxiety in the face of starting a new life. The concerned respondent had already settled in at the Adult Education Centre, and therefore felt as if he was being moved out of his comfort zone if he were progress with education in another setting. The other thing was that the Centre predominantly enrolls adults, but colleges of further education and third level institutions primarily enrol teenagers and younger adults. As a result, some mature candidates may find the atmosphere in colleges of further education and third level institutions not very encouraging.

Interviewer: "Thank you very much ladies and gentleman. You really helped me a lot. I appreciate the time and effort that you devoted to this research. I particularly consider that this research came at a time when you had gone through your studies and you solely came back to assist in the research".

Respondents: "Thank you too".

The interview process with the third focus group was for 32 minutes 19 seconds. The next interview that is transcribed below was with the VTOS Co-ordinator.

3.13.6 One-to-one interview with Daisy (the VTOS Co-ordinator)

This researcher introduced himself and explained confidentiality issues prior to recording the interviews. After that, he gave the research participant the Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form for her to read before signing the latter. In order to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participant, the VTOS Co-ordinator was throughout the interview and research process referred to as *Daisy*. The tape recorded interview process proceeded as reflected below:

Interviewer: "Thank you very much for according me this interview".

Daisy: "You are welcome".

Interviewer: "Since you are the VTOS Co-ordinator here, do you think leadership skills are embedded in the training curriculum for teachers/tutors?"

Daisy: "Eh...I think they are not necessarily explicit, but it is...I feel it is part of what we do in the sense that I suppose how we structure our programmes. The culture maybe of VTOS itself is about respect, the state where the learner is at, listening to learners and as much as we can to develop individual timetables for our learners. Now, so in all that, like two particular students won't always have the same timetable. Obviously, if you want to get your major award in Community Care, for instance, you have to do your mandatory subjects. But, within that then there are other options as well...attached to subjects".

Daisy stated that leadership skills might not necessarily be included in the training curriculum for teachers, but leadership was part of what the teaching staff did and this was partly because of the way the VTOS programmes were structured, which included respect for the learner.

Freire (2005) asserts that 'our relationship with learners demands that we respect them and demands equally that we be aware of the concrete conditions of their world, the conditions that shape them' (p. 102). The organisational culture of VTOS education institutions embraced respect for stakeholders, the state where the learner was at and student-centred approaches. It was therefore taken for granted that staff members cannot embrace the aforementioned principles without exercising leadership skills. In other words, the VTOS programmes were regulated by those who design the curriculum such that teachers exercise leadership in an implicit rather than explicit manner.

Interviewer: "I heard about that during discussions before this interview. So what you mean is that they have core subjects and in addition to that they can have electives?"

Daisy: "Correct...yah".

Interviewer: "How many core subjects would they have?"

Daisy: "By large for your major award at Level 5, you will have 8 core subjects for each one, like Work Experience and Communications are mandatory across all of them. But, within that then or as well as that it depends on your subject areas like Community Care or specific on Graphic Design...But, of the last few years, I've introduced subjects such as Psychology and we are offering Legal Studies, and every other year we do Social Studies. They are optional subjects. The purpose behind that is to get students thinking, maybe that we are not just about getting a FETAC award. It's not only about getting you a job. It's about maybe broadening your thinking, changing your thinking, building confidence...that's one aspect of it, right. We don't offer...we don't have subjects on leadership".

Daisy clearly explained the difference between core and mandatory subjects, before that this researcher was not aware that Work Experience and Communications were the mandatory subjects. It meant that a FETAC Level 5 candidate needs to pass a minimum of six subjects including Work Experience and Communications, and any other four subjects. Daisy also explained that there were specific core subjects for different courses. In addition, Daisy explained that she had introduced non-core or optional subjects such as Psychology and Legal Studies and in every other year students do Social Studies. She also stated that the rationale behind the introduction of non-core or optional students was to improve the students' thinking capacity, social skills and confidence. Lack of confidence and self-esteem by a significant number of students was also highlighted by Ayanda, Bianca, Connie and the students themselves. Lastly, Daisy asserted that they did not do subjects on leadership and that was also cited by respondents during focus group discussions.

Interviewer: "Yes, yes, I do understand, but..." [Interjection]

Daisy: "But, we are working from an adult education model as well. We do internal news...we do end of term evaluations. If the students come to me and say look we would like...I give an example, like last year we offered Spanish. It would be at Level 3 or Level 4 depending on students and their prior learning...we decided to start at what level... And then this time last year students who were doing Spanish at Level 4 came to me and said look, can we continue with Spanish next year at Level

5 because we are doing well and the teacher is supportive. So I said, OK once I get a minimum number of students who want to do Level 5, we can continue with it to Level 5”.

Daisy said that the Adult Education Centre worked from an adult education model by including students to participate in the generation of internal news and end of term evaluations. Both initiatives gave students a chance to have their voices heard and to have an input in decision-making. Students may use the internal news and end of term evaluation platforms to make proposals about changes and improvement in their academic life. If what they had proposed was feasible, the Centre would implement the changes or improvements.

Interviewer: “OK, yes...it came up during discussions prior to this interview. One of the students mentioned that doing some non-examined electives is good because it relaxes the learning atmosphere rather than all the time to be focussed on passing a particular module”.

Daisy: “Yes...that’s right”.

Interviewer: “They even cited Spanish as an example...But then, if they are doing the nonexamined electives, does it mean they will be doing more than...or end up doing more than eight modules?”

Daisy: “Yes...oh yes. Some could end up over the two years with ten, eleven or twelve modules”.

It was interesting for this researcher to know that students could do up to twelve modules in two years, something that was not achievable in colleges of further education because they do a one-year programme. Students who were enrolled in colleges of further education work under intense pressure to pass a minimum of six core subjects including Work Placement and Communications, which were mandatory. Work Placement and Communications were mandatory in FETAC Level 5 courses. McLaren and Leonard (1993) state that ‘Freirean pedagogy makes it clear that theory and practice work in concert, are mutually informing, and together constitute a dialectical praxis’ (p. 54). Dialogue, reflection and communication are important in the learning process and they transform students to more sophisticated human beings.

Interviewer: “Do you probably do optional subjects because you are taking advantage of the situation that the FETAC Level 5 here is done in two academic years, whereas in colleges of further education it’s done in one academic year?”

Daisy: “Yes”.

Interviewer: “So that gives you some flexibility to do that?”

Daisy: “It does help to do VTOS courses over two years...That’s the real advantage...real value of VTOS that it can be done over two years. So we are not just results-oriented. Eh...I suppose...the other important thing then is that we try to get our students to do is to take responsibility. Go out and get your work placement, you know. You link with the employers.

We bring in employers here. I haven’t made mandatory that they must engage with employers, OK. We encourage, we do mock interviews...eh...not everybody engages, but with that practice and confidence whatever. But, I am trying not to make too many things mandatory because I think we are adults we have to take responsibility...We want to do this...these are opportunities that are there, it’s up to them to take them. Now, the downside of that is that a number of our students maybe are lacking in confidence...and some of them need to be led along more than others”.

Daisy pointed out that the advantage of doing VTOS courses over two years was that it helped them not to only focus on the product (FETAC Level 5), but to also enjoy the process (optional subjects, tours, mock interviews, among others). Ayanda, Bianca, Connie and focus group members also cited the importance of striking a balance between the product and the process. The two-year programme gave a degree of flexibility for students to go for work placement and engage with employers at an appropriate time. The Adult Education Centre invited guest speakers from employers and facilitates students’ engagement with employers. The Centre also did some mock interviews, which were aimed at boosting the confidence of students. Freire (1972) asserts that:

Critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever stage their struggle for liberation has reached. The content of that dialogue can and should vary in accordance with historical conditions and the level at which the oppressed perceive reality (p. 41).

The downside was that some students lack confidence and wanted to continue being led along. Failure to take responsibility often resulted in failure by some students to avail of opportunities.

Interviewer: “Yes...yes, sure. Could the reason probably be that people who come back to adult education programmes including VTOS would have left formal schooling at different levels and that on its own would possibly affect their self-esteem and confidence?”

Daisy: “Yah, yah. But, it is in the second year that we engage with employers. So we are hoping that by the second year they have gained the confidence and the skills to bring themselves forward...put themselves forward, right. For the most part, it works, and then for some it doesn’t. That would be...but maybe...we have that like in all groups, and it’s one of the things that we debate. We’ve ongoing debates...that I’ve with teachers...and the Guidance Service make it mandatory or not to engage with employers. I am still of the view, and I say look if you are ready to go into the

workforce, then you have to be ready to take responsibility, to take opportunities that are up in front of you”.

Daisy stated that it was the policy of the education institution for students to engage with employers in the second year because the expectation was that by then they would have gained confidence to engage with employers. In most cases, the approach worked well but in some instances it did not. They usually experienced that problem with all intakes. There were ongoing debates taking place between the administration and teaching staff and the Adult Education Guidance Service on whether to make it mandatory for students to engage with employers. However, the general feeling was that it was not good to make everything mandatory because adults were expected to take responsibility. At the time of carrying out the study, engagement with employers was optional.

Interviewer: “You mentioned the Guidance Service, and how does it work with the Centre? Are they actually located in this complex or...?” [Interjection]

Daisy: “They are based at the Centre. They are part of a country-wide Guidance Service...they are under pressure as well. So they work...we work very well together. We’ve a good relationship. So the Guidance...eh...manager, I suppose she has like the 80 of the VTOS students. She also works as well with the part-time programmes within the local area.

But like at the start when students are coming in...We do fairly rigorous recruitment process because we interview everybody. I try and talk to everybody before they come in for interview. I would be with somebody in the office and talk to them. We bring people in for information sessions, right, and then...like yesterday and the day before, for example, we were interviewing everybody. Two staff members were interviewing. I was with people before they went in and when they came out asking them if they had questions. I tell them if you are not sure of what you want, this is the Guidance Counsellor because it is important for you that this is the right place. So we have a fairly rigorous recruitment process. We don’t tend to lose our students. I am finishing up...with 78 places. It’s end of year now”.

Daisy asserted that the Adult Education Guidance Service which is based within the same building complex where the Adult Education Centre is located was part of a country-wide counselling service. The administration and teaching staff had a good working relationship with the Guidance Service personnel. However, in addition to the 80 students enrolled at the Centre, the Guidance Service also offers a counselling service to part-time programmes within the local area. The Adult Education Guidance Service assisted the VTOS Centre during information sessions and when recruiting students by furnishing potential applicants with information that they needed in order to

make informed decisions. The Centre did not lose a high number of students after enrolment because students had made an informed choice when they enrolled for courses.

Interviewer: "Yes, yes, that is a very good retention rate".

Daisy: "I started out with say about 85 and the few who have left...I think there are probably about three who just for various reasons they couldn't come...We keep the students, we tend to keep them. Our progression rate from the programme is very good. Last year, out of the 36 who left, I think only about 4 went back to their original statuses. Everybody else went to employment or went to further education. So I think it works".

Daisy stated that the VTOS Centre had a high student retention rate. Daisy also said that the Centre had a good progression rate, and that in the previous year only four students went back to their original statuses.

Interviewer: "If that is the case, yes, it works".

Daisy: "Leadership...does that all fit in? Does that all fit into leadership? You know like we have a Student Council and we have...eh...and I suppose an open door policy as well, that if there's a problem I tell people to come into me. The staff would be very good in that, you know. If somebody...for the most if a student has a problem with the staff member, they will actually go to the staff member. But, sometimes if I don't have a good relationship maybe with the student the staff member's relationship, the staff member might come to me on behalf of the student. You know...we tend to listen or we try to listen as much as possible".

Daisy was not sure how leadership fitted into their scheme of things. She mentioned that they had a Student Council and an open door policy. During the focus group interviews, students confirmed that the administration staff had an open door but neither did the teachers nor focus group members mention the existence of a Student Council. It was therefore doubtful whether it had a meaningful impact on the academic lives of students. She also stated that they used student-centred approaches something that was reiterated by Ayanda, Bianca and Connie.

Interviewer: "So the Adult Guidance Service helps students on matters pertaining to progression routes?" Daisy clarified the role played by the Guidance Service as it interacts with students and staff members.

Daisy: "Correct...correct...and for progression, for subject choices, you know, maybe like the types of employment that they want to go to. The Guidance Service will actually work with some of the teachers then in doing up CVs, and design templates for CVs. They would go to classes and organise

trips to colleges. We had an Employer Focus Week, and the Guidance Service is very much involved in all of that”.

Daisy clarified about the areas in which the Adult Education Guidance Service counselled students. They include progression routes, subject choices and types of employment to go to. The Guidance Service also worked with some teachers in designing templates and doing the CVs. Staff from the Guidance Service made class visits and organised trips to visit colleges with students. The Adult Education Centre in collaboration with the Guidance Service organises an Employer Focus Week.

Interviewer: “During a discussion before this interview, I asked research participants about changes that they could make to the VTOS programme if they were the programme’s

National Co-ordinator. One research participant suggested that there’s a need to specialise and that at the moment there were too many modules being done. He even raised the issue that they needed 120 points in order to be awarded a full FETAC Level 5 Certificate, something that I didn’t know. He feels that it is not fair that all modules are given the same weighting, because he believes some modules are much more difficult than others. As a result, he proposes that certain modules should be awarded more than 20 points whilst others can still be pegged at 20 points”.

[Interjection]

Daisy: “More...Yes, yes”.

Interviewer: “He says, instead of ending up with 8 modules or whatever on a particular programme graduates may have less than 8 modules/subjects but 120 points depending on the weighting of modules/subjects”.

Daisy: “Yes, I think that’s a very fair point...That’s a fair point, but it’s outside our control”.

Interviewer: “Yes, yes...because accreditation is done by FETAC”.

Daisy: “I think that is a very, very fair point”.

Daisy acknowledged that the concerned student had raised a fair point but stated that there was nothing that they could do because assessment and accreditation was under the realm of FETAC and not VTOS.

Interviewer: “Tell me about the positive experiences that you think leadership skills bring to the learning environment”.

Daisy: "OK...it's the students that I suppose may be equipped with leadership skills...for example, maybe this week they wanted to go on fieldtrips, and I would say alright...OK you organise it. You come back and you tell me what it's going to cost, how many are going to go, what staff members are going to go with you. We do that, right".

Daisy the stated that leadership skills were particularly important when imparted to students because it was possible for staff members to assign them to almost independently do some tasks. Daisy pointed out that in the past students approached her with proposals to go on fieldtrips. She said she told them to organise the trips, give her a breakdown of the costs and to find out how many staff members would participate in the trips. Delegation of part of the duties to students helped staff members to focus on other areas of their work.

Interviewer: "Oh...you have had cases like that when students come forward and say they would like to go out on a field trip, then you say..."[Interjection]

Daisy: "Go sort it".

Interviewer: "OK...Go and work it out...and sort it and bring the information".

Daisy: "Yes...correct...yah. The...like that if they want a particular subject put on...and a few of them come to me, and I'll say OK if it's within my resources and if we have staff we'll actually do it then. I'll put it on, OK. Sometimes if they have concerns...eh...like the computers, there were lots of problems here with IT, with computers. They were slow. There were problems with laptops. They were coming to me and they would say look, can we get this sorted, and if I can sort it, I would say yes, or come back and I tell them when I can't...that I can't. I say openly, I can't do it, and because this is why I can't do it. Another example, I suppose would be with our Graphic Design students last year. They were saying they don't have enough time with Graphic Design. You know what, it's an important...it's a big subject. It's timetabled for only...I think it was maybe three hours. So the following year we put on Graphic Tutorials on the timetable and another one of...of the teachers...she trained over on it so she worked with the Graphics Design teacher and she did tutorial classes.

So that's...they are the positive things. That's...when the students take an initiative, they are telling me what it is that they need and as far as possible and within the resources we'll try and put it on".

Daisy pointed out that leadership skills helped students to make initiatives to try and change circumstances that negatively affected their learning environment. If the problem was within the wherewithal of the education institution, it solved or attended to it. The CVF is applicable in human resource development and management and adaptable when leaders switch among different roles

in accordance with the demands of the organisational environment (Belason and Frank, 2010; Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Helfrich *et al.*, 2007; Zaft *et al.* 2009; Yardley and Neal, 2007).

Interviewer: "OK...yes. With the issue of resources, one research participant mentioned that the teachers/tutors, the Co-ordinator and Administrator are all very supportive. However, he believes resources are lacking or in short supply resulting in that support being not fully realised or effective. What would be the resources that you happen to lack?"

Daisy: "You see...OK...eh...we would have a very...our non-pay budget is not a huge budget, OK. We don't have a capital budget. We don't have like a budget for special needs. So if somebody is dyslexic, or somebody has special learning needs, physical or...we don't actually have resources for that".

Interviewer: "OK, You mean that you can't apply for more funds in order to channel them to that particular student?"

Daisy: "Correct...yah that's a real issue, and one that we've brought forward nationally a number of times. Like, for example, a student comes into me with dyslexia, right. If that student were diagnosed with dyslexia while s/he was still at school, there's a reasonable chance that they will get additional support, OK".

Interviewer: "If the diagnosis would have happened..." [Interjection]

Daisy: "...while at school, s/he'll have you know, but if the student say is diagnosed over 21, we have no additional supports, right".

Interviewer: "You mean there are no structures that allow the adult education sector to assess and diagnose intellectual disabilities in the same manner in which it happens in the formal sector?"

Daisy: "Correct. Yes, yes. If that student progresses on to a PLC¹⁰ on to a Level 6, they will get supports. If they go to third level, they will get supports".

Interviewer: "So it means it is more likely for one to get additional supports if one is enrolled in the formal educator sector compared to when one is in the non-formal sector?"

Daisy: "Yes, correct".

¹⁰ PLC refers to Post Leaving Certificate College.

Interviewer: "Maybe...it's because VTOS is not recognised as part of the formal sector..."

[Interjection]

Daisy: "...Correct, but it is right across the spectrum of the education sector".

Interviewer: "Yes, yes, it feeds into the PLCs, which in turn feed into third colleges".

Daisy: "Yah...you won't get supports if you are on BTEI, you know. You won't get support if you are on Youthreach. So that is a really lack of supports that is huge and across the board within adult education. The other aspects...other resources really we are limited by room size, we are limited by room space, we are limited by...eh...resources I suppose a lot of those, you know".

Interviewer: "When it comes to examining or assessing students with special learning needs, do you have the facilities to do that in line with FETAC guidelines for accreditation?"

Daisy: "I would take them out of my own budget, like if I've...maybe a student we'll examine them in their own room. I'll pay someone else an external...somebody to come in and sit with them, you see. It could be a scribe...eh...a reader...yah, I would do that. But, that comes out of my own budget".

Interviewer: "Oh yes, your own budget".

Daisy: "Yes, I would do that out of my own budget. We had a student with physical disabilities and we did like buy a table. But, like the table was really expensive. It comes out of our budget. Like another time I needed a software for a student, but I couldn't afford that particular software. I mean would love to have...if I could have a much more practical...eh...maybe like a practical...an applied programme. But, we don't really have the skills...we don't have maybe the resources".

The issue of lack of resources was also highlighted by all teachers during interviews and some of the focus group members. It was of great concern that the adult education sector (nonformal sector) was treated less favourably in the allocation of resources when compared to the formal education sector. The Adult Education Centre was caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, the education institution did not have resources to offer supports to students with intellectual and physical disabilities. On the other hand, it would be viewed as discriminatory if they turned away students with intellectual and physical disabilities claiming that they had no support for them. Daisy also pointed out that if she had the resources she would re-introduce practical subjects. Connie lamented that the VTOS programme had moved away from its original ethos and was now concentrating on offering academic-oriented subjects at the expense of practical-oriented subjects.

Interviewer: “When it comes to special education needs, do you have teachers who have got expertise in that area or students with special learning needs are catered for by teachers who are trained in conventional forms of teaching?”

Daisy: “Some of our teachers have done training in it. They trained voluntarily. Some have also done CPD¹¹ in it”.

Staff members were really committed to doing their work because some of them have funded themselves in order to do courses that help them to be more proficient in their work.

Interviewer: “OK. I have thought of something. During focus group discussions prior to this interview I asked research participants about changes they could make to the VTOS programme if they were the ones in charge at national level. One particular participant highlighted the issue that there’s a subject or module that they used to do in a four-hour session in one day. It seems research participants agree that they found it rather exhausting and that it would have been better if the workload was spread over two days”.

Daisy: “Eh...hmm...” [Interjection].

Interviewer: “What could be your major challenges? Is it that maybe timetabling your teachers becomes a challenge since some of them have to juggle between education institutions/settings?”

Daisy: “There are two limitations there. One is rooms, because we share the rooms with other programmes, there is very limited room for manoeuvre. So that is a problem. The other problem is that I only have one staff member who is here over five days”.

Interviewer: “Yes, yes. Those are challenges”.

Daisy: “So those are the limiting factors, but the distribution of rooms would probably be one of the bigger ones, and maybe not enough computer rooms”.

Daisy pointed out that lack of room space had a negative effect in designing a timetable that was student-friendly. That was because they shared rooms with other programmes. Another challenge that also had an adverse effect on timetabling subjects was the shortage of computers. Lack of resources and supports for students living with intellectual and physical disabilities demonstrated tensions and complexities between the internal and external environments of an organisation. They can be addressed by adopting the CVF. Belasen and Frank (2010) outline:

¹¹ CPD refers to Continuous/Continuing Professional Development.

The Competing Values Framework (CVF) highlights the contradictory nature inherent in organisational environments and the complexity of choices faced by managers when responding to competing tensions. These responses include a variety of managerial roles differentiated by situational contingencies (pp. 280 – 281).

Interviewer: “I have realised that in the city where I live here in Ireland, the Guidance Service is out there and not located in the premises of a specific education institution. You told me earlier on that the Guidance Service under whose jurisdiction your organisation falls is housed within the Adult Education Centre complex. Would you say as an organisation you are benefiting from such an arrangement?”

Daisy: “Oh, it is. Yes. ...They are very approachable, like when we are recruiting, and for an Information Morning, the Guidance Service staff members come in, and tend to explain who they are and what they do, and they distribute their business cards. They advise prospective students to come to their office for advice. So like they are in same corridor with most of our classes. The students are familiar and know...the Guidance members of staff. So that is a plus. So I think the other one is then the BES, the Basic Education Service. Some students need one-to-one support. They get that as well”.

Daisy explained that staff members at the Adult Education Centre had a good working relationship with staff in the Adult Education Guidance Service. Ayanda, Bianca and Connie also stated that the VTOS Centre had a cordial working relationship with the Guidance Service. Daisy also pointed out that it was easy for students to approach the Guidance staff members because they knew them since they were also located in the same building complex that houses the VTOS Centre.

Interviewer: “Okay, okay. Are there any negative experiences that you think teachers/tutors go through when trying to incorporate leadership skills in their teaching approaches?”

Daisy: “Yes, there’s...and that can be a human condition...some students or some people find it hard to take responsibility for their own actions or maybe don’t necessarily realise that they have choices. So sometimes...sometimes maybe I think we possibly spoon-feed too much, OK. Then we say, no look, they are adults. It’s up to them to take responsibility, you know. We tell them the dates. I am just giving an example now like the CAO¹² application, right. You give everybody the dates. You tell them what they have to do if they want help with the

¹² CAO is acronym for Central Applications Office. According to Central Applications Office (2013), in Ireland, ‘The Central Applications Office processes applications for undergraduate courses in Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Decisions on admissions to undergraduate courses are made by the HEIs who instruct CAO to make offers to successful candidates’.

CAO form, and then we don't chase people up because we say no they are adults. But then, there have been occasions whereby people come back and say nobody told me, you never told me. Now I missed the date, it's your fault. ...So like an incident, we need to think how to overcome it. Now, we tend to get people sign if we give them something. We get them to sign to say I've received the information".

Daisy stated that there were some students who did not take responsibility for their actions. She also said that at the time of carrying out the study they were reviewing the over-reliance of students on staff members. There had been cases whereby students denied that they were told to fulfil a particular task by an agreed date. Such students would turn around and say nobody told me that. As a way of trying to avoid such incidences, the institution had introduced contract of agreement forms. Students entered into contract of agreements and signed agreement contract forms. One copy was given to the signatory while another copy was filed and kept as an office copy.

Interviewer: "Yes, yes, it becomes a big issue when they say were never told or never got the information".

Daisy: "Yes. Correct...we are also I suppose. You know...our use of IT I think could be much better, and our use of individual maybe emails...contacting people...that's work in progress. I would say to them let me know always when you have the use of a Blackboard, you know like within the colleges. So I think we are working on giving people a unique email".

Interviewer: "Oh, yes. So whatever communication that would have been made would be easier to follow up or would be traceable?"

Daisy: "Yes...yes. I suppose that would be easier, and text messaging service as well, and we're trying to set up texting people...you know...and Ellen, the Centre Administrator in the office is so supportive that they come in. We have an open door policy".

Daisy said that another way of making students accountable was by introducing an IT system that could make it easy to trace correspondences between students and the VTOS Centre. Daisy also said that Ellen, the VTOS Centre Administrator, was supportive to students and had an open door policy. Quantitative findings and discussions with one of the focus groups reinforced this assertion.

Interviewer: "Some research participants did say that they get that type of support and that there's an open door policy. Considering the state of the economy now compared to 2008 when the recession reached its peak, is there any improvement in terms of funding?"

Daisy: "You see, right, I only came in here in 2010. So I can't really speak for prior to that...prior to that record".

Interviewer: “Still on, what would you say is the current state of affairs in terms of funding for the VTOS programme compared to 2010 when you joined the organisation?”

Daisy: “I think we are getting better, maybe all the time. I think we are getting better in terms of structure. We are getting better in terms of...I suppose it is my policy that everybody will get as far as possible...that everybody will get...” [Interruption]

Daisy said that the funding situation was getting better compared to how it was when she joined the organisation in 2010. The economic recession reached its peak in 2008 and during the time of the study it had greatly improved.

Another research participant knocked at the door and came in to check if this researcher was ready to interview her. She talked to the Centre Co-ordinator, and the latter explained that she instead came before her. The Co-ordinator asked her to give us another five minutes. Daisy then continued with the discussion.

Daisy: “Yah, it is my policy that I would...that everybody would work towards a major award, okay. That wouldn't have been the policy previously, and I do that, OK. ...If people want to go to college, and the employers are looking for certification, I think if you have been here for two years, I think you should have a piece of paper that reflects that you have been here for two years. So in terms of certification, yah, our certification I suppose is increasing. I think the quality of our programmes has got better. The downside of that I think there's more pressure on the students. Eh...the other side I suppose the level of child care support has decreased, the level of financial support for students has decreased. So there's certainly more pressure on our students”.

Daisy pointed out that it was her policy that every student left the VTOS Centre with a major award. She also said that that was not the case in the past. Daisy further said that the reason why she had an emphasis on the acquisition of a major award was because colleges and employers were looking for accreditation. Smith and Spurling (1999) ‘suggest that there is substantial evidence of the growing popularity of accredited courses as a means of reinforcing the aims of adult continuing education and lending it greater status’ (cited in Powell *et al.*, 2003, p. 22). Powell *et al.* (2003) assert that ‘this is because assessment and accreditation are said to provide evidence of learner achievements and provide learner progression routes’ (p. 22). European governments have responded to this high demand for qualifications by setting up national qualifications frameworks as an incentive for adults to learn. However, Connie was strongly against the idea of accreditation of all courses and stated that that was against the fundamental principles of establishing VTOS.

Interviewer: "One other recent development that I've noticed is that students who are on BTEI in third level colleges no longer access education grants and are expected to sign the live dole register during summer holidays. Is it the case here?"

Daisy: "Yes".

Interviewer: "In the past, did the VTOS programme have education grants?" Daisy concurred.

Interviewer: "What's the situation now?"

Daisy: "The situation now is...as I am saying the financial support the students are getting is decreasing. So that makes it more difficult for students".

Interviewer: "Do they still apply for grants or they have to depend on whatever social welfare payment that they get?"

Daisy: "They have to live on the allowance. Some will get the BTEA¹³ allowance, but that has also been reduced. But, before they used...no, I am not totally familiar with it...but before they used to get maybe a book grant as well. That is gone".

Daisy pointed out that the financial support that students got is decreasing and students have to live on whatever social welfare payment that they would be getting.

Interviewer: "Yes, yes. I still remember I used to live with a housemate who was on a VTOS programme and he used to get a book grant".

Daisy: "But now we supply books, we supply all the materials that somebody needs when they come on VTOS".

Interviewer: "OK...OK. So with the books, do you run a library facility or how do they access them?"

Daisy: "We loan them out to students at the start of the year and then we get them back from them at the end of the year".

Interviewer: "OK...OK".

Daisy: "The staff members come to me and say I want an X amount of books. At the start of the year, I usually ask members of staff what resources they need for the year, and they will tell me so that I do the budget. I don't give each department their own budget because my experience tells me if you tell somebody you can have €800, they will spend €800, whether they need it or not".

¹³ BTEA Back to Education Allowance

This researcher agreed with the research participant's assertion.

Interviewer: "Yes, yes. It is human nature to want to spend all that one has been told is entitled to".

Daisy: "So what I've done over the last few years is that people will come to me and say I want or I'll need whatever and then we kind of balance it out...and say OK we get that this year and from next year's budget maybe we get the next one, and it seems to be working. Like (name withheld) he got an X amount of new cameras from last year's budget, and again from this year's budget I'll get more. If towards the end of the year I realise that OK there's an extra amount that I haven't spent, I'll go back to the teachers and say right...OK this amount of money is there, what do you need?"

Interviewer: "Okay...One other thing that I am not very sure of, does VTOS have local, regional and national structures? If those structures are there, I would like to know how they feed into one another".

Daisy: "VTOS...OK...this I suppose like there were 33 VECs up to last year, now there are 16 Education and Training Boards. So we have now gone into Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB). There were three VTOS, for example, in County Clare. So we used to meet up regularly. We were supportive through VTOS Co-ordinators. We would meet...eh...regionally we used to meet informally within the VTOS Co-ordinators' Association. They were the ones who convened meetings...and then maybe once a year you would have a national conference of VTOS. All of that is in transition at the minute. There's still the VTOS Co-ordinators' National Association. But now instead of just three County Clare VTOS Co-ordinators, we also have the city of Limerick and County of Limerick. So we are working towards meeting them. At the moment, like we are working informally, and we pick up the phone and talk to each other, support each other, you know. It's very positive.

Now regionally, we would...like we would report to the AEO¹⁴...the Clare AEO. That is in transition also at the moment, because within the LCETB area there are now two AEOs".

Interviewer: "Yes, I realise there is a similar amalgamation of structures in the County and City where I live".

Daisy: "Now we were told last week, for example, that I've a new line manager. So the Clare AEO is no longer my line manager for VTOS, that is, the former County Limerick AEO is going to take responsibility of all the full-time programmes. The former Clare AEO is going to take responsibility of all the part-time programmes. How that's going to work...it's all a little bit not clear".

¹⁴ AEO is an acronym for Adult Education Officer

Interviewer: "OK...it is work in progress".

Daisy: "Yah...yah...yah".

Interviewer: "I am happy with discussion that we have had so far, is there anything else that you would like to add?"

Daisy: "No, I think that's okay, Rabson. We are work in progress. There are limiting factors, but there are great staff members to you here. They have great attitude, you know. They are very positive, and really for the most part they have the support of the students. I think it's a good programme".

Interviewer: "Yes, it's a good programme. I could tell from the students themselves, they seem really happy. Eh...there is this. I asked a question on whether they have to wait for a certain period of time when they are already out of employment before they can enrol on the VTOS programme".

Daisy: "Yes, you have to be over 21. You have to be signing for a minimum of six months, now that comes with qualification. So it is six months or you have a redundancy letter. So you can be the spouse or partner of somebody, you know, of qualified adult. You could be signing for credits, you could be on VTOS...the whole Department of Social Welfare system is a minefield, okay. So you can be, for example, you could have two people on VTOS one is getting a payment, the other isn't getting a payment".

Interviewer: "Does it mean that if a prospective student's spouse or partner is working and the family is not in receipt of a social welfare payment, the prospective student can qualify to enrol on a VTOS course?"

Daisy: "No, only if you are an eligible dependent on somebody who qualifies for VTOS".

Interviewer: "OK, not necessarily because the prospective applicant is out of employment even if the spouse or partner is working".

Daisy: "Correct".

This researcher sought further clarification on the qualification criteria.

Interviewer: "In other words, the prospective student's spouse or partner could be the one signing but does not choose to do a VTOS course".

Daisy: "Correct...correct or if you are signing for credits or you are on different types of payments maybe Lone Parent, maybe...But, the first thing is the qualification criteria on social welfare payment, and then we prioritise low level of education".

Interviewer: "Thank you very much for the discussion".

Daisy: "Thank you too".

The interview process with the Centre Co-ordinator lasted 40 minutes 30 seconds. The last interview below is with one of the teachers, Connie.

3.13.7 One-to-one interview with Connie (a teacher)

The formalities that were done prior to recording were similar to the ones done with the other two teachers and the Centre Co-ordinator. The third teacher was referred to as *Connie* throughout this study.

Interviewer: "Do you think leadership skills are embedded in the curriculum of course(s) that you did when you trained as a teacher?"

Connie: "Do you mean Rabson what I teach now or when I trained as a teacher? Do you mean my teacher training, when I trained?"

Interviewer: "Yes, I mean when you trained".

Connie: "Well, I suppose...to be frank I would like to think that I exhibit leadership skills in the classroom at the moment. But, I believe that I've learned to develop them over the course of the teaching rather than...I know it's a considerable time now since I trained as a teacher.

But, certainly the formal training to be a teacher was more based on...kind of pedagogy¹⁵ that was backward looking rather than forward looking. I suppose I would have trained as a teacher to go into second level type of a school¹⁷, and you know it was predominantly based on discipline and obedience, and to follow the curriculum. It wasn't really about selfexpression or nurturing. Those words 'self-expression' and 'nurturing' came in considerably later, but I think my experience in adult education is quite different because I suppose my training was originally for a younger demographic. The idea was that they were there to be taught and do as they were told, whereas in the adult education setting the people we meet everyday know a great deal more than we do. They

¹⁵ Roger Simon (1987) distinguishes *pedagogy* from *teaching*. 'Pedagogy [refers] to the integration of particular curriculum content and design, classroom strategies and techniques, and evaluation, purpose, and methods. All these aspects of educational practice come together in the realities of what happens in classrooms. Together they organise a view of how teacher's work within an institutional context specifies a particular version of what knowledge is of most worth, what it means to know something, and how we might construct representations of

have come from very varied life experiences. So I wouldn't presume that way to lay down the law, you know. I think in leadership in adult education context what I think we all trying to do in whatever methods we apply is to bring out of you and each other adult learner what we think they know, so in a sense to make them the leader, to make them the expert. So if we were doing a Spreadsheet, we are trying to say when you run a house, you run a budget. Although not aware what you are doing, you still pay bills, now we are going to apply a Spreadsheet, which is a technological way of doing something that you already know. So in adult education you are getting people from a different base. So I think in adult education the students become leaders because they are the people with the knowledge".

Connie said that the leadership skills that she exhibited in the classroom were developed during the course of her teaching duties rather than learnt when she trained as a secondary school teacher. This concurred with what Bianca had stated earlier on and with Daisy's assertion that leadership was being expressed in an implicit rather than explicit manner. Bianca and Connie trained as secondary school teachers at around the same time. However, a lot has changed since then and a teacher who did an up-skill degree course two years before the study stated that topics on leadership skills were included in the curriculum of the course. Connie also stated that at the time when she trained training for secondary school teachers had an emphasis on discipline, obedience and to adherence to the curriculum, an assertion that was also reinforced by Bianca. In addition, Connie stated that student-centred approaches that emphasised self-expression and nurturing were introduced later.

Connie also pointed out that the approaches that she employed when supervising secondary school students were different from those she used when teaching adults. This was also highlighted by Bianca. Furthermore, Connie asserted that secondary school students were to

ourselves, others, and our physical and social environment. In other words, talk about pedagogy is simultaneously talk about the details of what students and others might do together and the cultural politics such practices support. In this perspective, we cannot talk about teaching practices without talking about politics (cited in McLaren, 2002, p. 187).

¹⁷ In the Irish education system Second level type of a school means Secondary school.

be taught and do as they were told, whereas adult learners are guided rather than taught. The latter's knowledge-base was very varied, and have vast experiential knowledge and sometimes know some topics more than teachers do. This was also acknowledged by Ayanda, Bianca and Daisy. Connie also stated that adult learning targets topics that students encounter in their daily lives. Linderman (1926) points out that 'adult's orientation to learning is lifecentred' (cited in Knowles and Shepherd, 2005, p. 40). Finally, Connie pointed out that adult learners became

leaders during the learning process because they already had experiential learning when they enrolled for the courses.

Interviewer: “Yes, I think the learning is more student-centred in adult education than it is in other settings, because in the former learning caters for varied and diverse needs of students. When you say adult learners are the leaders in the learning process, I agree because they tell you what it is that they already know and what they need to know. In that way, it is expected that the teacher would avoid teaching them what they already knew. That is in contrast with, for instance, the primary and secondary school settings whereby pupils are in most cases treated as passive objects or as empty vessels that need to be filled with knowledge”.

Connie: “Yes, it’s a different perspective. In the second level, certainly when I was training there was a presumption to tell you nothing and they will know everything when you are finished. I suppose what adult education tells us all as teachers is how little we know often, vis-à-vis, we learn all the time from the students we come in contact with”.

Connie pointed out that dialogue between students and teachers was minimal in secondary school settings, whereas in the adult education sector there was a lot of dialogue. Elias (1994) asserts that in adult education ‘dialogue was to replace the traditional lecture or passing on of information. Learners were not to be passive recipients but active group participants’ (p. 19). Freire (2005) points out that it is important for educators ‘to live the balanced, harmonious experience, between talking to learners and talking with them’ (p. 111). Learning in the adult education settings is a two-way process between teachers and students. This can be explained by the boomerang effect (Ilesanmi, 2011).

Interviewer: “What specific group(s) do you deal with?”

Connie: “Well, I teach a lot of Business Studies, as you know different businesses like IT Applications. I also teach the Theory of Business. That is so much easier when you are dealing with adults because many of them would have been involved in different businesses in the past. As well as I teach Legal Studies, and you know people have life experience and fresh of air in that, that a school leaver wouldn’t know”.

Connie pointed out that students were interested in Legal Studies because it dealt with life experiences or with issues that they interacted with in their daily activities (Linderman, 1926, cited in Knowles and Shepherd, 2005, p. 40).

Interviewer: ‘I’ve realised from lived experience that when it comes to learning computer applications students are usually at various levels of computer literacy or proficiency. How do you pedagogically deal with that without causing disharmony among learners?’

Connie: “I suppose I’ve a bit of an advantage in that I get Second Years”.

Interviewer: “That might mean whatever differences that may have existed during the first year would have been ironed out by the time you take over”.

Connie: “Yes, with the first years we would be very conscious that some people have a great level of ability and a great level of prior knowledge in IT...eh others have very little. Sometimes people can be extremely proficient on something like the use of Internet and online shopping, but they actually don’t know the fundamentals of saving, so the nitty-gritty. So people are different at the start of the year, but by the time the first year is over they all have the fundamentals of saving and opening, and...so file management. But, by the time they come to me really I am...I am happening to be using IT...I am thinking about budgets. I’ll be saying, well you are a farmer, you know. You submit annual accounts, and then I would say let’s put that on a Spreadsheet. Somebody else, maybe let’s say they want to take out a loan for car, then I would say let’s do that on a Spreadsheet. Let’s see if you went to AIB¹⁶ Bank what it will cost you to have a car or what about if you go to a Credit Union. So you are bringing things I think...that’s what I always try to do bring the things that they might want to do on the back of an envelope, but to do it using IT, you know”.

Connie pointed out that students would be at different levels when they started the first year of the IT course and that those differences would have been ironed out by the time they began the second year. Connie also explained that she aligned the IT topics that were studied with real life experiences. That way the students found the lessons meaningful because they related to what they experienced in everyday life.

Interviewer: “OK, thanks. How and when do you use leadership skills during the course of executing your teaching duties?”

Connie: “Well, I suppose I never really saw it as leadership until you asked the question, but I suppose the methodology would always had been to say you know what is it about you can bring to the group so that we can learn from it. So it’s not about me being a leader as so much as about trying to get them to be leaders. So you are an expert in your field and try and draw that out for the benefit of the overall group. We would have had people who would have had, you know, very diverse backgrounds in terms of what they would have done before they came here. Some of them,

¹⁶ AIB is an acronym for Allied Irish Banks

you know, we might have people now the last while might have been made redundant. They could have had very high powered positions. We have particularly women who have raised big families. That's quite...that's quite a challenge, you know. It's to try and bring...it's to try and say there's value...there's real value in that in terms of you giving us something that we can use to bring IT together”.

Connie stated that she did not view the methodology as leadership until this researcher asked her the above question. This confirmed Daisy's assertion that leadership was not explicitly expressed by the teachers. Connie also stated that it was not about her being the heroic leader but it was about facilitating students from diverse backgrounds to come to the fore and share with the overall group what they already knew. Ayanda, Bianca, Daisy and the focus groups reinforced that was what was happening during the learning process. Teachers recognised students as the “experts” and acknowledged the knowledge that they already had and that encouraged the latter to come forward and share it with peers. In other words, there is no heroic leader in leadership is distributed (Hargreaves, 2005; Spillane, 2005). The approaches that Connie used were characterised by sustainable and distributed leadership perspectives.

Interviewer: “During discussions with one focus group, I questioned about how leadership is distributed among group members. A research participant told me that what happens is that people seek advice from peers that are more articulate and knowledgeable in a particular area”.

Connie: “Yah, they seek advice from peers. That's true”.

Interviewer: “Otherwise the distribution of leadership debunks the notion that there's a specific leader. Leadership sort of rotates”.

Connie: “It rotates yah. Say, for instance, somebody could be extremely good at languages particularly since we have a lot of “non-national”¹⁷ students. Many of them would be excellent French and Spanish speakers, whereas we would be running Spanish and French for Beginners. So obviously you naturally rotate the person who has the excellent spoken French or spoken Spanish as the final decider. But, you might completely ignore them in a different context because they might not have the same expertise. So I suppose adult education maybe...would be different to

¹⁷ “Non-national” is shorthand for “non –Irish/EEA national” which is a term used by the Irish Naturalisation & Immigration Service (INIS) to describe the residency status of people living in Ireland who are not Irish citizens or citizens of a country which belong to the European Economic Area (EEA). As a result, Spanish and French nationals do not fall into the category of “non-national” unless if those referred to would be speakers of those languages that probably originally come from former colonies. The term is widely viewed among the immigrant community as not politically correct because critics believe it equates to a ‘stateless’ person. Instead, the terms, ‘migrant’ and ‘foreign national’ are regarded to be more politically correct and would as well be a suitable

second level education in the sense that in second level leadership seems to be you are blonde, and you are pretty and you are popular. Therefore, you are the leader rather than that you have any innate abilities to lead, whereas in adult education people are very discerning, I suppose. They ask the person that would know. I suppose because they are adults they don't tend to want to be...they don't want to be friends with the in-crowd to some degree, you know".

Connie asserted that leadership rotated among course group members, and that informal leaders often led in areas that they were good at. This was reinforced by contributions made by Ayanda, Bianca, the first focus group and second focus group. Members of the third focus group strongly argued that course group members did not assume any formal or informal leadership positions. Connie further pointed out that identification of leaders in secondary schools was superficially based on traits such as being blonde, pretty and/or popular. However, she argued that adults had a broad and deeper understanding of what leadership entailed. Secondary school students wanted and competed to be friends with members of an in-group rather than out-group, but adults were very discerning and considered quality of leadership. Zaft *et al.* (2009) posits that although the CVF is meant to inform organisational culture and professionalism, people sometimes deliberately ignore what is right and choose to do the opposite. It is common knowledge that within organisations exist in-groups and outgroups leading to factions and nepotism. People gravitate towards those similar to them either by cultural background, ethnicity, gender and age, among other things.

Interviewer: "OK. Tell me about the positive experiences that you think leadership brings to the learning environment".

Connie: "Well, I think confidence. Eh...that like if somebody...if I defer to my peer and I am not acting actually as a teacher, because I suppose in an adult learning environment we are more equal than maybe in other areas of learning...I think it is very good for someone's confidence when somebody defers to them, particularly maybe when a teacher does. It's an acknowledgement that you are a student yet you know a great deal more about this than I do

category for Spanish and French nationals. The author would like to make it equivocally clear that the interviewee did not intend to prejudice or offend a certain group of people by using the term.

as a teacher or any of your peers. So I think...it gives people a boost...to feel that they have something to contribute. That's the benefit of it".

Connie stated that the advantages of using leadership skills in the learning environment were that they boosted confidence. This was also cited by Ayanda, Bianca, Daisy and all the focus groups. The acknowledgement by teachers that students had something to contribute to the learning environment served as the key in unlocking the students' confidence and potential. Self-confidence is transformational. It is pertinent to mobilise people for participation in the process of change and to encourage a sense of collective identity and collective efficacy, which in turn brings strong sense of self-worth and self-efficacy (Burns, 2003).

Interviewer: "OK. Tell me about the negative experiences that you have gone through when trying to incorporate leadership skills in your teaching approaches".

Connie: "Eh...no...not negative. I wouldn't say there would be many negative...There would be...there would have a few very limited few instances where it might happen in IT. It happened more when I used to teach the First Years, where you explained earlier about the fact that people were at different levels. Sometimes when I used to teach First Years, there was a sense of superiority by the person that knew a little bit more than someone else. But, you know, we do stamp that out...even if it means to take it on. So it's a case people must be free to ask questions. That's kind of part of the ethos that we say from the beginning, look you have more experience maybe than your...that's sitting next to you. But, you know, you must share that experience rather than use it as a lever to make yourself feel better. You know...it's ...eh like I suppose sometimes the first years maybe it's...maybe it is shyness and nervousness too that they want to show off a bit if they are better than someone else. But, like really when they're really here a couple of months they realise that they might be excellent in ceremonia and may not be..." [Interjection]

Connie pointed out that she would rather refer to her experiences as challenges rather than negative experiences. She stated that she could link those challenges to her experiences when she taught first years. Connie referred to what this researcher had cited earlier on about students having different levels of IT knowledge especially in the early stages of the course. She pointed out that she encountered problems because of superiority complex of students who knew slightly more than others. Connie said that the Adult Education Centre had principles that targeted and stamped out such attitudes and behaviours. From the outset, teachers encouraged students who knew better than others to share their experience than use it to feel more superior to other students. After a few months, students realised that the knowledge-base in the course group levelled out and that it was beneficial to collaboratively work with other students. Some of the principles of sustainable leadership hypothesise are that it secures success over time, sustains the leadership of others, creates and preserves sustaining learning and develops rather than depletes human and material resources (Hargreaves, 2005; Hargreaves and Fink, 2003).

Interviewer: "...I think maybe this type of recognition or show-off that you are talking at times depends on the learning environment or the ethos that are embedded in the education system. For instance, when I went back to education here in Ireland I was surprised that there was a lot of emphasis on collaborative approaches such as group and team work. My experience back in my country of origin was that education is a competitive enterprise. I therefore think that the educational background that students were exposed to before they came here does influence their behaviours and preferred learning approaches".

Connie: "That's right. They are also second timers in education, and that's true they are all trying to replicate in a sense something that failed them in the past really. ...because you know I suppose the old model of school was that everybody wanted to endear themselves to the teacher. If their head is down without being noticed, and I suppose when people come here they may spend the first while trying to impress teachers by how much they know. But, you know, I suppose here there's more group work and they do subjects that they wouldn't have done before. They begin to see that they can only offer more in one subject and another peer can maybe do the same in another subject".

Connie pointed out that adult learners were second timers in education and that some of their actions including superiority complex partly stemmed from unknowingly and unwisely trying to replicate what failed them in the past. Furthermore, some of the problems arose from some kind of posturing and trying to endear or impress the teacher. Connie also stated that teachers encouraged group work or teamwork. It later dawned on the students that had superiority complex that they were probably good only in one subject and that they needed help in order to do other subjects.

Interviewer: "Therefore, they realise that in other areas they need assistance from others".

Connie: "Exactly. I think it can be to try and feel superior is something that they kind of grow out of after a short while really".

Interviewer: "Yes sure".

Interviewer: "Suppose that you were in charge and could make some changes to the VTOS programme, what are the changes that would be in your top priority list?"

Connie: "I think that...I am in service now for nearly 20 years. When I originally started, it was for vocational training opportunities scheme. That's what it still means, but I've noticed over time that we have developed an overemphasis in particular in academic certification. I think we've gone away from the vocational. We've entirely almost departed from manualtype things, and I think that's a pity because not everybody who wants to go back to second chance education...wants to end up in

a third level college, maybe somebody wants to be a certified mechanic. We don't give them that chance, and when I started the programme we did". [Chuckles]

Interviewer: "I get your point. There are now more academic-oriented courses being offered by VTOS than what used be the case in the past when there were more hands-on courses".

Connie: "In a sense we are becoming more like the second level schooling system that in many ways failed the..." [Interjection]

Connie argued that the overemphasis of academic-oriented subjects at the expense of the practical-oriented subjects was a deviation from the fundamental principles of the VTOS programme. She further stated that the move resulted in some practically gifted students falling through the cracks of the training programme because their needs were not being catered for.

Interviewer: "Yes, yes, maybe the fact is that VTOS and PLCs are currently being used as conduits or springboards by prospective students who want to pursue third level courses. Personally, I think both programmes seem to be focussed on helping those returning to education to compete for third level places with students being churned out by the second level school education system".

Connie: "Yes, yah. That's what it is, and even the statistics when we talk about the success of the programme...yes more recently now we talk about people who get work. That's really good because work is so scarce. Typically, the success seems to be measured now by the number of people who get to third level. I feel if I was a VTOS student now who hadn't the ability maybe or the aspiration to go to third level; I think I might feel that I somehow didn't matter because I didn't match the new profile of successful entry to third level, you know".

Connie pointed out that the departure from the basic principles of the VTOS programme was further demonstrated by the fact that its success was measured by the number of students that progress to do third level courses. In contrast, in the past, it was measured by the number of people that went back to work.

Interviewer: "Since you have said that VTOS as an institution is now prioritising academic subjects at the expense of practical subjects, do you think that VTOS as an institution still has resources and other equipment that may make it possible for students to effectively learn hands-on courses?"

Connie: "I actually think that...it's an economic issue because when I started here we had quite a lot of hands-on. Now, hands-on programmes take a lot of materials, and one of the features of our programme is that it cannot cost students anything, right down that they get the job it depends. So when we used to do hands-on like Woodcraft, Stained Glass, those kinds of things, the raw materials were very expensive. So there was obviously a decision made on high that these courses

are costing a way too high. So it did mean then that anybody who because of the hands-on or manual-type courses, you know...I suppose when you equip...now I know I am a Computer teacher...when you equip a room with 12 computers, they don't cost anything after initial investment. However, if you run a Wood Carving or Stained Glass class every day those students come in, there're more materials needed".

Connie argued that prioritisation of academic courses instead of practical courses was an economic issue because it was cheaper to offer the former compared to the latter. Practical courses such as Woodcraft and Stained Glass cost more because raw materials were expensive. However, academic subjects may need equipment which once fitted during the initial investment may take a long time to replace. Daisy, the VTOS Co-ordinator, stated that she wanted to re-introduce practical subjects but lack of resources was an impediment.

Interviewer: "Do you think that the failure by policy makers to invest on practical subjects might also be negatively impacting on the second level schooling system in the same way as what happens in the VTOS programme?"

Connie: "Yes, I do, I do".

Connie agreed that the second level education is also gradually drifting away from practical subjects.

Interviewer: "Do you think such failure by social policy and the attitude of the majority of Irish society towards practical subjects may be having a negative impact on motivation and preparedness of students to do practical subjects and apprenticeship courses?"

Connie: "Yes, yes, and I suppose...I personally look at adult education as somebody's second chance, and typically in an adult education context we would have many students whose experience of conventional second level was far from decent...and in a way if we bring them into our setting and all we can offer them it's academic is a little bit like repeating the type of system that failed them".

Connie argued that adult education is a second chance, and therefore repeating the type of system that failed the students at second level was not a decent thing to do.

Interviewer: "OK, OK, and the fact that they already have life experiences...Instead of cultivating and nurturing those experiences..." [Interjection]

Connie: "...you bring them back into the second level model...twenty years later, you know".

Interviewer: "Yes...yes. I get it".

Connie: "...and as well said I suppose I noticed over the last...you know...over the last number of years...I think that the students are being...channelled into the things we offer...rather than the things they might like. But, that...I suppose it's just resources really, you know".

Connie argued that students were being pushed into doing courses that they did not like. She believed all that was being done because policy-makers wanted to cut down costs.

Interviewer: "Yes...yes. Thank you for broad discussions on the founding principles of Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme. The discussion was helpful and informative because I did not know that the principles of VTOS now are no longer in adherence with the founding principles. I found it particularly interesting when you drew comparisons".

Connie: "Yes, it has changed. It has".

Interviewer: "If you were involved in recruiting students to the VTOS programme, what would you say are the outstanding qualities of your organisation?"

Connie: "Well, I suppose if I were actually recruiting students for next year and I suppose what...well what I would say our programme offers...It certainly offers an outstanding commitment on behalf of management and the staff to try and make people's experience here as positive as it can be. We are conversant that many of our students are coming into us having had quite negative experiences of education maybe in the past, considering that our focus is specifically those of low educational attainment. So we are not offering something to people who are well educated and just want career change. We are offering something to people who would have had very basic education. So I suppose it is our concerted effort that the experience here would be better than anything that they have witnessed before. There's a very collaborative...eh...precept...ethos in the place. There's equality between staff members and students that I don't think they would have witnessed before, you know. That they cannot believe that say the staff and students will share the same canteen because their experience before was that the staff had a place to go at lunch time and students went to the yard. So I suppose it's certainly our intention to make the place as inviting, and yes there are excellent courses. The students work very hard, and there's accreditation. I mean even besides that we don't do some of the things that have given pleasure the way we used to...eh we do try and deliver what we have in the most interesting way possible, and that is a pleasant experience.

It's not all fun, obviously. They have some work to do, but it's to try and make their experience here a good one, you know".

Connie pointed out that the staff members are committed to make the life of students to be as positive as possible. Ayanda, Bianca, Daisy and focus group members also stated that the VTOS Centre used student-centred approaches to enrich the learning experience. Staff members took into cognisance that they offered education primarily to students with low educational attainment. As a result, teachers ensured that the place is inviting and welcoming and that the students' experiences were better than anything that they have witnessed before. Some of the principles of the VTOS Centre were that they employed collaborative approaches and equality between members of staff and students. In addition, Connie asserted that the VTOS Centre offered excellent courses and there is FETAC accreditation.

Interviewer: "OK...OK. What about Legal Studies, how do students find it and what aspects of it that they apply in everyday life?"

Connie: "Well...we more or less pick our own agenda for the class and what I try to bring to Legal Studies is to bring legal principles to their everyday experiences. So say, for instance, I drive into the back of your car what happens or say why is it that I am wrong? You know, legally why is it that I am wrong? Why it is that Gardaí¹⁸ don't want to come to the scene?

Because they weren't a witness, they are after the fact, you know. So it is to try and pick say their extraordinary interest in inheritance, you know. Ireland has a preoccupation with property. I suppose it used to be the land, now...you know. ...So they would be very interested in things like that, you know. Eh...now we'll always have a session whereby I would say was anybody listening to *Morning Ireland*. So something would be on the news, you know. We might talk about the right to die, abortion or the referendum, you know. So try and say why does it matter, you know. Why are they asking us to vote? But...it's fairly much a conversation, you know, because the ending part shows really that Legal Studies impacts on people. It sounds a bit pompous. But you know, the reason we can only travel at 50 km/hr is because of law".

Connie said that in Legal Studies they chose to discuss legal principles that impacted on the students' everyday life experiences. Examples she cited were the rules of the road, inheritance, property rights, right to die, abortion and the referendum. Connie also stated that it was fairly much of a dialogue. Daisy said that she introduced optional subjects including Psychology and Legal Studies in order to improve the thinking capacity of students.

Interviewer: "Yes, yes. We enter into contract agreements almost on a daily basis. If we break those contracts, what happens?"

¹⁸ Garda Síochána more commonly referred to as the Gardaí is Ireland's National Police Service.

Connie: "There are consequences".

Interviewer: "Yes, we find ourselves sometimes losing something that is valuable or dear to us".

Connie: "They are very interested now in Legal Studies because I suppose they do see that there are things for which they hadn't explanations. When they actually have a bit of the theory..."

[Interjection]

Interviewer: "The reason why I thought of asking the question is because at face value it seems rather intimidating that they do Legal Studies. You have even reinforced that by saying it sounds pompous. As a result, I thought I would rather ask to find out what topics are covered in the module".

Connie: "No, no. They actually love it, because I suppose they end up knowing reasons for things that they previously had accepted. Say they go to witness the court sessions. We are lucky enough that we have the District Court, the Circuit Court and the High Court occasionally come here. So they have the different levels and they have been very lucky. Some of the judges would welcome them and bring them to the back and say, do you realise what was happening there? You know. I would have said it to them before they went that it's not that the judge is going to say this is principle 'A' now, but..."

Connie asserted that students liked Legal Studies because it helped them to have explanations to certain things some of which they had no explanations before doing the subject. The VTOS Centre sometimes arranged visits to the District Court, the Circuit Court and the High Court sessions in order to witness proceedings at first hand. Some of the judges would welcome the students to the back-stage and explain the rationale why certain cases had specific outcomes.

Interviewer: "...you would explain to them why a particular case might have had a particular outcome".

Connie: "...yah, but different judges have actually brought them in and said do you understand the rationale for why I said that...I suppose...like...it helps because I think there are things that students feel are kind of beyond them, you know...I wouldn't be interested in Legal Studies or I was never in a court".

Interviewer: "Even to me it was sort of puzzling because I thought it is Business Administration and then how does Legal Studies come in. However, with the way that you have explained, I now understand the logic behind doing the subject as part of the course. The inference is that Business Administrators need to understand the legal implications of their actions as individuals or as representatives of organisations. They enter into contracts with suppliers, subcontractors,

employees and regulatory authorities, *inter alia*¹⁹. You talked about simple things that happen every day...” [Interjection]

Connie: “Yah, simple things that happen every day!”

Interviewer: “...but, that are legally binding and have a great impact on our lives”.

Connie: “I mean say for instance you, you know, eh...I suppose people feel I’ve rights, you know. In fact, rights and responsibilities...that’s the law. If you have the rights, somebody must have an obligation...so let your right become a reality. I suppose I’ve noticed with our students...I used to joke about it particularly when our women...We seem to have more women than men. When they join us initially, and when you meet them in the canteen and all they can talk about...no disrespect I’ve children myself, is childbirth and how it was for them, because in a sense that is their mastery. That’s something about they are experts, but by Christmas they are talking about things like the budget. They are talking about things they hate about the right to die or the right to life, you know. So they would have changed. We actually see them...we see the change, you know”.

Connie pointed out that the topics that they discussed during Legal Studies sessions may appear to be simple things, but they had legal implications. Connie also explained that people sometimes passively talked about having rights but what was not usually highlighted was that rights go with responsibilities. In other words, if someone had rights, it was the responsibility of law enforcement agents or other people around that person to ensure that those rights were realised. Rights and responsibilities were what constitute the law.

Interviewer: “Thank you very much for an informative discussion”.

Connie: “You are welcome. I wish your research is successful”.

The interview with the third teacher was for 32 minutes 45 seconds. This section presented data that was collected during the fieldwork phase of the research process. The section that follows is a conclusion of the chapter on collection and presentation of data.

3.14 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the methodological assumptions that form the philosophical underpinnings of the research design. Reviewed literature revealed that philosophical underpinnings of epistemology, ontology, axiology and praxeology are central in grounding leadership. The study adopted a flexible mixed methods design in a sequential explanatory strategy embedded with an

¹⁹ *Inter alia* is commonly used in Legal language and is Latin for ‘among other things’.

interpretivist paradigm with a critical constructivist stance, and a narrative approach. In addition, the chapter asserted that the research design, addressed issues pertaining to ethical practice when carrying out research, and the examined various elements that determine quality. This chapter also explained that some challenges that were experienced by this researcher before making a breakthrough to access the site of research.

This chapter also posited that analysis of qualitative data takes many forms as the data themselves and that the analysis of data is influenced mainly by the purposes of the research as well as the research design. In addition, the chapter defined qualitative research and explained that it is not practical to keep interpretive research linear or as discrete parts. The chapter also discussed that most traditional qualitative research methods encompass general inductive analysis approaches.

The chapter also explored the coding process during the general inductive analysis and also compared different descriptive data analysis approaches. Furthermore, the chapter defined the general inductive analysis, and compared it with deductive analysis. The chapter also discussed that the general inductive data analysis was guided by the objectives of the study, which identified topics to be investigated. In addition, the chapter posited that the inductive analysis involved multiple readings and interpretations of raw data. Furthermore, the chapter explained that the general inductive data analysis had some similarities and differences with other descriptive qualitative data analysis approaches. This chapter also discussed the development of the 'Framework'. The chapter also pointed out that Thomas' (2006) general inductive analysis evolved from Miles and Huberman's (1994) content analysis. The chapter explored open, axial and theoretical coding. Lastly, the chapter discussed data collection and presentation. The next chapter examines presentation of findings from data collected during fieldwork.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings

4.0 Introduction

The primary aims and objectives of the study focussed on answering the main research question: *How and in what ways does the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) of an Education Training Board (ETB) in Ireland transfer sustainable, transformative and distributed leadership skills to teachers/tutors in order to improve service delivery to adult learners?*

Data was collected using multiple methods of both primary and secondary data collection. Primary data collection processes included completion of questionnaires, focus group interviews and one-to-one interviews. Secondary data collection sessions involved a review of a broad range of key Irish policy documents written about Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS). This chapter presents findings based on questionnaires filled out by students and teachers. The chapter also presents findings based on three focus group interviews with students, and one-to-one interviews with three teachers and the VTOS Coordinator. The section that follows presents findings derived from questionnaires completed by students.

4.1 Presentation of findings from questionnaires filled out by students

The primary focus of this section is to present findings derived from questionnaires completed by students. The subsection below presents findings on age group distribution of respondents.

4.1.1 Age group distribution of respondents

The numbers of respondents in the study who represented the age groups of 18 to 29 years and 60 years or more were low. The age group of 18 to 29 years consisted of 9% of the respondents, and the age group of 60 years or more consisted of 6% of respondents. Representation of respondents in the age groups that lie between the 18 to 29 years and the 60 years or more age groups are as follows: 30 to 39 years (29%), 40 to 49 years (26%) and 50 to 59 years (29%), which reflects an evenly distributed demographic.

The majority of service providers of VTOS courses state that the VTOS programme enrolls students who are aged 21 years or more and are not specific on the age limit. Ideally, the age group of 21 to 29 years could have been substituted for the age group of 18 to 29 years when the study shifted from Adult Literacy and Basic Education Service to the VTOS programme, but that was overlooked when questions were modified to be in line with requirements of the new research site. There were fewer students in the age group of 18 to 29 years that are enrolled in specific VTOS courses. This is despite that there was an extra incentive of a top up payment for under-25s that is aimed at encouraging that cohort to enrol on VTOS courses (Citizens Information Board, 2013; Department

of Social Protection, 2010; Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, 2014; The Irish Government News Service, 2013). The Irish Government News Service (2013) states that:

...in a further measure to support young adults a minimum of 2,000 training places will be ring-fenced for under-25s at a cost of €6 million as part of a €46 million Youth Guarantee being implemented across Government Departments. These places will be provided under a follow-up to the successful Momentum programme that operated in 2013.

The Momentum programme generally targeted young people who were less than 25 years and in long-term unemployment (one year or more). Conlon (2013) asserts that:

People who have been unemployed for a long time (more than 1 year) are the clients for Momentum. People under 25 years of age form a particular cohort within this target. That is because young people, in particular, are very susceptible to the damaging and scarring effects of unemployment.

Education and training providers from public, private, and voluntary and community sectors pooled resources and offered places in areas that were identified after making consultations with potential employers.

In addition to the financial bonus that was offered to under-25s that enrol in VTOS courses, the Department of Social Protection encouraged this age group to go back to education and failure to comply might lead to a reduction of their social welfare payment and to subsequent termination.

The low representation of students who were 60 years or more could be attributed to that the official policy is that there is no need to re-skill, up-skill or teach new skills to people who are over 60 years of age since they will be about to retire or they would have reached the retirement age. This researcher made a follow-up telephone conversation to the VTOS Coordinator to clarify issues about the 60 years or more age group. The Co-ordinator stated that the VTOS programme prioritises enrolment of students in the age group of 21 to 35 years who also have low educational achievement. She also explained that the primary objective for the VTOS programme is to get people back to work or help them further their education. The Co-ordinator gave an example that a 63-year old who enrolled on a two-year programme would have reached retirement age by the time s/he completed the course. However, she clarified that the scheme does not discriminate against potential candidates based on age as long as they are 21 years or more. Therefore, individual VTOS education institutions have the discretion and prerogative to offer places to the 60 years or more age group or not to do so. Since the scheme mainly targets those who are from 21 to 35 years, that could be one of the reasons why there are fewer prospective applicants aged 60 or more who enrol on the VTOS courses. It also reflects that the official position is that the transfer of leadership skills mainly targets the age group of 21 to 35 years.

Age group prioritisations and restrictions make the VTOS programme not broad, less flexible and limits its usefulness. The programme would be more meaningful if all participants who had completed compulsory basic education were eligible to participate could without any specific age restrictions and prioritisations of certain age groups (Powell *et al.*, 2003).

This subsection presented findings on age group distribution of respondents. The subsection that follows presents findings on distribution of students that are doing specific courses.

4.1.2 Distribution of respondents doing specific courses

Respondents were asked to indicate courses that they were enrolled in. Forty percent of the respondents who participated in the study are enrolled in the Further Education Training Awards Council (FETAC) Level 5 Community Care course. Nine students were enrolled in the Core Skills Language and General Studies Levels 3 and 4 courses, but it was not clear how many students were enrolled in each level. The VTOS 'programmes commence each year in the last week of August and runs until the end of May. VTOS operates over a two year period' (Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, 2014). Five out of nine of the research participants enrolled in both courses, completed the questionnaires, which was a response rate of 56%.

Out of the twenty-one students who were enrolled on the Arts Craft and Design and Graphic Design Level 5 course, three filled out the questionnaires, which was a return rate of 14%. The findings reflected that the majority of the students who participated in the study were supervised by teachers who also took part in the study. On the other hand, classes that were supervised by teachers who did not participate in the study had fewer students who participated in the study.

Distribution of students enrolled in specific courses reflected trends in the labour market, in colleges of further education and third level colleges. Students who completed VTOS courses used both leadership and academic skills when they go back to employment or further their education.

The subsection presented findings on distribution of students doing specific courses. The following subsection presents findings to establish how respondents rate their ability to do literacy tasks.

4.1.3 Rating literacy tasks

Respondents were asked to rate their literacy skills in accordance with the modern definition of literacy (Department of Education and Science, 1997, 1998 and 2000; DES, 2010; Hargreaves, 2003; Kirsch, 2001; NALA, 2007; The Teaching Council, 2014). The modern definition of literacy hypothesises that literacy encompasses more than just reading and writing. The Department of Education and Skills (2010) asserts:

Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, print, broadcast media, and digital media.

In the same way we now think of numeracy as not just the ability to use numbers but the wider ability to use mathematics to solve problems and meet the demands of day-to-day living in complex social settings (p. 9).

Literacy skills now also include numeracy and computer literacy (Department of Education and Science, 1997, 1998 and 2000; DES, 2010; Hargreaves, 2003; Kirsch, 2001; NALA, 2007; The Teaching Council, 2014). It is paramount to note that an adult or young person with low literacy, numeracy and computer skills feel isolated from the wider society (Department of Education and Skills, 2010). That is because s/he finds it difficult to do basic tasks including reading, writing and sending emails and text messages. A person who has literacy issues might also find it difficult to write a shopping list, fill out Department of Social Welfare forms, shop online, understand a bill, read a map for directions and read instructions. The Department of Education and Skills (2010) reinforces what has been aforementioned and states that 'research has shown clearly that mastering the skills of literacy and numeracy brings with it many social, economic and health benefits for the individual and society as a whole' (p. 9). The majority of respondents stated that they were on the spectrum ranging from competent to very competent in most literacy tasks.

Literacy skills boost self-esteem and self-confidence leading to further education and increased production in the work place (Department of Education and Science, 1997, 1998 and 2000; Department of Education and Skills, 2010; Naidoo, 2005, Walters, 2008). Leadership responsibilities are linked to self-esteem and self-confidence involve effective communication, networking, compiling and reading reports, and making decisions that are informed by available information.

On a Likert-type scale, with 1 being incompetent and 5 being very competent, the majority of respondents claimed to operate at a high level of the literacy scale. This meant that those students were capable of enjoying social, cultural, and economic and health benefits of being literate and numerate as individuals and in a broader society.

This subsection presented findings to establish how respondents rate their ability to do literacy tasks. The subsection that follows presents findings on the respondents' main sources of news about what is happening in their surroundings.

4.1.4 Main sources of news

Research participants were asked to indicate their main sources of news about what was happening in their surroundings. Department of Education and Science (1997) points out that:

While some literacy practices (e.g., newspaper reading) are engaged in by almost most Irish respondents, a significant minority are never involved in any significant literacy activity. Specifically, one-fifth of people never read a book, and an even greater number

never write anything substantial [...] Involvement in one kind of literacy activity tends to be associated with involvement in other kinds (p. x).

The majority of respondents stated that they relied on television (28), Internet (22), friends (19), newspapers (14) and radio (13) as main sources of news about what is happening around them. This confirms that being involved in one kind of literacy activity leads to involvement in other kinds of literacy and non-literacy activities because research participants indicated that they relied on more than one source of news. Nowadays, news from the majority of the abovementioned sources are delivered with some degree of criticality, and comments are usually sought from experts. Therefore, consumers need to be active, critical and effective listeners.

Televised news, online publications and newspapers may incorporate maps, and tables and graphs, some of which are iterative. Therefore, ability to consume such news needs a certain degree of literacy and numeracy on the part of the listener or reader. The level of literacy determines the source of news that one is attracted to. The Department of Education and Skills (2010) asserts that literacy 'includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, print, broadcast media, and digital media' (p. 9). Two respondents rely on magazines and 1 relies on teachers as sources of news. The Department of Education and Science (1997) argues that:

Involvement in literacy activity is also associated with involvement non-literacy activities including attendance at plays, films, and concerts as well as participating in community organisations. Thus, it would seem that literacy activity and competence are associated with a richer and a fuller involvement in social and cultural life. On the other hand, heavy television viewing is negatively associated with both literacy and non-literacy activities (p. x).

What it means is that one does not necessarily need to be literate in order to rely on friends, teachers, radio and television as sources of news. Thus, understanding what is being said does not translate to an ability to read, write and meaningfully apply mathematical applications. However, the fact that respondents have a broad base of sources of news indicates that they experience a richer and fuller social and cultural life (Figel, 2008; Starratt, 2001).

Leaders are keen to know what is happening in their surroundings, and the level of literacy skills determines the complexity of the source of news. Sources of news inform leaders about the internal and external environment, and issues that affect the continued existence of their organisation and its competitiveness.

This subsection presented findings on the respondents' main sources of news about what is happening in their surroundings. The following subsection presents findings to establish how respondents rate skills that enhance their self-confidence and self-esteem.

4.1.5 Rating personal development and study skills

Research participants were asked to rate personal development and study skills of numeracy, reading, writing and interpersonal skills on a scale 1 to 4, 1 being the least important to them and 4 being most important. In the 4th category (most important with a score of 4), the numbers of respondents in specific skills were: interpersonal skills (17), numeracy (12), writing (8) and reading (7). In the 3rd category (more important with a score of 3), the numbers of respondents were: reading (14), writing (10), numeracy (8) and interpersonal skills (5). In the 2nd category (important with a score of 2), the numbers of respondents were: writing (13), reading (9), numeracy (4) and interpersonal skills (4). Lastly, in the 1st category (least important with a score of 1), the numbers of respondents were: numeracy (11), interpersonal skills (9), reading (5) and writing (4).

There were 35 respondents that completed the questionnaire, 77% of them ranked the skills as instructed and 23% did not adhere to the instructions. The possibility is that some respondents were not comfortable with giving a numerical value, for instance, of 1 or 2 when they believed all the skills were of equal importance to them. One such respondent awarded one skill a 4 and 3s to the other three skills, and then wrote an inscription on the completed questionnaire, 'All of equal importance'. The majority of the respondents who did not rate the skills in a sequence awarded most of them numerical values of between 3 and 4. However, one respondent awarded numerical values of 1's to all skills. It is possible that some of the respondents did not clearly understand the instructions. However, a possibility of that happening was not detected when the questions were piloted. Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (2014) states:

The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme is a full-time general education and work related training programme for adults. The aim of the scheme is to provide unemployed adults with an opportunity to gain skills, confidence and certification which will enable them to enter/re-enter the work force, or progress to further education.

It therefore follows that helping adult learners to gain confidence is one of the principal objectives of the VTOS programme. Lester (2007) points out that one of the characteristics of successful teams is confidence to overcome problems.

This researcher considered that it was important to include the results of those who did not follow instructions and rate the skills in a numerical order as envisaged. The decision was made because this researcher asserted that the research participants acted that way because they felt that personal development skills were inextricably of equal importance and therefore believed their

reasoning was justified. Furthermore, this researcher believed that it was not the question's lack of clarity that caused the confusion. If that was the case, there was a high possibility that the anomaly could have been detected when the questions were piloted. The researcher also considered that the students' voices were important in the study and could not be ignored. It is pertinent to include the students' voices because by doing that they could be considered for inclusion in the design and review of the education curriculum.

Findings of this study indicate that students rated reading as least important, writing as important, numeracy as more important and interpersonal skills as the most important skill.

This subsection presented findings to establish how respondents rate personal development and study skills. The subsection below presents findings to establish how respondents rate support that they get from members of staff and their peers.

4.1.6 Rating the amount and quality of support

Respondents were asked to rate the amount and quality of support that they get from staff members and peers. Respondents highly rate the support that they get from peers, administration and teaching staff. A rating of 'Very Good' was delivered by 8 respondents in favour of the Co-ordinator, 9 for the Administrator, 10 for teachers and 11 for classmates. A rating of Excellent was delivered by 22 respondents in favour of teachers, also 22 for classmates, 24 for the Administrator and 25 for the Co-ordinator. Therefore, the total number of respondents who rated the Co-ordinator to be Very Good and Excellent was 33 out of 35. It was also 33 for the Administrator, 32 for teachers and 33 for classmates.

Cameron and Quinn (2006) point out that one of the multiple skills considered under the Competing Values Framework as a requisite for mid-level and upper-level managers is facilitation of effective interpersonal relationships, including supportive feedback, listening, and resolution of interpersonal problems. Spillane *et al.* (2001) assert that 'leadership involves the identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination, and use of social, material, and cultural resources' (p. 24). Julsuwan *et al.* (2011) state that it is acting in a manner that can 'convince...followers to work and accomplish the organization's goals' (p. 424). Lester (2007) defines leadership 'as the ability to inspire, persuade or influence others to follow a course of actions or behaviour towards a defined goal' (p. 303).

Modern approaches to teaching incorporate coaching techniques. One of the key responsibilities, qualities and attributes of a coach are that s/he should be an active, critical and effective listener. The coach should be honest, a good communicator with negotiating skills, have an ability to build relationships, a problem-solver, be patient with achieving results, and full of enthusiasm and ready to support others (Bolt, 2000, p. 15; Robertson, 2009; Williams *et al.*, 2004).

In addition, the VTOS Centre Co-ordinator was asked during the interviews if she thought there were any negative experiences that teachers go through when trying to incorporate leadership skills in their teaching approaches. She responded:

Yes, there's...and that can be a human condition...some students or some people find it hard to take responsibility for their own actions or maybe don't necessarily realise that they have choices. So sometimes...sometimes maybe I think we possibly spoon-feed too much, OK.

Then we say, no look, they are adults. It's up to them to take responsibility, you know. We tell them the dates. I am just giving an example now like the CAO²⁰ application, right. You give everybody the dates. You tell them what they have to do if they want help with the CAO form, and then we don't chase people up because we say no they are adults. But then, there have been occasions whereby people come back and say nobody told me, you never told me. Now I missed the date, it's your fault. ...So like an incident, we need to think how to overcome it. Now, we tend to get people sign if we give them something. We get them to sign to say I've received the information.

The interview discussion with the Co-ordinator shows that while it is important to support students the organisation must be wary that that does not lead to a dependence syndrome.

Bolt (2000) asserts that during mentoring process 'the individual is explicitly learning from a more experienced senior person who typically advises on career advancement issues' (p. 6). The relationship between the mentor and mentee is not of equal partnership (Adeyemi (2011; Bell and Treleaven, 2011; Fajana and Gbajumo-Sheriff, 2011; Herrera *et al.*, 2011; Ilesanmi, 2011; Ojedokun, 2011). As a result, if the mentoring process is not handled well, there is a possibility that the mentee may develop a dependency syndrome. The exception is in the case of a mentor-coach (a coach who trains more senior executives) in which relationships are asymmetrical and dependency syndrome is less likely to occur (Rațiu and Băban, 2012).

Belasen and Frank (2010) state that 'the facilitator and mentor roles help facilitate group interactions, motivate individuals, and support the development of problem-solving and communication skills essential for teamwork' (p. 281). Zaft *et al.* (2009) agree with Belasen and Frank (2010) and assert that the mentor acknowledges personal needs, develops people, cares for mentees, and is empathetic. In addition, Zaft *et al.* (2009) state that the facilitator acknowledges

²⁰ CAO is acronym for Central Applications Office in Ireland. According to Central Applications Office (2013), 'The Central Applications Office processes applications for undergraduate courses in Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Decisions on admissions to undergraduate courses are made by the HEIs who instruct CAO to make offers to successful candidates'.

personal needs, develops people, practises participation and teambuilding, focuses on consensus building, manages conflict and encourages participative decisionmaking (p. 275). Yardley and Neal (2007) claim that 'it appears that there is a general academic consensus proposing a more inclusive leader who promotes self-directed team behaviours. Through manipulating group culture the leader can evoke change in behaviours and achieve goals' (p. 24). Adult educators incorporate facilitation and mentoring roles, and the styles and behaviours that align with the facilitator and mentor roles are of a *relational orientation*.

Belasen and Frank (2010) point out that 'when managers play the mentor and facilitator roles, for example, they use a relational approach to communication that places emphasis on receivers' insights and feedback' (p. 283). Belasen and Frank (2010) also state that 'relational messages are aimed at personal relationships, informal interactions, peer communications, and maintaining an awareness of the importance of the individual's role in completing the organisation's mission' (p. 284). Furthermore, the focus is on commonalities in understandings, intrapersonal issues, commitment to continuing professional development (CPD), and commitment to personal and shared goals of the organisation, personal and professional networks. Belasen and Frank (2010) also point out that 'members seek to constantly improve relationships through constructive cycles of feedback and positive frames are discerning and perceptive of needs of individuals and groups as important organisational stakeholders' (p. 284). Findings reflect that the Adult Education Centre promotes an organisational culture that resonates with the adult educators and adult learners, and teachers play facilitator and mentor roles as illustrated in the CVF's team culture.

During the interview, the VTOS Centre Co-ordinator indicated that there were occasions when the support that students got from staff resulted in students' failure to take responsibility for their actions. As a way of dealing with that, the educational institution has introduced a policy that obliges students to enter into contractual agreements and they commit themselves by appending their signatures.

The preceding subsection presented findings to find out how respondents rate the amount and quality of support that they get from members of staff and their peers. The subsection presents findings on whether the VTOS programme is meeting the objectives of respondents.

4.1.7 Investigating if the VTOS helps respondents to meet their objectives

Respondents were asked to rate the extent at which they felt the VTOS programme was meeting the objectives that made them to enrol for courses that they were doing. Fifty-four percent (54%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 40% agreed that the VTOS programme was meeting their objectives. As a result, 94% of the respondents at least agreed that their expectations were being

met. That was a significant percentage that further confirmed that the assertion that the Adult Education Centre offered a favourable learning atmosphere.

Although the organisation and teachers had their objectives, it was important that those objectives were aligned with those of students. In other words, the learning process needed to be student-centred. Ayanda said that:

I think the outstanding quality of this particular organisation that I work for is that we really care about our students...that...you know, no matter what challenges we do our utmost to support everybody and we kind of realise that adults learn differently and some are flying it and more struggle and more need other supports. So I think we are people-centred, and I think that's what I like about it...that we really care. And I suppose having two years with students gives you that time to develop those relationships as well. You know, you can really develop very strong relationships over two years.

Connie concurs with Ayanda. She stated that:

Yes, I think the learning is more student-centred in adult education than it is in other settings, therefore, caters for the varied and diverse needs of students. When you say adult learners are the leaders in the learning process, I agree because they tell you what it is that they already know and what they need to know. In that way, the teacher avoids teaching them what they already know. That is in contrast with, for instance, the primary and secondary school settings whereby pupils are in most cases treated as passive subjects or as empty vessels that need to be filled with knowledge.

VTOS courses employ principles of local community development projects. Dublin City Council (2015) defines community-based learning as:

...broad set of teaching/learning strategies that enable youth and adults to learn what they want to learn from any segment of the community. Our definition provides for learners of all ages to identify what they wish to learn and opens up an unlimited set of resources to support them. By community, we are including the schools, formal and informal institutions in one's neighbourhood, and the entire world through such resources as the Internet.

Programmes that are included in the Dublin City Council community-based learning include VTOS, FÁS programmes, NALA Reading and Writing Schemes, Distance Learning, Vocational Adult Literacy programmes and Community ICT Project. Organisations that embrace project approaches are more creative and innovative than traditional working groups, and help their clients to achieve their objectives (Lenfle, 2008).

The success criteria and success factors play a key role in successful and effective implementation of projects. Murphy and Ledwith (2007) assert that ‘success criteria are the measures by which success or failure of a project will be judged’ (p. 156). Examples of success criteria include quality, finishing within budget and schedule, and appreciation by client, stakeholders, project team, recipient and contracting partners, among others. VTOS courses are synonymous to multiple projects that are run by the Adult Education Centre. Murphy and Ledwith (2007) state that ‘project success is based more on internal than external factors’ (p. 159). Therefore, the input of teachers, non-teaching staff, Voluntary Board of Management (VBoM), immediate community and students contribute to project success or the outcome of courses.

Success factors include inputs by senior management and key stakeholders that have direct or indirect effect on the successful implementation and delivery of a project. Examples of success factors include top management support, risk management, resource management, clear goals and objectives, scheduling, cost management, leadership and teamwork, planning, communications, feedback, and performance monitoring, among others.

The findings reflected that teachers and non-teaching staff members use and transfer leadership skills in a manner that helped students to achieve objectives that motivated them to enrol to do specific courses at the Adult Education Centre. It is not easy for students to achieve their objectives without support, guidance and direction from staff members and the Adult Education Guidance Service.

This subsection presented data on whether the VTOS programme was meeting the objectives of respondents or not. The subsection that follows presents data about factors that influence respondents to enrol in the VTOS programme.

4.1.8 Factors that influence respondents to enrol in the VTOS programme

Respondents were asked to state the factors that made them join the VTOS programme. The majority of the respondents, twenty-three (66%) cited that they enrolled on the courses that they were doing because they wanted to up-skill, re-skill or to gain new skills. That was in line with the primary objectives of the VTOS programme. The majority of the respondents in this category were between 30 and 60 years old. Figel’ (2008) points out that ‘Europe is undergoing a major transformation to become a world-leading knowledge-based society – making the pursuit of lifelong more important than ever’ (p. 23). The enrolment requirements include minimum age, period of unemployment, low level of educational achievement and being in receipt of a social welfare payment or in possession of a redundancy letter or be a spouse or civil partner of someone who meets the qualifying criteria (Citizens Information Board, 2013; Department of Social

Protection, 2010; Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, 2014; The Irish Government News Service, 2013).

Five respondents (14%) stated that they decided to enrol on the courses because they wanted to enhance their personal development and satisfy other personal needs. In brief, they took the decision for personal and social reasons rather for economic reasons. One of the research participants stated, 'I wanted to have something to do with my day. I was unemployed and wasn't occupied so when a person who went to school here told me about enrolling in a course myself, I was happy to apply and to be accepted was great for me'. The categories of respondents in this group were most likely to be those approaching 60 years or more than that.

The official position prioritises enrolment of 21 to 35-year olds, but generally the programme does not discriminate against any particular age group as long as the applicant is 21 years or more and has low educational achievement. Targeting the age group of 21 to 35 years may be the reason why very few applicants aged 60 years or more apply for VTOS courses. The Adult Education Centre uses its own discretion in enrolling the over-60s. Policy makers see no need for the 60 years or more age group to up-skill, re-skill and acquire new skills they will be about to retire from active employment or would have retired. Age restrictions and prioritisations of certain age groups are against aspects of the working definition of adult education adopted by this study which advocates for no specific age requirements and making adult education open to all participants doing post-compulsory education (Powell *et al.*, 2003).

The VTOS programmes offer "Taster" courses. The Department of Social Protection (2010) states that "'Taster" courses are designed to teach study skills and personal development to persons who are considering a return to full-time education'.

Seven respondents (20%) said they enrolled in the VTOS programme to further their education since they left school early. The Citizens Information Board (2013) states that 'VTOS is operated through local Education and Training Boards and is aimed in particular at unemployed people who are early school-leavers'.

Leadership skills and their transfer have a relationship with the level of general educational.

People who are better educated have the potential to become good and articulate leaders.

Leadership at the workplace is associated with the acquisition of technical or professional skills.

This subsection above discussed the factors that influence respondents to enrol in VTOS courses.

The above section presented findings derived from the questionnaires completed by students. The following section presents findings based on the questionnaires filled out by teachers.

4.2 Presentation of findings from questionnaires filled out by teachers

This section primarily focuses on presenting findings from questionnaires filled out by teachers. The section will also present discuss findings from open-ended qualitative questions that were incorporated in the questionnaires.

Two open-ended questions were incorporated in the questionnaires. A closed-ended question that required teachers to answer 'Yes' or 'No' was, 'Do you use leadership skills during the course of executing your teaching duties? The open-ended question that followed was, 'If you use leadership skills, what type of leadership skills do you use?' Another closed-ended question that required a 'Yes' or 'No' answer was, 'Do you equip your students with leadership skills?' The open-ended question that came after it asked, 'If you do equip your students with leadership skills, how do you do that?' Subsequently, one-to-one interviews were held with research participants to establish whether they apply leadership skills during the course of their teaching duties and if they equipped their students with leadership skills.

All three research participants concurred that they apply leadership skills during the course of their teaching duties. The respondents were also asked to discuss the type of leadership skills that they use during the course of executing their duties. Most of the responses were short and written in phrases rather than full sentences. The excerpts below are verbatim responses from respondents as they appear on the completed questionnaires.

Ayanda: 'Group leadership skills'. Most community education and development courses are delivered in community settings and include modules such as Group Dynamics, Facilitation Skills or Communication Skills. The aforementioned modules prepare students to take leadership roles in their communities. Spillane *et al.* (2001) state that group work, teamwork and distributed leadership theories conceptualise that formal and informal 'leaders' collective knowledge enables an understanding of leadership practice that would not be possible if either leader were considered alone' (p. 25). According to Burns (2003), the leadershipfollower paradox theorises that:

...the boundary between leaders and followers blurs and ultimately disappears if, instead of identifying individual actors simply as leaders or simply as followers, we see the whole process as a *system* in which the functions of leadership is palpable and central but the actors move in and out of leader and follower roles. At this crucial point we are no longer seeing individual leaders; rather we see *leadership* as the basic process of social change, of causation in a community, an organization, a nation – perhaps even the globe (p. 185).

Bianca: 'Offer guidance, encouragement, freedom to speak in an open environment'. A low level of education is one of the criteria that are used to enrol students for VTOS courses. That is the reason why some of the adult learners need guidance and encouragement to help them to boost their self-esteem and self-confidence to remain in the course and increase their chances of furthering their education and assuming positions of leadership in the work place.

That in turn helps them to speak up for themselves. Starratt's (2001) hypothesises that:

[The fifth premise] concerns a framework for thinking about the leadership of democratic organizations...I want to emphasize leadership as 'cultivation'. By this I mean that democratic leadership is primarily concerned to cultivate an environment that supports participation, sharing of ideas, and virtues of honesty, openness, flexibility, and compassion.

Democratic educational leadership should be focused on cultivating school environments where...richer and fuller humanity is activated by people acting in communion (p.338).

Connie: 'Provide tuition and subject knowledge, followed by practical applications of material studied. Encouraging students to recognise possibilities from within their own life experiences use I.T. or legal expertise'. Generally, adults want to learn something that they can apply in everyday experiences. Linderman (1926) identified key theoretical perspectives about adult learners that include the following:

1. Adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy
2. Adult's orientation to learning is life-centred
3. Experience is the deepest source of adult's learning (cited in Knowles and Shepherd, 2005, p. 40).

Respondents were required to answer 'Yes' or 'No' to a closed-ended question that enquired if they equipped their students with leadership skills. The open-ended question that followed was: 'If you do equip your students with leadership skills, how do you do that?' Respondents had this to say:

Ayanda: "Set them group tasks, leaders emerge. Sometimes nominate heads. Pick names from a hat so that all students get an opportunity to lead a task or session". This can happen when Ayanda has trust on her students. Pashiards (2009) asserts that trust embraces three aspects of leadership, that is, 'knowledge, behaviour and beliefs. Thus, trust is a key concept for development, sustainability and delegation of authority, in order to have leaders who can develop and sustain policy' (p. 10). Burns (2003) points out that:

...[a transformational leader is hypothesized] to rise one step ahead of followers...but continued progress depends on their ability to stay closely attuned to the evolving wants, needs, and expectations of followers – in short, to learn from and be led by followers. And requires a commitment to a process in which the leaders and followers *together* pursue selfactualization (p 143).

Bianca: “Encourage adapting prior learning to current learning. Open and supportive environment – no question is ever “stupid” – encourage a voice and ideas”. Bianca’s approach recognises that adults tap into their experiential knowledge as a way of facilitating learning. Connie stated:

By drawing on their prior work/social lives, students can create/submit work where software principles or legal principles may be applied to their own chosen scenarios. It makes the student the “expert” on the problem and the solution. Students are more confident when bringing solutions to bear on events within their own experience.

Connie highlighted the importance of experiential knowledge when teaching adults, and the adults’ interest to learn something that has a bearing to their lives and the importance of local knowledge. The seven principles that characterise sustainable leadership are depth, endurance, breadth, justice, diversity, resourcefulness and conservation (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003).

Students reinforced some of the assertions that were made by their teachers. A respondent from the first focus group asserted:

I think there is one other thing about our group in particular. Say we might all have a deadline for an assignment. Some of us may be finished before that, there’s no race to do it. There was like...Oh! Do you need a hand with this? We all helped each other. There is no I am gonna get this, I am gonna do this better. We didn’t have that as a group. We didn’t have competition against each other.

The above statement shows that students were pleased that teachers transfer sustainable leadership skills to them and that they were encouraged to use collaborative approaches. Teachers used sustainable leadership approaches to encourage students to collaborate rather than compete against one another. Concepts of collaboration are ingrained in transformational leadership theoretical perspectives (Burns, 2003). Burns (2003) posits that:

Leaders take the initiative in mobilising people for participation in the process of change, encouraging a sense of collective identity and collective efficacy, which in turn brings stronger feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy, described by Bernard Bass as an enhanced

'sense of 'meaningfulness' in their work and lives'. By pursuing transformational change, people can transform themselves (pp. 25 – 26).

Teachers who trained at a time when leadership skills were not included in the curriculum learnt them during the course of their duties. Connie remarked, "Well, I suppose...to be frank I would like to think that I exhibit leadership skills in the classroom at the moment. But, I believe that I've learned to develop them over the course of the teaching rather than...you know". During a follow-up telephone conversation after the interviews, the VTOS Coordinator stated that teachers do leadership courses that were either funded by the organisation or privately funded. This researcher asked the Co-ordinator during the interview if the team of teachers at her education institution have the requisite skills to teach students with disabilities. She replied, "Some of our teachers have done training in it. They trained voluntarily. Some have also done CPD²¹ in it". However, the VTOS Co-ordinator stated that there was lack of supports for students with special education needs.

Bianca pointed that planning for field trips lacks support from top leadership. She asserted:

"Negative...I think sometimes that...the people high up...not necessarily that I am in an area where we have a person in charge of us. But, I mean people high up. If you decide to do something with a group, there is no part of paperwork involved in it, and in this country there's an awful lot. You have to take insurance, you can't take them out, you know. I've experienced that with Local History...I found out when going to various places owned by the Office of Public Works, they would ask for insurance. They want to know whether you have permission to come down and come in. Eh...that kind of has a negative impact on people, you know, that you would have involved in planning trips. It stops people from wanting to plan something.

One of the principles of sustainable leadership is that it lasts. A member of the first focus group stated that the learning process that they receive at the Adult Education Centre lasts and helps to keep the brain intellectually stimulated. The member of the first focus group asserted:

It helps the brain, you know, it keeps the brain ticking over and active. Even if you didn't work after this, it gives you an interest in other things, like computers, for instance, to learn how to use them and to use the Internet. Even if you didn't work after this course and if you had your laptop, the world is opened up to you, you know, what is going on in the world and different cultures, and learn that as well. ...and I mean you can go learning at home, which is brilliant.

²¹ CPD refers to Continuous/Continuing Professional Development.

It is evident from the above quotation that acquisition of computer skills made students to feel empowered. The research participant also highlighted that some of those skills had social benefits and could be used outside the workplace (Department of Education and Science, 1997, 1998 and 2000; Department of Education and Skills, 2010; Figel', 2008; Starratt, 2001).

Teachers use their leadership skills to equip students with skills that they can use in different settings. The computer literacy skills that have been transferred to them have widened their horizons, and helped them to enjoy a richer and a fuller social and cultural life (Department of Education and Science, 1997, 1998 and 2000; Department of Education and Skills, 2010; Figel', 2008; Powell *et al.*, 2003; Starratt, 2001; Walters, 2008).

Another principle of sustainable leadership is that it spreads knowledge beyond the confines of assessed work or examined subjects. The VTOS Co-ordinator, Daisy pointed out:

I've introduced subjects such as Psychology and we are offering Legal Studies, and every other year we do Social Studies. They are optional subjects. The purpose behind that is to get students thinking, maybe that we are not just about getting a FETAC award. It's not only about getting you a job. It's about maybe broadening your thinking, changing your thinking, building confidence...that's one aspect of it, right.

A member of the second focus group confirmed the idea that non-examined subjects were beneficial in the learning process. She stated:

I think it's handy to say I don't want Spanish now, I want to do Cooking. It's just good to have kind of a bit of noncore subjects to do because it's kind of so intense at times. If we have a bit of fun it kind of balances the week out. We used to cook on Fridays, and very much after a heavy few days of the week, and then on a Friday you go there. It's a Friday evening, you wind down and you do the cooking and it's very entertaining and we all enjoyed it. If it's busy, busy, busy, you tend to kind of ...er...hee! While the kind of fun in subjects...mean the Spanish is kind of something different. It's very entertaining, to go abroad on holidays was handy...ah...you catch up with that kind of noncore subject. Some kind of social subject, the way we call it, some bit of fun, a little bit of fun, entertainment in a week. It will encourage people to come more often I think, if there's some bit of fun.

When teachers transfer optional subject skills to students, the process enriches the latter's political, social, economic and cultural life (DES, 1997; Figel', 2008; Starratt, 2001). Students, for example, who are native speakers of other European languages, help their counterparts to learn those languages.

The VTOS Co-ordinator asserted that they had a good retention record because they employed sustainable leadership concepts by giving prospective students enough information in order for them to make informed decisions. In addition, she stated that they employed a fairly rigorous interview process. She pointed out:

We do fairly rigorous recruitment process because we interview everybody. I try and talk to everybody before they come in for interview. I would be with somebody in the office and talk to them. We bring people in for information sessions...Two staff members were interviewing. I was with people before they went in and when they came out asking them if they had questions. I tell them if you are not sure of what you want, this is the Guidance Counsellor because it is important for you that this is the right place. So we have a fairly rigorous recruitment process. We don't tend to lose our students. I am finishing up...with 78 places. It's end of year now.

High retention rates are associated with good leadership skills, availing information to clients help them to make informed decisions on issues that have an impact on their personal and professional development, health, safety and welfare. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) argue that 'school and school systems too can...become toxic environments of wasted and seemingly disposable human potential. Sometimes the evidence is there for all to see – in crime, disorder, absenteeism, lack of learning, or loss of hope' (p. 258).

A member of the first focus group reinforced the notion that the learning at the Adult Education Centre is transformational. The member asserted:

What education does to you as an adult is that it upgrades you, like for instance, it could relate to adults because it actually updates them to do things with their children and with other adults as well. It gives you pathways in case you might want to further your education.

You might want to go to third level or to do something else in life...That actually encourages me to further my education...so coming as an adult to education is good because we did that willingly ourselves.

The member of the focus group meant that education could be used as a transformational tool for raising basic social needs of a person to high order needs. In other words, education helped the participant to become more sophisticated, for example, the aspirations of a student doing a VTOS course may change leading to finding pathways to further education. According to this research participant, education assisted parents to better understand the nature and behaviours of their children.

During the early stages of the interview, Connie indicated that the Adult Education Centre embraced aspects of sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership approaches. That led to this researcher to ask her if she had witnessed any negative experiences while trying to incorporate leadership skills in her teaching approaches. She asserted:

Sometimes when I used to teach First Years, there was a sense of superiority by the person that knew a little bit more than someone else...we do stamp that out...even if it means to take it on. So it's a case people must be free to ask questions. That's kind of part of the ethos that we say from the beginning, look you have more experience maybe than your...that's sitting next to you...you must share that experience rather than use it as a lever to make yourself feel better.

Connie explained that in the early stages of the first year teachers stamp out certain undesirable practices that might be displayed by students such as superiority complex and resistance to sharing knowledge, competences and skills. The education institution discouraged such practices by explaining principles that guided student behaviours when enrolled on VTOS courses. What Connie stated further reinforced the idea that collaboration was encouraged as opposed to competition. When teachers transferred collaborative approaches to students, the latter were likely to embrace them in their careers, leadership roles and social lives. One of the members of the first focus group corroborated that the organisation embraced conceptual frameworks of distributed leadership. The member stated:

In any group, you have got individuals that are good in various things. In our group, you know, we had (name withheld) that was really good in computers, other students used to approach him if they needed any help to do with computers. We didn't have an appointed leader...various students were leaders in areas that they were good at.

The member of the first focus group meant that instead of having one or two formal leaders, leadership in their group rotated among those that were knowledgeable with what was being done. In addition, a member of the third focus group said that:

The person has to know what they are talking about themselves to be able to put it across to other people, so that other people can learn it from that person. They have to be able to give out the subject they are talking about. They have to have knowledge of it, technology of it, and they have to be able to give it out so that people can pick it up, and take it on board.

The rotation of leadership among informal leaders is guided, facilitated and directed by teachers. Rotation of leadership is in line with theoretical perspectives of distributed leadership (Hartley, 2009; Spillane, 2005; Spillane *et al.*, 2001; Timperley, 2005). Ayanda states that the policy of the organisation is that there is no formal appointment or choice of leaders, and that informal leaders spontaneously emerge from the groups. This researcher is of the opinion that the absence of formal leaders in course groups that feed into the Student Council denoted that formal leadership structures lacked coordination with grassroots. As a result, an opportunity that encouraged students to develop formal approaches leadership was being missed. Ayanda explained:

I think with adults as well...it's a confidence thing, if you have confidence to ask questions...Sometimes when adults come back to education that's probably the biggest thing that they lack...confidence. So it's the person maybe sometimes that has the confidence to ask questions, you know. ...ask all the awkward questions or sort of sort out the issues and whatever, you know what I mean. We don't sort of formally call anybody a leader.

Another student confirmed that leadership rotated among course group members. One of the members of the second focus group stated:

In Bookkeeping, for example, if you don't know anything about something, you will be going to her, ask for advice or something like that...but sometimes in other cases they will come to me to ask. It depends, in every different subject; there are different people and different circumstances. But I wouldn't really call that leadership, more like giving them a hand.

It emerged that that respondents found it rather difficult to clearly define and articulate conceptual frameworks of sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership. However, teachers practised them and transferred them to students as evidenced in preceding paragraphs above. Burns (2003) explains why members in organisations may fail to articulate and define leadership by stating that the term 'leadership' is elusive to define and that there is no concise and generally agreed definition. Distributed leadership (Hargreaves, 2005; Hartley, 2009; Spillane, 2005; Spillane *et al.*, 2001; Timperley, 2005) and sustainable leadership (Hargreaves, 2005; Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Thomas, 2008; Tormey and Serrano, 2009; UNESCO, 2002) approaches are relatively new concepts in educational administration.

Leadership approaches used by all the three teachers are embedded with sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership leanings, and they equipped their students with leadership skills. However, it was paramount to point out that they all failed to specify which leadership approaches they employ.

This section presented findings based on questionnaires filled out by teachers. The section that follows presents qualitative findings based on interviews with students.

4.3 Presentation findings from focus group interviews with students

The Adult Education Centre had a non-teaching Administrator, non-teaching Co-ordinator and twelve teachers at the time of carrying out the study. The Administrator and Co-ordinator were both female, and the gender balance of teachers was nine females and three males. The three male teachers worked 22 hours, 12 hours and 9 hours a week, which is a total number of 43 hours per week out of a total allocation of 154 hours. Therefore, female teachers did 111 hours per week. The percentage of workload done by males was 28% and females did 72%. Seven staff members did regular full-time hours, five of them were females and two were males.

The numbers of Year 1 – 3 students enrolled at the VTOS and their gender balance is shown on Table 4.1 below.

	Male	Female	Total
1st Year	13	33	46
2nd Year	11	23	34
3rd Year	1	1	2
Total	25	57	82

Table 4.1: Numbers of students and gender balance in Year 1 – 3

Males and females respectively constituted 30% and 70% of the students enrolled in Year 1 to Year 3. This researcher sent an email to the Co-ordinator in April 2015 to enquire about the circumstances that led to students doing the third year since all VTOS FETAC Level 5 courses are done in two years. The Co-ordinator clarified that the students got a third year place on exceptional grounds such as certified illness, learning difficulties and maternity leave during year one or two.

The numbers of learners that were in each age group and their gender balance are shown on Table 4.2 below.

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
21 – 24	1	6	7
25 – 34	6	19	25

35 – 44	6	11	17
45 – 54	8	17	25
55 – 64	4	4	8
65+	0	0	0
Total	25	57	82

Table 4.2: Numbers of learners in each age group and the gender balance

The highest numbers of students were in the 25 – 34 age group (25 students), 35 – 44 age group (17 students) and 45 – 54 age group (25 students) and that is a total of 82 students. Therefore, the percentage of students between 25 and 54 years was 82%. The 21 – 24 age group constituted 8%, the 55 – 64 age group constituted 10% and the 65+ age group was 0%.

Twenty-three research participants volunteered to take part in the more detailed qualitative phase of the research process. Three focus groups were put together by the VTOS Coordinator after this researcher emailed her the list of names of participants who had volunteered to participate. The focus groups put together were Focus Group One with 11 members, Focus Group Two with 8 members and Focus Group Three with 4 members. The numbers of members in focus groups were not evenly distributed because the VTOS Coordinator recommended that each focus group should primarily consist of members drawn from a particular course group. In other words, the Co-ordinator suggested that research participants from the same course groups should be put together and that was envisaged as a way of encouraging active participation. As a result, Focus Group One members were all recruited from the Community Care course, Focus Group Two members from the Business and Administration course, and three members and one member of Focus Group Three were respectively recruited from the General Learning Skills and the Art, Craft and Design courses.

The following were the prepared interview questions for focus group participants:

1. How and in what ways do your teachers/tutors equip you with leadership skills?
2. Could you please explain to me about how leadership is distributed in your class?
3. Please tell me why you think it is important to equip students with leadership skills?
4. Tell me about a practical situation(s) in which leadership skills have helped you to achieve your goals.
5. Suppose you had five minutes to talk about coaching, training and mentoring, what would you say?

6. Do you think you are getting adequate support from your Co-ordinator, teachers/tutors and peers to assist you to achieve your objectives?
7. Suppose you were in-charge of the VTOS programme, what changes would you make in order to make the programme more effective in delivering services to students?

Five *common themes* emerged during interviews in which the above questions were discussed.

These were:

- Difficulties in defining leadership or what constitutes leadership skills;
- Respondents pass transferrable skills to peers or to workmates;
- Leadership in course groups is distributed among informal leaders;
- Respondents are getting adequate and quality support from peers and staff members; and
- Respondents are benefiting from a two-year study programme.

The subsection below presents findings relating to difficulties that emerged in defining leadership or what constitutes leadership skills.

4.3.1 Difficulties in defining leadership

Respondents were asked to explain how and in what ways their teachers equipped them with leadership skills. A common theme that emerged among all focus groups was that respondents found it difficult to define leadership or what constitutes leadership. The majority of respondents did not explicitly say that teachers use leadership skills. One respondent asserted that leadership skills were only employed by politicians and those who run companies. A member of the second focus group asserted that:

I see here we are kind of in a very protected environment really, which is very good to us. I think all of that would be relevant to our government. The standards of institutions in our country are in a shocking state because there's no proper leadership. But, I don't think that would apply to us here. We are in a learning environment where there's a programme devised for us. We follow suit, and between ourselves if we can ask each other and we help each other out. So I don't know of any practical situation.

The member of the focus group was of the opinion that education happened in a protected environment in which a programme was devised by the authorities and all stakeholders simply toe the line. Furthermore, a member of the first focus group responded, "In some subjects, yah definitely...some structures that we have in our class...I use it in other classes". Some of the

members of the second focus group made the following comments. One member stated, “We just do some work experience. Where I was, they used Microsoft 2003, here we do 2010. So if I worked somewhere where they go handy with the newer system, I’ll be able to...show them.... So that’s formal, it’s not real leadership, is it?” Another member argued, “...generally leadership...they have a subject that would be like subject of leadership that actually teaches...but that cannot be forever because not everybody can be a leader, you know...but those that believe...they just do it”. The following are some of quotes that were contributed by members of the third focus group. One member said, “I won’t answer that question”. Surprisingly, he changed his mind and commented:

You know, I’ll tell you this. It is by default that your leadership improves because the teachers and tutors improve your self-confidence, which in turn...gives you better ability to express the leader within you...So that is the main way I think teachers and tutors equip you with leadership skills and improve your self-confidence.

In addition, another member said, “If you don’t have any leadership skills you...you don’t have”. The above quotations show that participants were finding it hard to explicitly articulate what constitutes leadership skills. Lester (2007) defines leadership ‘as the ability to inspire, persuade or influence others to follow a course of actions or behaviour towards a defined goal’ (p. 303). When we discussed what they practically do in the classroom, both teachers and students showed that leadership is the ability to influence opinions and convince followers to move towards a certain course of action or direction.

Discussions with both students and teachers showed that teachers act as formal leaders to facilitate informal leaders to emerge from course groups. The teachers also equipped their students with leadership skills. However, respondents were not articulate in defining leadership or what constitute leadership skills. Students were of the opinion that teachers only used teaching skills during the course of their duties rather than leadership skills. The organisational culture ingrained in the Adult Education Centre’s structures was that the most likely cause of students’ failure to be articulate and be explicit in defining leadership and what constituted leadership skills. There was a strong possibility that lack of openness in talking about leadership and aspiring to be leaders was being overshadowed by a culture that promoted equality. Connie said:

There’s a very collaborative precept...ethos in the place. There’s equality between staff members and students that I don’t think they would have witnessed before, you know. That they cannot believe that say the staff and students will share the same canteen because their experience before was that the staff had a place to go at lunch time and students went to the yard.

Equality and collectivism are good principles; however, if overemphasised they might stifle individual aspirations. It is important to maintain both individual and collective identity, and to reward individual and collective achievement. Yardley and Neal (2007) state that a team/clan culture has 'shared values and goals, cohesion, participativeness, individuality, and a sense of 'we-ness' (p. 28). A position in which adult learners cannot articulate leadership was rather worrying. That was a particularly the case because the graduates are expected exercise leadership skills when they get back to work or continue with education.

This subsection presented findings on complexities that emerged in defining leadership or what constitutes leadership skills. The subsection that follows presents findings on whether respondents pass transferrable skills to peers and workmates.

4.3.2 Respondents pass transferrable skills to peers and workmates

Another common theme that emerged during focus group discussions was that students passed transferrable skills to peers and workmates. Students sometimes assumed leadership roles without realising that they would have done so. Respondents asserted that informal student leaders transferred skills to their peers.

Staff members at the Adult Education Centre acquired skills through in-service training, continuing professional development training, and networking at local, regional and national level. Wakahiu and Salvaterra (2012) assert that 'networking is essential for an organisation to learn from others. Sustainability is ensured in the eagerness and determination of the trainees to network and consult each other on ways to solve problems in their organizations and communities' (p. 159). In addition, the findings of Wakahiu and Salvaterra's (2012) study show that:

The participants in SLDI²² value mentoring as a technique designed to ensure stability and sustainability. They endeavoured not only to produce good results and increase productivity but also to empower their mentees and co-workers to practise good leadership skills they saw modelled by mentors (p. 160).

According to Bolt (2000), the following are some of the reasons why coaching is considered to enhance success in transferring skills in a twenty-first century organisation:

- Organisations are more decentralised, which means that employees need to make more and better decisions themselves.
- Employees are becoming more empowered, which means that they are more involved in the organisation and don't expect to simply carry out instructions.

²² SLDI refers to Leadership Development Initiative

- Change is rapid and continuous, which means that employees need to be flexible and adaptive.
- Old career patterns no longer exist, which means that employees must adopt a different attitude towards issues of security and advancement.
- Increasingly, new technologies and work processes are being adopted, which means that employees must embrace continual learning.
- Innovation and rapid response to market place changes can be the key to success, which means that employees must be committed to improvement and new ideas (pp. 1 – 2).

Coaching could be used in imparting transferrable skills in VTOS programmes because the schemes are decentralised to local communities. Staff members and students at the VTOS Adult Education Centre were empowered and therefore decisions were facilitated as opposed to being directed. Teachers negotiated with students instead of instructing them. Rapid and continuous change in the labour market necessitated re-skilling and up-skilling. Short-term rather than long-term employment contracts dictated that employees needed to up-skill and reskill to keep abreast with the trends in labour markets. Innovation and rapid response to market changes called for employees that keep upgrading skills.

Training and mentoring are other mediums that are employed in passing transferable skills.

However, the Adult Education Centre used only coaching and training approaches. Employees that can be targeted for coaching, mentoring and training are those in the top, middle and lower level of leadership or management. On the other hand, general operatives are usually targeted for training. This researcher asked Ayanda whether there may be certain other things that happened in Community Care that have elements of coaching, mentoring and training for leadership. She stated:

Okay. I suppose to work...to really physically leave here after two years with your award, you know. I suppose you definitely do need some type of leadership to go into work in Care. You need to have developed strong confidence in your own ability. Obviously, you have to get certain skills. We give the students, Patient Handling, First Aid and any other things they can get, like to help them along the journey. But definitely, you know, to work in that kind of intimate care with people, you really need to have kind of strong confidence in yourself, to be kind of aware of your ability. ...and obviously you have got to learn on the job again. You know, it does require a form of leadership within yourself. It does yah.

This researcher asked a focus group the following question: "Suppose you had five minutes to talk about coaching, training and mentoring, what would you say?" A member of the second focus group remarked:

Maybe you should recognise that in class people don't have the same level of skills. Some might know more than others, like when we started a computer class, some people in our class knew a lot. So when coaching someone you should take into account that not everyone is in the same standard.

Bianca explained that she was worried that the Irish education was lagging behind in terms of mentoring compared to the English education system. She argued:

If I were to make a change, I think we've a lot of students coming in. Some of them come in and are very sure of themselves, but that would be a third (1/3). The other two thirds (2/3), they really need...they need something that kind of gives them confidence, you know. They need....and I think...where I worked before we always had mentors for our new members of staff when they started...Eh...coming here, came at a great disadvantage in that the person in charge was relatively new. Therefore, it was very hard to settle in, but there were two teachers who took me on board. If anything could have happened, I think I could have walked...I could have left, you know. It was such a different system to work in. So I think if you have even student teachers...you need to mentor people. Nowadays you need to mentor people, because there's so much out there.

This researcher asked a focus group the following question: "How and in what ways do your teachers/tutors equip you with leadership skills?"

The following were excerpts from respondents in the first focus group. One respondent stated, "I think leadership skills will be more used when imparting transferrable skills to First Years. I would be a first year and those guys are second years. They would have led us by example or given us structures...somebody to go to, you know, in the peer support kind of a way". Another respondent reinforces what had been highlighted by the other speaker and asserted, "It encourages students who are coming to the course to learn from others, which does help them to excel. Because...in a way, their tutor will be empowering the second years to be leaders to teach and help the first years". Furthermore, another member stated, "They mentor the first years" and another one elaborated, "Some prefer to be mentored as individuals, while some prefer to be mentored as a group".

There are many conceptual frameworks of mentoring relationships. Organisations usually choose particular approaches that are of interest to them or suit their needs and at a given point in time. Fajana and Gbajumo-Sheriff (2011) highlights the following as some of the mentoring approaches:

- Formal mentoring – This refers to a structured process supported by the organisation and addressed to target populations
- Informal mentoring – This relationship develops on its own between partners
- Group mentoring – is when one mentor can be teamed with several protégés who meet at the same time. As the mentor poses questions, listens and reflects he or she engages all members of the group into a conversation. Each one has their own experience and insight to share and can draw their own learning from the discussion
- Peer mentoring – is usually a relationship with an individual within the same grade, organisation, and/or job series. The purpose of peer mentoring is to support colleagues in their professional development and growth, to facilitate mutual learning and to build a sense of community. Peer mentoring is not hierarchical, prescriptive, judgemental or evaluative
- Team mentoring – involves more than one mentor working with one protégé or a group of protégés. Team mentoring allows mentors to work together or separately to help the protégé reach identified developmental goals (If mentors work separately, they should communicate regularly to share information and ideas
- Virtual mentoring – uses videoconferencing, the Internet, and e-mail to mentor individuals. This is beneficial for those who are unable to leave their workplace and for those who live in rural or remote communities. Virtual mentoring is usually less expensive compared to face-to-face mentoring and provides an individual with more choices for mentors. Even with virtual mentoring, it is recommended the mentor and protégé meet face-to-face at least once (pp. 426-7).

Mentoring did not take place at the Adult Education Centre. Findings suggested that peer and group coaching and training sessions take place at the education institution although they are not well developed theoretical perspectives.

Ilesanmi (2011) refers to reverse mentoring as Boomerang Mentoring. Ilesanmi (2011) points out that ‘mentors often get as much out of the mentoring relationship as the protégés’ (p. 176). When mentors give advice or express ideas or when the mentee asks questions and expresses opinions, the mentor gains more insight and understanding of the issue under discussion through a *boomerang effect*.

A member of the first focus group remarked, "If you are a second year student now, you can pick out a student that wants to be ahead of others. You can see it...the leadership coming through the first year students...you can see it". The member is of the opinion that those who want to be mentored usually approach second year students because they presumed they have leadership skills.

The researcher asked the question, "How and in what ways do your teachers/tutors equip you with leadership skills?" The following are some of the responses from the second focus group. One of the focus group members said, "We get the knowledge, that is, and we go to any office and teach other people what we have been taught, that's more of leadership skills".

This researcher asks, "Do you sometimes have a situation when you offer peer support?" Another member replied:

We do...we do...We've all experienced *if we give it we get it*. If we know something and a colleague doesn't know it, we help them. In reverse, if I don't know something I'll also inform a colleague. That was the...it was the set up from day one. There is no such thing as better than or equal to.

In addition, another member said, "We would rather get help from fellow students...than bother our teacher". This researcher assumed the respondent meant that instead of waiting for the teacher who might not be at the Centre at a particular point in time they would rather get help from their peers. This researcher did his secondary education with the non-formal education sector, and got help from peers. In fact, it is that shared history that motivated him to research on the Irish non-formal education sector in order to have a deeper understanding about how it delivers its services.

There were constraints in terms of allocation of hours and payment of permanent, temporary, part-time teachers and whole-time/full-time volunteers that work in the VTOS programme. That negatively affected the number of hours that individual teachers and volunteers may spend teaching and supervising students (Circular Letter Number 0036/2007 and Subsections 3.1 and 3.2)

A member of the third focus group said, "We were dealing with personal to personal skills case...with our teacher and she taught us how to speak out and all the different kinds of behaviours". Despite that respondents were not sure whether teachers equipped them with leadership skills, they agreed that they equipped them with skills that helped them to pass transferable skills to other students and to workmates during work placement. The problem was that it had never occurred to the students that teachers used leadership skills during the course of their duties. They associated leadership skills with people leading in structures of political parties,

government departments and private companies. However, what they said to be practically happening in the classroom suggested that teachers used leadership skills and transferred them to students who in turn passed them on to other students and workmates.

This subsection presented findings to establish how respondents pass transferrable skills to peers and workmates. The subsection that follows presents findings to find out how leadership is distributed among informal leaders in course groups.

4.3.3 Leadership in course groups is distributed among informal leaders

A common theme that emerged during focus group discussions was that leadership in course groups was distributed among informal leaders. Respondents were asked how power and authority is distributed among course group members. The following were some of the responses from members of the first focus group. One respondent stated:

In any group, you have got individuals that are good in various things. In our group, you know, we had (name withheld) that was really good in computers, other students used to approach him if they needed any help to do with computers. We didn't have an appointed leader...various students were leaders in areas that they were good at.

Another member of the first focus group pointed out, "People need to be open too to being helped and say, if you can do it please show me". In addition, another member commented, "We all have different talents as a group. We pool our strengths together as a group. So we all different, you know, so that is great...kind of comrades". The following are some of the comments from the second focus group.

One member of the focus group answered, "I would say in different modules there would be different people you would be going to". Furthermore, another member responded, "There's no appointed leader". Another member stated, "There's no need of one...so far there hasn't been any need for one, group representative or whatever". Respondents were asked how power and authority was distributed among course group members. One of the members of the third focus group stated:

I would say that there was no leader, you know. There was no leader...There wasn't because it was about individual learning. So I didn't see any opportunity for people to lead...People were very helpful to each other, and supportive to each other, but there was no leadership within the class...from the student. I presume you mean the student.

Another member pointed out, "There was no student who led anything...they didn't lead anything at all. We didn't operate that way". This researcher sought clarification, "But, you supported one

another?” One of the focus group members replied, “I feel that we were quite a supportive class...yah. Now, I suppose when I think on it, if there were one or two times when students seemed unhappy, I would say there were one or two other students who calmed the situation down, maybe who said well hold on, let’s wait”.

This researcher further asked, “Do you mean they wouldn’t take a formal role?” A respondent replied, “No”. In addition, another respondent said, “In my group is the same story because we have only 8 people in the group. It’s a small group and everybody is friendly”.

The interview discussion that follows corroborated that distributed leadership approaches are employed within the structures of the VTOS Adult Education Centre. Interviewer: “Do you think your leadership approaches are more inclined towards distributed leadership?” Ayanda: “Yah...definitely. I like that...I like that”.

Interviewer: “Do you mean you like the approach whereby power or authority is distributed among individuals rather the one-person- or a few-people-take-it-all approach?”

Ayanda: “I do...I do...because I worked a lot in the community. I’ve worked a lot of my life in the voluntary and community sector. This is the big issue personally I see with people in the voluntary sector. They are great people, they want to achieve great things, but there’re often a lot of power issues”.

Interviewer: “Yes, power issues”. Ayanda: “And I hate power issues. [Laughs] They kind of...upset me...power issues...because, you know. If you working, running a service whatever, with power issues, you upset a lot of people, you disenfranchise a lot of people”.

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) point out that other features of Professional Learning Communities and distributed leadership include a vision of student-centred community ‘focused on learning, teaching, and caring, based on strong relationships, mutual respect, the importance of family, and achieving balanced personal and professional lives’ (p. 124). Teachers and the VTOS Coordinator state that the organisation uses student-centred approaches. Professional Learning Communities embrace notions of sustainable leadership because they focus first on learning, then achievement, and finally testing (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Hord, 1997; Wenger, 2012).

In contrast, in unsustainable leadership, targets are imposed rather than negotiated, leaders aim for short-term rather than long-term achievements. In summary, where Professional Learning Communities work well, leadership is embodied with creativity, assertiveness, active listening, activism, democracy and spontaneity. The VTOS Co-ordinator pointed out:

The culture of the VTOS itself is about respect, the state where the learner is at, listening to learners and as much as we can to develop individual timetables for our learners. Now, so in all that, like two particular students won't always have the same timetable.

Obviously, if you want to get your major award in Community Care, for instance, you have to do your mandatory subjects. But, within that then there are other options as well...attached to subjects.

The formal leaders that ran the Adult Education Centre were members of staff and the Student Council. The formal leaders among the staff members included team leaders, the VTOS Co-ordinator and the Administrator. However, interviews with focus group members reflected that in course groups students assumed informal leadership roles. It was an issue of concern that the Student Council operated without class representatives that fed into its structures. Therefore, there were no clear structures that directly link course groups with the Student Council. As a result, that adversely affected the Student Council's effectiveness. It was therefore not surprising that the student body was not mentioned by the majority of research participants except the VTOS Co-ordinator. Joanne Ciulla states that:

[We should be wary] of "bogus empowerment", when leaders ignore "the moral commitment of empowerment", instead using the forms and language of empowerment to exploit followers more efficiently. Some leaders might lack the "moral courage" to alter "the power relationship that they have with their followers". And when people "are told that they are being empowered, but they know they are not", the failure to deliver breeds cynicism about leadership and the collapse of followership (cited in Burns, 2003, p. 184).

Richard Couto investigated differences among community and voluntary organisations that were engaged in promoting integration and collaboration among groups of factions at grassroots level. Burns comments that:

[Richard Couto] contrasted "psycho-political" empowerment that boosts people's self-esteem and mastery of their own lives, and promotes democratic participation in actions for a common benefit, with "psycho-symbolic empowerment" that may gratify people's self-esteem but leaves them otherwise as they were – politically powerless (p. 184).

Empowerment of students through a Student Council with structures that were not fed into by class representatives may be mistaken to be synonymous with bogus/“psycho-symbolic” empowerment as opposed substantive/“psycho-political” empowerment.

This subsection presented findings how leadership is distributed among informal leaders in course groups. The following subsection presents findings to establish how respondents get adequate support from peers and staff members.

4.3.4 Respondents highly rate support from peers and staff members

One of the emerging themes during the research process was that students highly rated the amount and quality of support they received from peers and staff members. During the qualitative stage of the research process, respondents were given a chance to discuss that support in more detail. The quotations below reflected how members of the first focus group rated the support that they got from peers and staff members.

One of the focus group members stated that collaborative approaches were embedded in the way they do things in their group. She stated:

I think there is one other thing about our group in particular. Say we might all have a deadline for an assignment. Some of us may be finished before that, there’s no race to do it.

There was like...Oh! Do you need a hand with this? We all helped each other. There is no I am gonna get this, I am gonna do this better. We didn’t have that as a group. We didn’t have competition against each other.

One of the teachers explained that part of the ethos of the organisation was that students were encouraged to work collaboratively as opposed to competing against one another. The principles that guided behaviour during the study period were explained to students immediately after enrolling on specific courses.

Another member of the first focus group said that the VTOS Co-ordinator was inspirational and thus a role model. She pointed out, “She is someone that inspires you, and she leads by example. Thank God, I’ll. She fights your corner, you know. She gives you something to inspire you to go through that”.

The following were the comments that members of the first focus group made about the

Centre Administrator. One member stated, “She is so efficient...so patient now”. Another member agreed and said, “Yah, she’s patient”. Furthermore, another member concurs with what has already been said and stated, “She gives attention to everyone. You can go to her up to ten times a day. She’s always willing to listen too. Actually, she is so calm”.

The quotes that follow were what members of Focus Group Two said about the support that they got from peers and staff members. This researcher asked if teachers, the Co-ordinator and the Administrator gave them support that helped them to achieve their goals. When respondents filled out questionnaires the majority of them agreed and strongly agreed that they got support from the administration staff. They also confirmed that during the interviews.

The following were the additional responses that members of the third focus group said about the support that they got from the VTOS Co-ordinator. One focus group member replied, “Yah, enough...more than enough, she’ll help you. You just come ask, and she straight away helps you”. Another member said, “She’s always available in her office if you need to speak to her”. In addition, another focus group member stated:

I would agree that they are very supportive, but I do think that their resources are limited. They are excellent tutors and a Co-ordinator, but I am aware that they have limits and their resources...you know what I mean. There would be things that they would prefer to do, but they don’t have the funding.

Eleven out of 35 respondents rated the support that they get from their peers as ‘very good’, and 22 out of thirty-five rated it as ‘excellent’. Respondents in all three focus groups concurred that they got support from peers and members of staff.

It is paramount for students to receive support from staff members and peers as this facilitated transfer of leadership and personal development of individual students. Burns (2003) asserts that:

Leaders take the initiative in mobilising people for participation in the process of change, encouraging a sense of collective identity and collective efficacy, which in turn brings stronger feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy, described by Bernard Bass as an enhanced ‘sense of ‘meaningfulness’ in their work and lives’. By pursuing transformational change, people can transform themselves (pp. 25 – 26).

Therefore, the amount and quality of support from other stakeholders helps students to develop self-confidence, self-worth and self-efficacy.

This subsection presented findings to find out how respondents got adequate support from peers and staff members. The following subsection presents findings to establish how respondents are benefiting from the two-year study period offered by the VTOS programme.

4.3.5 Respondents are benefiting from a two-year study programme

Focus group members were asked on whether it was advantageous or not to do VTOS courses over a two-year programme. A common theme that emerged was that respondents were benefiting from a two-year study period. The quotations that follow highlight what respondents said about the benefits of the two-year programme. A member of the first focus group pointed out:

If you are in the First Year, you are tense you are naïve...you are no gonna ask how to do things in a different structure. You need to go through it first, and by second year then you have the confidence to go through structures and all of that, and that transfers to first years as well. In a natural environment, you always get different personalities that will come to the front, anyway.

A member of the second focus group stated, “Yah, but that’s one thing I’ve noticed. The subjects weren’t crammed. You didn’t have to get everything within two hours, but it was spread over to take a bit of pressure off you. It was spread over a nice period of time”. In addition, another member replied, “We do more choice, yah. You kind of know where you are going for the next two years, and you kind of feel secure in that fact and you learn a lot more.

I was very happy with the two years. I would do three years, if I had to do three. One year is very short”.

A member of the third focus group remarked, “I prefer two years because I don’t want to end up in confusion. I didn’t know some kind of stuff with computers before I came here. So I find that it helps to do the two years”. Another focus group member who spoke English as a second language said that two years was more helpful because it helped her to improve her proficiency to communicate in English, and also said that it increased her chances of getting a job. In summary, they stated that two years provided them with depth and breadth, that is, two of the seven principles that characterise sustainable leadership (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003).

All focus groups agreed that respondents were benefiting from the two-year study period offered by the VTOS programme. It was clear that students benefited more from interacting with their peers and teachers over two years when compared, for instance, to a period of one year. Teachers had a greater opportunity to transfer more leadership skills in a two-year than in a one-year programme. Two years also gave students a chance to develop in a multiple of dimensions.

This subsection presented findings to find out how respondents were benefiting from the twoyear study period offered by the VTOS programme. The presented findings were based on interviews with students. The section that follows presents qualitative findings based on interviews with three teachers and the VTOS Co-ordinator.

4.4 Presentation of findings based on one-to-one interviews with staff members

The semi-structured interview questions that this researcher drafted for discussion with teachers were as follows:

1. Do you think leadership skills are embedded in the curriculum of course(s) that you did when you trained as a teacher/tutor?
2. How and when do you use leadership skills during the course of executing your teaching duties?
3. Tell me about the positive experiences that you think leadership skills bring to the learning environment.
4. Tell me about the negative experiences that you have gone through when trying to incorporate leadership skills in your teaching approaches.
5. Suppose that you were in charge and could make some changes to the VTOS programme, what are the changes that would be in your top priority list?
6. If you were involved in recruiting students to the VTOS programme, what would you say are the outstanding qualities of your organisation?

The VTOS Co-ordinator was asked the same questions except that there were slight differences in questions numbered 1, 2 and 6, which read:

1. Do you think leadership skills are embedded in the training curriculum for teachers/tutors?
2. How and when do teachers/tutors use leadership skills during the course of executing their teaching duties?
6. When recruiting students to the VTOS programme, what would you say are the outstanding qualities of your organisation as compared to other services dotted around the jurisdiction in which you operate?

The five *common themes* that emerged during discussions with teachers and the VTOS Coordinator were as follows:

- Leadership skills are embedded in the teaching curriculum;
- Informal leaders emerge in course groups and leadership roles are distributed;

- The VTOS Centre embraces humanistic and client-centred approaches;
- The two-year study programme is beneficial for professional and personal development of students;
- The importance of striking a balance between product and process; and
- Students' failure to take responsibility and lack of confidence is an issue.

The subheadings that follow analyse and discuss the five common themes that were identified. The subsection that follows presents findings that show that leadership skills are embedded in the teaching curriculum.

4.4.1 Leadership skills are embedded in the teaching curriculum

One of the common themes that emerged during the interviews with teachers and the Coordinator was that leadership skills were embedded in the VTOS courses' teaching curriculum. A teacher who did a degree course relevant to the subjects she taught, two years prior to this study, asserted that leadership skills were included in the curriculum of the degree course. She used leadership skills to teach Group Work to the Community Care course group. Findings also indicated that twenty to thirty years ago the teacher training curriculum did not include leadership skills. Teachers who trained during that period claimed to have gained leadership skills during the course of their duties. According to the VTOS Coordinator, the Adult Education Centre offered in-house Continuing Professional Development training in leadership skills to its staff.

Teachers also privately sponsored themselves to train in leadership and special education needs skills. This researcher asked, "When it comes to special education needs, do you have teachers who have got expertise in that area or students with special learning needs are catered for by teachers who are trained in conventional forms of teaching?" The VTOS Co-ordinator replied, "Some of our teachers have done training in it. They trained voluntarily. Some have also done CPD²³ in it".

In 2009, the Teaching Council reviewed and published new regulations and requirements for VTOS teaching staff and those who teach in areas that lead to equivalent FETAC qualifications. The new regulations were captured in a document commonly known as *Regulation Five*.

VTOS Co-ordinators perform teaching and non-teaching duties depending on the number of students that are enrolled at a specific VTOS Centre. Circular Letter 45/99 outlines the maximum teaching hours that are required from a Co-ordinator. The VTOS Centre in Ireland has an enrolment

²³ CPD refers to Continuous/Continuing Professional Development.

of between 80 and 119 students and has a non-teaching VTOS Co-ordinator only and no Assistant Co-ordinator.

Teachers were asked whether they used leadership skills during the course of their duties. The following were some of the excerpts from respondents. Ayanda said:

Well, I suppose definitely when I did my training, which is very recently, because I only completed my degree two years ago. I did a good degree in Community and Family Studies. So it was kind of around community education. I would have done two subjects or modules.

One would have been at leadership skills, and one would have group dynamics...and all that. So there was a strong emphasis on sort of leadership, and identifying leaders in a group and supporting the skills of people coming to the fore. So I would say there was a strong emphasis on it in my course.

Bianca initially trained as a secondary school teacher and in second level schools before she worked as an adult educator. She commented:

Eh, okay, I trained way back in the eighties and I would have done my course in Maynooth. It would be an H Dip in Ed, which would give you an idea of how to teach. But, as to whether it...leadership skills...maybe not. You were trained to teach and impart information, and...develop it as you go along. And working now, the various courses that I've done along the years and particularly working on adult education, there's more emphasis on leadership, you know.

Connie also initially trained as secondary school teacher and then later moved to the adult education sector. She commented:

Well, I suppose...to be frank I would like to think that I exhibit leadership skills in the classroom at the moment. But, I believe that I've learned to develop them over the course of the teaching rather than...you know. I know it's a considerable time now since I trained as a teacher. But, certainly the formal training to be a teacher was more based on...kind of pedagogy that was backward looking rather than forward looking.

Daisy, the VTOS Co-ordinator, was asked whether she thought leadership skills were embedded in the training curriculum for teachers. Daisy replied, "I think they are not necessarily explicit, but...I feel it is part of what we do in the sense that I suppose how we structure our programmes".

Teachers at the Adult Education Centre are qualified to teach courses that lead to a FETAC qualification or its equivalent in accordance with regulations and guidelines as stipulated in

Regulation Five of the Teaching Council [Registration] Regulations 2009 (The Teaching Council, 2014, pp. 17 – 22).

When leadership skills are embedded in the curriculum it makes it possible for teachers to act as role models (Julsuwan *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, when teachers transfer leadership skills, students are encouraged to practise the skills. As a result, they gain confidence in employing them.

This subsection presented findings that showed that leadership skills are embedded in the teaching curriculum. The subsection that follows presents findings which show that informal leaders emerge in course groups and that leadership roles are distributed among informal leaders.

4.4.2 Informal leaders emerge in course groups

Another common theme that emerged during discussions with teachers and the Co-ordinator was that informal leaders emerged in course groups and that leadership is distributed. The Adult Education Centre has a Student Council that acted as a link with students, and the administration and teaching staff members. Spillane *et al.* (2001) point out that in an educational institution that embraces principles of distributed leadership, ‘enacting leadership tasks is often distributed across multiple leaders in a school, including principals, assistant principals, curriculum specialists, reading or Title I teachers, and classroom teachers’ (p. 25).

Spillane *et al.* (2001) also point out that ‘the collective properties of the group of leaders working together to enact a particular task...lead to the evolution of a leadership practice that is potentially more than the sum of each individual’s practice’ (p. 25). Hartley (2009) reinforces Spillane *et al.*’s (2001) ideas and states that ‘distributed leadership is also regarded as being a way of dealing with new government policies which require greater partnerships and collaborations among hitherto discrete professional cultures’ (p. 142). However, Hartley (2009) is sceptical about Spillane *et al.*’s (2001) model of treating leaders, followers and situation as discrete units of analysis. There are also contradictions in the manner in which the terms ‘structure’, ‘context’ and ‘situation’ are contextualised. Hartley (2009) argues that:

Within distributed leadership studies informed by socio-cultural theory, the terms “structure”, “context” and “situation” are defined and operationalized in a particular manner. Take structure: for macro-social theorists, structures refer to wider patterned regularities – economic, social, cultural, legal and political – which are analytically distinct from formal *organizational structures*. Taken together, these patterns would be regarded as the external “context” of an organization. But...in socio-cultural theory there is no context “out there”, so to say. The context is the activity system (p. 145).

Hartley (2009) proposes an approach that conflates structure, context and situation instead of treating them as discrete entities.

The quotations below were what respondents said about distribution of authority among formal and informal leaders.

Daisy explained that the only formally elected representatives of the students constituted the Student Council. However, in course groups there is no appointment or selection of formal leaders, that is, informal leaders emerged from the groups.

Ayanda was asked if it would be easy for her to identify potential leaders in the early days after the enrolment of First Years. She answers, "I could yah...very quickly, and I think that people kind of come to the fore...very quickly. I find that if I give students little tasks to do in a classroom situation, you see leaders emerge". In addition, Ayanda explained how she distributed leadership roles in her group of Community Care students. She asserted:

...sometimes I think it is also important to say, John you are in charge this week...to try and give people...a bit of responsibility. With group tasks, you know, sometimes one or two people do all the work, and the rest kind of do not bother, whereas if you give a bit of responsibility, it's a bit better.

Bianca also said that leaders emerged during group work activities. Bianca explained:

...you put a group together in small groups of six to eight people, and you look at people who decide they are going to lead the group, and you can see the rest of the group looking at them. So you have to kind of...you let them do it for a bit and you let them see where it's going [...] They have to be able to work as a group and they have to decide who will...not somebody in charge, but as somebody who will take down what's going to happen. So that's a running operation in place rather than just you know sure, if it happens it happens.

This researcher said to Connie that one research participant had told him during focus group interviews that there were no formal leaders and that fellow students sought advice from peers that were more articulate and knowledgeable in a particular area. Connie confirmed, "Yah, they seek advice from peers. That's true". In a further reference to leadership, Connie commented:

It rotates yah. Say, for instance, somebody could be extremely good at languages particularly since we have a lot of "non-national" students. Many of them would be excellent French and Spanish speakers, whereas we would be running Spanish and French for Beginners. So obviously you naturally rotate the person who has the excellent spoken

French or spoken Spanish as the final decider. But, you might completely ignore them in a different context because they might not have the same expertise.

Daisy stated that distributed leadership perspectives (Hartley, 2009; Spillane, 2005; Spillane *et al.*, 2001; Timperley, 2005) are embedded in the structures of the organisation and that students sometimes act as informal leaders in some of the initiatives that they wish to undertake. This researcher asked her to tell him about the positive experiences that she thought leadership skills brought to the learning environment. Daisy replied:

OK...it's the students that I suppose may be equipped with leadership skills...for example, maybe this week they wanted to go on fieldtrips, and I would say alright...OK you organise it. You come back and you tell me what it's going to cost, how many are going to go, what staff members are going to go with you. We do that, right.

Distribution of leadership assisted teachers to transfer leadership skills that students later used in their careers, at the workplace and when furthering their education. Practical situations gave students an opportunity to gain confidence in applying leadership skills. Additionally, perspectives of distributed leadership reduced the amount of work that was done by formal leaders because some of the tasks were delegated to informal leaders.

This subsection presented findings that showed that informal leaders emerged in course groups and that leadership roles were distributed among informal leaders. The following subsection presents findings that show that the VTOS Centre embraces client-centred approaches.

4.4.3 The VTOS Centre embrace client-centred approaches

One of the common themes that emerged during interviews with the VTOS Co-ordinator and teachers was that the Centre embraced client-centred approaches. According to teachers and the VTOS Co-ordinator, client-centred approaches in service delivery were at the core at the Adult Education Centre.

Spencer (2004) states that humanistic and people-centred approaches are becoming more and more ingrained in structures of public and private organisations including education institutions. She points out that the use of terms such as 'networks', 'alliances', 'communities', 'partnerships' and 'teams' are helping to shape the language of connectedness. But words are only the beginning' (p. 7). In addition, she states that words 'such as 'divisions', 'departments', 'sections', 'levels' and 'units'(p. 6) that are viewed to promote disunity rather than unity are now on the decline. Hartley (2009) confirms that the fact that

'policy documents are now replete with the prefixes *inter-*, *co-*, and *multi-*' (p. 141) is further evidence that humanistic and people-centred approaches are now prioritised more than what used to happen in the past.

This researcher asked Ayanda what she might say were the outstanding qualities of her organisation if she were involved in a student recruitment programme. She said that her organisation reflected best practice to its students by offering pastoral care and welfare through a client-centred service delivery. She explained:

I think the outstanding quality of this particular organisation that I work for is that we really care about our students. ...that...you know, no matter what challenges we do our utmost to support everybody and we kind of realise that adults learn differently and some are flying it and more struggle and more need other supports. So I think we are people-centred, and I think that's what I like about it...that we really care. And I suppose having two years with students gives you that time to develop those relationships as well. You know, you can really develop very strong relationships over two years.

Ayanda also emphasised that offering VTOS courses over two years and the expertise that the Centre got from the Adult Guidance Service helped professional relationships to blossom between members of staff and students. This researcher asked Bianca the same question. She elaborated:

I'll say this that this one is very people-centred. It big into the person and, you know. They are placed into the programme, and you would drop by for five different courses in the year. The programmes include Community, Business Administration and Employability Skills. You look at the person coming in, you see where they are at, you know, what have they done, where have they gone in school, how far they have progressed, and then you fit them into a course that you think, and I might hate using the word, 'fit'.

This researcher also asked Connie the same question that he had asked the other two teachers.

She commented:

Well, I suppose if I were actually recruiting students for next year...what I would say our programme offers...an outstanding commitment on behalf of management and the staff to try and make people's experience here as positive as it can be. We are conversant that many of our students are coming into us having had quite negative experiences of education maybe in the past, considering that our focus is specifically those of low educational attainment...So I suppose it is our concerted effort that the experience here would be better than anything that they have witnessed before. There's a very collaborative...eh...precept...ethos in the place.

There's equality between staff members and students that I don't think they would have witnessed before, you know.

The VTOS Co-ordinator concurred with the teachers and emphasised that VTOS Centre used student-centred approaches when delivering service. She stated:

The culture maybe of VTOS itself is about respect, the state where the learner is at, listening to learners and as much as we can to develop individual timetables for our learners. Now, so in all that, like two particular students won't always have the same timetable. Obviously, if you want to get your major award in Community Care, for instance, you have to do your mandatory subjects. But, within that then there are other options as well...attached to subjects.

Client-centred approaches create an encouraging learning atmosphere for students and staff members. It decreases drop-out rates and facilitates transfer and development of leadership skills. Students also validated the notion that the Centre employed client-centred approaches.

This subsection presented findings that showed that the VTOS Centre used client-centred approaches when delivering services. The following subsection presents findings that show that the two-year study programme is beneficial in terms of professional and personal development of students.

4.4.4 The two-year study programme is beneficial to students

A common theme that also emerged while discussing with teachers and the Co-ordinator was that the VTOS two-year study programme was beneficial to students. The study period gave teachers an adequate opportunity to transfer leadership skills to students and for those skills to develop. Ayanda pointed out, "I suppose having two years with students gives you that time to develop those relationships as well. You know, you can really develop very strong relationships over two years". Additionally, Ayanda asserted, "I suppose to work...to really physically leave here after two years with your award, you know. I suppose you definitely do need some type of leadership to go into work in Care. You need to have developed strong confidence in your own ability".

Colleges of further education offer some FETAC Level 5 courses in an academic year as opposed to two years in VTOS programmes. This researcher asked Ayanda whether that did not put them at an advantageous position. Ayanda remarked, "It is good. Two years is very good. We are lucky to have two years". Ayanda also clarified that there was a difference between the calibre of students that are targeted by colleges of further education/PLCs and VTOS programmes. She argued:

I think we are still fortunate that people or adults that come back to education are not judged the same way as young people, which are shoved into Post Leaving Certificate

courses. So I think that's how we are having a leeway to do the same course in two years. Hopefully, they won't change it. You have to remember that some, say, and I am not picking the men. For instance, some of these that are probably doing Community Care now would have worked in the Construction industry for, say, thirty-eight years. So they do need some time to sort of hone their skills and work in Community Care, don't they?

Ayanda further argued, "It's not something they can learn in a year and run out and do, you know. It's a complete change of direction in one's life". Bianca gave reasons to justify why their students needed two years. She said:

I think it depends on the type of students you have. ...and I think for us an awful lot of our students are coming back to education, you know. I mean maybe they worked for 20 years in a factory, and then it closes down, but they went in with very little education, you know...in some cases they might have just the Group Certificate or Intermediate Certificate, which is the same as the Junior Cert now. So they may never have done a Leaving Cert, you know, or they came to work coming straight from Leaving Cert or some of them were made redundant because of recession. So I think our students are different, and some of them come back and their self-esteem and their self-confidence would have been wiped.

Connie was of the view that two years gave students an opportunity for a gradual and smooth transition from the first year to the second year. Daisy presumed that doing VTOS courses over two years helped students with issues of self-confidence and self-esteem to deal with them in the first year and to be more assertive in the second year or by the time they finished their studies. She said that, as a result, they might be in a better position to take up employment opportunities during or after the second year. This researcher asked if people who come back to education and join adult education programmes have low self-esteem and lack confidence probably because they include those who would have left formal schooling early. Daisy replied:

Yah, yah. But, it is in the second year that we engage with employers. So we are hoping that by the second year they have gained the confidence and the skills to bring themselves forward...put themselves forward, right. For the most part, it works, and then for some it doesn't".

The three teachers and the VTOS Co-ordinator agreed that the two-year study programme was beneficial in terms of professional and personal development of students.

This subsection presented findings which showed that the two-year study programme was beneficial in terms of professional and personal development of students. The subsection that

follows presents findings which indicate that staff members say that it is important during the learning process to strike a balance between the product and process.

4.4.5 The importance of striking a balance between product and process

A common theme that emerged while discussing with the Co-ordinator and teachers was the importance of striking a balance between product and process. Sometimes educators view themselves as experts who know best and learners as passive recipients who know less. Botes and van Rensburg (2000) point out that:

The reason for this is that professionals are predominantly trained in ways that disempower and to tell other people what they should do and think. This has contributed to professionals (unconsciously or consciously) regarding themselves as the sole owners of development wisdom and having the monopoly of solutions which consistently under-rate and under-value the capacities of local people to make their own decisions as well as to determine their own priorities (p. 43).

When doing a course, tensions exist between processes and delivery of a product. Botes and van Rensburg (2000) state that 'there is always a tension between the imperatives of delivery (product) and community participation (process), between the cost of time and value of debate and agreement' (p. 50). When an organisation regards the process as *less* important than the product, decision-making is centralised and top-down. There is a lot of emphasis on time and product, for example, strictly adhering to the timetable and prioritising accreditation. The services of such an organisation are also characterised by an emphasis on output, corporate interests, competitiveness and profits.

When an organisation embraces an approach that considers the process to be *more* important than the product, decision-making is client-centred, decentralised and bottom-up. The services of such an organisation acknowledge capacity building, personal needs, and collective needs, develop people, practises participation and teambuilding, focus on consensus building, and manage conflict. There is also a strong emphasis on empowerment, collaboration, process and consultation before making decisions.

The quotations that follow gave an insight of what respondents thought about the relationship between process and product during the delivery of VTOS courses at the Adult Education Centre.

Ayanda was asked about what changes would be in her top priority list if she were given a chance to be in charge of the VTOS programme. She replied:

...I suppose I think it's a very good programme. There are a lot of very positive things on the programme. I suppose in the last few years we've been very driven by the FETAC

qualification. And I suppose although that is very important, I wish we should kind of have a little bit less of the end product and enjoy the journey if it's more worth, you know what I mean.

Bianca stated that she believed that mentoring sessions could make the learning environment more enjoyable and less strenuous (Bell and Treleaven, 2011; Fajana and Gbajumo-Sheriff, 2011; llesanmi, 2011; Ojedokun, 2011).

Connie points out that if she were given an opportunity to be in charge of the VTOS programme she could bring back the vocational courses, which she claims are no longer being given priority. She states that students who are interested in doing practical courses are not accommodated in the current education curriculum, which she claims mainly suits those who want to further their education especially to third level. Connie argued:

I think that...I am in service now for nearly 20 years. When I originally started, it was for vocational training opportunities scheme. That's what it still means, but I've noticed over time that we have developed an overemphasis in particular in academic certification. I think we've gone away from the vocational. We've entirely almost departed from manual-type things, and I think that's a pity because not everybody wants to go back to second chance education...wants to end up in a third level college, maybe somebody wants to be a certified mechanic. We don't give them that chance, and when I started the programme we did.

Connie pointed out that she was not impressed that the success of the VTOS programme was measured mainly by the number of students who proceeded to third level colleges. Connie stated:

Yes, yah. That's what it is, and even the statistics when we talk about the success of the programme...yes more recently now we talk about people who get work. That's really good because work is so scarce. Typically, the success seems to be measured now by the number of people who get to third level. I feel if I was a VTOS student now who hadn't the ability maybe or the aspiration to go to third level; I think I might feel that I somehow didn't matter because I didn't match the new profile of successful entry to third level, you know.

Connie argued that over-emphasis on academic subjects was to the detriment of students who were not academically gifted. The VTOS Co-ordinator also explained:

I've introduced subjects such as Psychology and we are offering Legal Studies, and every other year we do Social Studies. They are optional subjects. The purpose behind that is to get students thinking, maybe that we are not just about getting a FETAC award. It's not

only about getting you a job. It's about maybe broadening your thinking, changing your thinking, building confidence...that's one aspect of it, right. We don't offer...we don't have subjects on leadership.

In addition to two mandatory subjects, that is, Communications and Work Experience, and about six course specific core subjects, the Adult Education Centre offered Psychology, Legal Studies and Social Studies as optional subjects. Students who were awarded a full FETAC Level 5 award would have passed a total of eight subjects. However, those who would have incorporated optional subjects may end up with ten to twelve subjects over two years.

Respondents agreed that while it was important to deliver the product and that it was equally important to enjoy the journey or the process.

Striking a balance between product and process helped students to value the transfer of leadership skills because by doing so they enjoyed a richer and fuller social, political, economic and cultural life. Starratt (2001) states that 'democratic educational leadership should be focused on cultivating school environments where...richer and fuller humanity is activated by people acting in communion' (p.338).

This subsection presented findings that reflect that staff members believe it was important during the learning process to strike a balance between the product and process. The subsection that follows presents findings that show that students' failure to take responsibility and their lack of confidence is a matter of concern.

4.4.6 Failure of students to take responsibility

The students' failure to take responsibility and their lack of confidence emerged as a common issue during discussions with teachers. Below are excerpts of interviews with staff members that are reinforced by students' comments.

A member of the first focus group said that someone with good leadership qualities "shows you how to do it, that is, step by step. It gives you confidence by showing you how do it, especially for people who have been out of education for a number of years.

You would be a bit apprehensive about things like computers". In addition, another member of the first focus group stated:

If you are in the First Year, you are tense you are naïve...you are no gonna ask how to do things in a different structure. You need to go through it first, and by second year then you have the confidence to go through structures and all of that, and that transfers to

first years as well. In a natural environment, you always get different personalities that will come to the front, anyway.

Another member said that, "For me, I think this course boosts confidence. I wouldn't have had the education before, just through the learning that I have had I would have more confidence now".

Ayanda was asked to explain how informal leaders emerge in course groups. She explained:

I think with adults...it's a confidence thing, if you have confidence to ask questions. ...Sometimes when adults come back to education that's probably the biggest thing that they lack...confidence. So it's the person maybe sometimes that has the confidence to ask questions, you know...ask all the awkward questions or sort of sort out the issues and whatever, you know what I mean. We don't sort of formally call anybody a leader.

Ayanda was also asked to explain what she thought were positive experiences that leadership brought to the learning environment. Ayanda believed that it was pertinent for the learning environment to be embedded with leadership skills. She answered:

I think the positive thing that it brings is that it's really good for people's confidence. I think skills and talents emerge that you mightn't have been aware of. You know that people emerge with talents and skills you mightn't recognise that they had, you know what I mean.

That's really positive because...you know.

Connie also said that the positive thing that leadership brings to the learning environment was confidence. She remarked:

Well, I think confidence. Eh...that like...if I defer to my peer and I am not acting actually as a teacher, because I suppose in an adult learning environment we are more equal than maybe in other areas of learning...I think it is very good for someone's confidence when somebody defers to them, particularly maybe when a teacher does. It's an acknowledgement that you are a student yet you know a great deal more about this than I do as a teacher or any of your peers. So I think...it gives people a boost...to feel that they have something to contribute.

That's the benefit of it.

Ayanda strongly believed that Community Care students who would have acquired leadership skills were most likely to have a successful professional career. She asserted:

Okay. I suppose to work...to really physically leave here after two years with your award, you know. I suppose you definitely do need some type of leadership to go into work in Care.

You need to have developed strong confidence in your own ability.

Bianca believed that confidence helped adult learners to further their education. She said:

We would have people who have done two years with us and they got to do Level 6 there, but if talking to somebody who did it last year and is now in...doing a Level 6 there. He turned out and said if he had gone straight from losing his job to the College of Further Education, he would have left it. He said that but the two years showed him what he needed to do and what was expected of him. So now he has the confidence, you know. He says if somebody said to him you can't do it, he would have turned out and said you are wrong, I know what I am doing, and I learnt all of that.

A member of the third focus group stated that teachers improved the students' selfconfidence, which had secondary incidental effects on students' leadership skills. The member commented:

You know, I'll tell you this. It is by default that your leadership improves because the teachers and tutors improve your self-confidence, which in turn...gives you better ability to express the leader within you...So that is the main way I think teachers and tutors equip you with leadership skills and improve your self-confidence.

The VTOS Coordinator, Daisy, asserted that subjects such as Social Studies, Psychology and Legal Studies helped to increase the student's levels of confidence. She asserted:

I've introduced subjects such as Psychology and we are offering Legal Studies, and every other year we do Social Studies. They are optional subjects. The purpose behind that is to get students thinking, maybe that we are not just about getting a FETAC award. It's not only about getting you a job. It's about maybe broadening your thinking, changing your thinking, building confidence...that's one aspect of it, right. We don't offer...we don't have subjects on leadership.

Daisy also stated that confidence played a key role in increasing one's chances of getting employment. She stated:

We encourage, we do mock interviews...eh...not everybody engages, but with that practice and confidence whatever. But, I am trying not to make too many things mandatory because I think we are adults we have to take responsibility...We want to do this...these are opportunities that are there, it's up to them to take them. Now, the

downside of that is that a number of our students maybe are lacking in confidence...and some of them need to be led along more than others.

Daisy also said that they engaged employers in the second year because they believed at that stage most students would have transformed and gained more confidence. She stated:

...it is in the second year that we engage with employers. So we are hoping that by the second year they have gained the confidence and the skills to bring themselves forward...put themselves forward, right. For the most part, it works, and then for some it doesn't. That would be...but maybe...we have that like in all groups, and it's one of the things that we debate.

Ayanda asserted that she rotated group leadership roles as a way of giving all group members a chance to lead. Ayanda emphasised:

...sometimes I think it is also important to say, John you are in charge this week...to try and give people...a bit of responsibility. With group tasks, you know, sometimes one or two people do all the work, and the rest kind of do not bother, whereas if you give a bit of responsibility, it's a bit better.

Daisy stated that they encouraged their students to take responsibility. She explained:

It does help to do VTOS courses over two years...That's the real advantage...real value of VTOS that it can be done over two years. So we are not just results-oriented. Eh...I suppose...the other important thing then is that we try to get our students to do is to take responsibility. Go out and get your work placement, you know. You link with the employers.

Daisy also stated that some students found it hard to take responsibility. Daisy responded:

Yes, there's...in that...can be a human condition. In that...some students or some people find it hard to take responsibility for their own actions or maybe don't necessarily realise that they have choices. So...sometimes maybe I think we possibly spoon-feed too much, OK.

Then we say, no look, they are adults. It's up to them to take responsibility, you know. We tell them the dates. I am just giving an example now like the CAO²⁴ application, right. You give everybody the dates. You tell them what they have to do if they want help with the

²⁴ CAO is acronym for Central Applications Office. According to Central Applications Office (2013), in Ireland, 'The Central Applications Office processes applications for undergraduate courses in Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Decisions on admissions to undergraduate courses are made by the HEIs who instruct CAO to make offers to successful candidates'.

CAO form, and then we don't chase people up because we say no they are adults. But then, there have been occasions whereby people come back and say nobody told me, you never told me. Now I missed the date, it's your fault...So like an incident, we need to think how to overcome it. Now, we tend to get people sign if we give them something. We get them to sign to say I've received the information.

On the one hand, students and staff members agreed that taking responsibility and having confidence boosted the chances of successfully completing the course. On the other hand, staff members said that failure to take responsibility and lack of confidence impedes students from taking informal leadership roles, getting employment and progressing further with education. Taking responsibility is paramount during coaching, mentoring and training. However, the relationship between the mentor and mentee is not of equal partnership (Adeyemi (2011; Bell and Treleaven, 2011; Fajana and Gbajumo-Sheriff, 2011; Herrera *et al.*, 2011; Ilesanmi, 2011; Ojedokun, 2011). As a result, if the mentoring process is not handled well, there is a possibility that the mentee may develop a dependency syndrome or an overdependence on the mentor. Taking responsibility and confidence are key qualities in leadership.

This subsection presented findings that indicate that students' failure to take responsibility and their lack of confidence was a matter of concern. The entire section presented findings based on interviews with three teachers and the VTOS Co-ordinator. The section that follows draws a conclusion to the presentation of the findings chapter.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented findings based on data that was collected using multiple methods of both primary and secondary data collection. Primary data collection processes included completion of questionnaires, focus group interviews and one-to-one interviews. Secondary data collection sessions involved a review of a broad range of key Irish policy documents written about Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS). There were challenges that were encountered during data collection because all focus group interview sessions and one-to-one interviews were done in one day and therefore the programme was congested. This did not accord this researcher an opportunity to make a preliminary analysis in-between the interviews. Preliminary analysis in-between interviews would have accorded this researcher a chance to reformulate some of the research questions and add others. The next chapter analyses and discusses findings.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion of Findings

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the core themes or concepts that emerged during data analysis. The core concepts were the Real Self, Transforming Self and Ideal Self that emerged from themes and subcategories during open coding, axial coding and theoretical coding. The Data Analysis chapter discussed the emergence of these core concepts.

The study investigates sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership in the nonformal education sector. Leadership scholars are engaged in ongoing debates about whether leaders were born or nurtured, or both. This researcher draws from Goleman *et al.* (2002) who posit that 'leaders are made, not born' (p. 100). Goleman *et al.* (2002) assert that:

The crux of leadership development that works is *self-directed learning*: intentionally developing or strengthening an aspect of who you are or who you want to be, or both. This requires first getting a strong image of your *ideal self*, as well as an accurate picture of your *real self* – who you are now. Such self-directed learning is most effective and sustainable when you understand the process of change – and the steps to achieve it – as you go through it (p. 109).

Students narrated the trajectory of their self-directed learning by emphasising where they were when they began their courses (Real Self) and where they aspired to be in future (Ideal Self). The transition from the Real Self to the Ideal involved transformation. The coach uses emotional intelligence to take the coachee through the change process. Coaching focuses on intra-personal skills, that is, it develops the individual to articulately deal with her/his emotions. The coaching process also targets inter-personal skills in order to help the coachee to be able to relate to others or to deal with the emotions of others (Grant, 2011). Theories of transformational leadership are based on motivational theory for managing change (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership aims to motivate individuals to satisfy higher order needs through actualisation (Bass, 1985). This researcher ascribed the transition from the Real Self to the Ideal Self as the Transforming Self.

The students' learning was self-directed because during the recruitment stage and throughout the course, the Adult Education Guidance Service, teaching and administration staff facilitated students to make informed decisions but did not impose decisions on them. In addition, students were allowed to switch subjects in the early stages of the course as long as the timetable could facilitate

this. Students were empowered because they had an input on the choice of non-core subjects and on planning and organising fieldtrips and choosing places of interest that they would like to visit.

The motivation for adult learners to go back to education either started from within (intrinsic) or was influenced by external factors (extrinsic). However, findings show that the adult learners experienced high levels of anxiety in the early stages of engaging in their studies.

According to responses from the teachers, students and the VTOS Co-ordinator, the anxiety diminished during the transition phase as the courses progressed whilst for some it was prolonged. A good example of high levels of anxiety was that Daisy, the Co-ordinator recommended that certain students were to be included within a particular focus group because they had low self-esteem and could not actively participate if mixed with students with high self-esteem.

The term 'Real Self' captures where students were at in terms of knowledge, skills and competences and how they felt in the early stages of attendance when they first came to enrol for the courses. This researcher used theoretical coding to interweave sub-categories into three main categories as theorised in the Thomas's (2006) general inductive analysis and Miles and Huberman's (1994) content analysis. The core concepts were the Real Self, Transforming Self and the Ideal Self.

Details of how the categories and core concepts emerged are discussed in Chapter 3 which addresses the methodology and methods. Table 5.1 below first introduced in Chapter 3 on the section on data collection and subsection on theoretical coding is discussed in detail in this chapter.

Core concepts	Real Self	Transforming self	Ideal self
Axial coding	<p>Anxiety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feeling tense and timid ➤ Struggling and lack of confidence ➤ Need for guidance and training ➤ Need for mentoring <p>Demotivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Non-participatory ➤ Failure to take responsibility <p>Client-centred approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong relationships ➤ psycho-political empowerment ➤ Professional and emotional support ➤ Balancing qualifications and process ➤ Balancing academic and practical <p>Good public relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Good repertoire with key stakeholders 	<p>Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Gain confidence in the second year ➤ Delegation of duty ➤ Revised selfconcept ➤ Coaching, mentoring & training ➤ Inactive to active state <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Funding ➤ Supports ➤ Rooms ➤ Staff <p>Enjoyment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Incorporation of non-core subjects ➤ Visiting places of interest 	<p>Confidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Interpersonal & intrapersonal ➤ Academic ➤ Career <p>Guidance and Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Counselling ➤ Coaching, mentoring or training <p>Active participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Key stakeholders ➤ Immediate community <p>Enabling environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Internal ➤ External <p>Motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implicit ➤ Explicit <p>Revised paradigms and self concept</p>

Table 5.1: Theoretical coding part 2

The sub-categories that constituted the Real Self category are anxiety, demotivation, humanistic and good public relations. The sub-categories that were components of the Transforming Self category were change, resources and enjoyment. The category Ideal Self consists of the sub-categories confidence, guidance and training, active participation, enabling environment, motivation, and revised paradigms and self concept.

This section addressed the core concepts of Real Self, Transforming Self and Ideal Self and drawing from Goleman *et al.* (2002) who hypothesises that leaders developed through selfdirected training

and are not necessarily born with the requisite skills. The section also explores and elaborates on the sub-categories that constitute Real Self, Transforming Self and Ideal Self. The section that follows addresses the core concept of Real Self.

5.1 Real Self

This section will discuss the following sub-categories of the Real Self, that is, anxiety and demotivation, client-centred approaches and good public relations. It will start by addressing the subsection on anxiety and demotivation.

5.1.1 Anxiety and Demotivation

Research participants stated that they felt anxious in the early stages of the first year after enrolling on the courses. However, findings showed that for the majority of research participants the anxiety eased as they progressed into the second year of the course. A member of the first focus group stated, "If you are in the first year, you are tense you are naïve...you are no gonna ask how to do things in a different structure. You need to go through it first, and by second year then you have the confidence..." The phrase 'you need to go through it first', means to be taught by a teacher, trained by trainer, guided by a leader, coached by a coach or mentored by a mentor before being able to independently do an activity.

Daisy concurred with the member of the first focus group quoted above. She stated, "...it is in the second year that we engage with employers. So we are hoping that by the second year they have gained the confidence and the skills to bring themselves forward...For the most part, it works, and then for some it doesn't". Another member of first focus group stated that leadership "gives you confidence". According to Bianca, "two-thirds...need something that kind of gives them confidence", and referred to mentoring as the panacea. Bianca also pointed out that the reason why a lot of students that enrolled in VTOS courses had low self-esteem was because the majority of them would have low education attainment when they left school. Bianca pointed out:

I think for us an awful lot of our students are coming back to education...maybe they worked for 20 years in a factory, and then it closes down, but they went in with very little education...in some cases they might have just the Group Certificate or Intermediate Certificate, which is the same as the Junior Cert now...So I think our students are different, and some of them come back and their self-esteem and their self-confidence would have been wiped.

One research participant who was a member of the first focus group differed slightly with what Bianca said. The research participant stated that their teacher made them recognise that they bring a lot of experiential knowledge to the learning environment. The member of the first focus group pointed out:

...within the first months that we were into our class, the first thing she said (teacher) is that we bring life skills and that we shouldn't be over-awed by this education system, but we are kind of better than that. So we may not have been in education for years and years, but what we have gained in life that's very important for her to facilitate her teaching in class...and I thought that is very encouraging...because we are all catered for.

A member of the second focus group concurred with what the member of the first focus group had said and what was also the observed of one of the teachers. The focus group member stated that they already had experiential knowledge and that they enrolled in VTOS courses to up-skill and they were not starting from the beginning. The focus group member stated, "...we are mature students... so we are back to up-skill what we learnt...We are not starting from scratch". This further confirms that most students that register for VTOS courses do so in order to build on the knowledge that they already have.

One of the entry requirements of the VTOS programme is that prospective applicants must be of low educational attainment. The Administrator and teachers argued that the reason why their FETAC Level 5 courses take two years while similar courses in colleges of further education take one year was because they targeted applicants with low educational attainment. The other reason

given on why some of the students experience anxiety and have low self-esteem was that their past was tainted with negative experiences about schooling.

Connie, a teacher, said, "We are conversant that many of our students are coming into us having had negative experiences of education maybe in the past". Negative past experiences about education impacted on the motivation of students to avail of opportunities.

The teachers and the Co-ordinator stated that the majority of the students had low self-esteem. However, most of the research participants who voluntarily chose to participate in the focus group interviews were assertive and confident in their interactions.

Findings reflected that some students were failing to take responsibility. According to Daisy, the Co-ordinator, some students fail to take responsibility or to avail of opportunities that might arise. As a way of counteracting such behaviours and attitudes, staff members now make students sign contracts of agreement to do specific tasks. Findings showed that failure to take responsibility and non-participation were closely related to lack of confidence and self esteem although the former may stem out of rebel against authority. Findings also indicated lack of confidence and failure to take responsibility adversely affected the concerned students' chances of succeeding in their courses, progression routes in education and getting employment. Non-participation or apathy may also be due to lack of motivation. Lack of motivation is not expected to be the case since students voluntarily choose to enrol on VTOS courses. However, there might be some students that may have ended up enrolling for VTOS courses after having been required to do so by the Department of Social Protection. Ayanda, Bianca, Connie and Daisy all agreed that low-self esteem and lack of confidence was an issue with the majority of students.

This subsection highlighted that some students were demotivated and had anxieties in the early stages of the courses. The subsection also posited that the students' demotivation resulted in failure to take responsibility. Evidence from interviews with teachers and the Coordinator suggested that demotivation adversely affected chances of success in courses that students were

doing, progression routes in education and accessing employment. The subsection that follows explores client-centred approaches and good public relations.

5.1.2 Client approaches and good public relations

Students, teachers and the Co-ordinator agreed that the VTOS Adult Education Centre employed client-centred approaches in delivering services to clients. Ayanda said:

I think the outstanding quality of this particular organisation...is that we really care about our students...no matter what challenges we do our utmost to support everybody and we kind of realise that adults learn differently and some are flying it and more struggle and more need other supports. So I think we are people-centred and...that we really care.

Findings indicated that staff members work hard to create a learning environment that is friendly and conducive for the success of learners. This is despite the fact that the VTOS Centres have encountered a reduction in resources and other constraints. Bianca, Connie and Daisy also confirmed that the organisation used a client-centred approach. It was clear during the interviews that staff members were compassionate and motivated about their work despite the funding challenges and the lack logistical supports. The organisation also fostered strong relationships among course participants and members of staff. Bianca stated, "I suppose having two years with students gives you that time to...develop very strong relationships". Client-centred approaches and emphasis on strong relationships are important characteristics of a Professional Learning Community (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Hord, 1997; Wenger, 2012). Connie pointed out:

There's a very collaborative...eh...precept...ethos in the place. There's equality between staff members and students that I don't think they would have witnessed before, you know. That they cannot believe that say the staff and students will share the same canteen because their experience before was that the staff had a place to go at lunch time and students went to the yard.

This researcher witnessed at first hand the friendly interaction among students and staff members. Students stated that they empowered one another. A member of the first focus group said, “I think we empowered each other”, and another member said, “We did yah!” [To the loud approval of other research participants]. A third member from the same focus group said:

Not necessarily tutors, because although the tutors are good at the end of the day they are here for so many hours a week and we are here for a stretch of three hours. So if we need to ask somebody something instead of asking someone that might be here once a week, we gonna ask each other.

The above statement suggests that although teachers empowered students, some of the students were of the opinion that they empowered one another rather than teachers empowering them. Since some of the students have been in employment, there was a possibility that they may have acquired leadership skills at the workplace. However, there is likelihood that teachers had to first impart leadership skills to them before they gained confidence to assist their peers.

The first stage of the fieldwork phase of the research process required students to fill out questionnaires. The majority of adult learners rated the amount and quality of support that they get from the Administrator, Co-ordinator, teachers and peers as Very good to Excellent. Students in the VTOS Centre were represented by the Student Council, but it was not clear how the representative body liaises with grassroots structures. The fact that only Daisy mentioned the existence of the Student Council corroborated that it had little positive impact on the lives and welfare of students.

The Adult Education Guidance Service, teaching and administration staff offered professional and emotional support to students. Daisy stated, “I tell them if you are not sure of what you want, this is the Guidance Counsellor because it is important that this is the right place for you. So we have a fairly rigorous recruitment process”. What Daisy referred to was that the Adult Education Guidance Service provided students with information that they needed in order to make informed decisions about the courses that they enrolled on. Students were also given an opportunity to decide if the

VTOS Centre is the right place for them. Daisy also attributes the Centre's high student retention rate to this, as well as the rigorous recruitment process and working in collaboration with the Guidance Service. Providing students with the information that they needed improved their chances of finishing the courses that they were enrolled on. Ayanda said, "We've very good Career Guidance Service that will counsel as the student progresses [...] I...work very closely...with Career Guidance as well". The Adult Education Guidance Service is easily accessible to students because it is housed in the same building complex. This further facilitated interaction between students and Adult Education Guidance Service members of staff. Students, teachers and the Co-ordinator agreed that the administration staff had an open door policy. As a result, students' issues are attended to without any unnecessary delays.

The teachers, the VTOS Co-ordinator and many students stated that there was a need to strike a balance between offering core and non-core subjects or the product and the process. The product was the qualification that they get after finishing the course and the process was the journey that they undertook before they were accredited. One of the members of second focus group pointed out:

I think it's handy to say I don't want Spanish now, I want to do Cooking. It's just good to have kind of a bit of noncore subjects to do because it's kind of so intense at times. If we have a bit of fun it kind of balances the week out. We used to cook on Fridays, and very much after a heavy few days of the week, and then on a Friday you go there. It's a Friday evening, you wind down and you do the cooking and it's very entertaining and we all enjoyed it. If it's busy, busy, busy, you tend to kind of ...er...heh! While the kind of fun in subjects...mean the Spanish is kind of something different. It's very entertaining, to go abroad on holidays it's handy...ah...you catch up with that kind of noncore subject. Some kind of social subject, the way we call it, some bit of fun, a little bit of fun, entertainment in a week. It will encourage people to come more often I think, if there's some bit of fun.

This researcher was surprised by the interest shown in doing non-core subjects at a time when learners are perceived to be more focused in attaining qualifications than doing extracurricular activities. Another second focus group member said, "It takes off pressure". A colleague agreed and said, "It does...It does. It's just a different subject that you wouldn't normally do. It wasn't Payroll, Bookkeeping, Excel, Database...all figures, all sums. This was something very different, to learn a language is very interesting". Students usually choose to learn a European language such as French, German and Spanish, languages that are widely spoken within the European Union. They found these languages useful in furthering their careers and when they go on holiday and on student exchange programmes. Daisy stated:

I've introduced subjects such as Psychology and we are offering Legal Studies, and every other year we do Social Studies. They are optional subjects. The purpose behind that is to get students thinking, maybe that we are not just about getting a FETAC award. It's not only about getting you a job. It's about maybe broadening your thinking, changing your thinking, building confidence...that's one aspect of it, right.

It was evident from the above quotations that striking a balance between core and noncore subjects enriched the learning experience and made it more enjoyable. The Adult Education Centre further enhanced that experience by consulting students to come forward with suggestions about noncore subjects that they would like to study. One of the teachers said that the VTOS education programme in general had moved away from its founding principles and was offering more academic-oriented subjects at the expense of practical-oriented subjects.

Connie argued:

I've noticed over time that we have developed an overemphasis in particular in academic certification. I think we've gone away from the vocational. We've entirely almost departed from manual-type things, and I think that's a pity because not everybody wants to go back to second chance education...wants to end up in a third level college, maybe

somebody wants to be a certified mechanic. We don't give them that chance, and when I started the programme we did.

Connie regretted that the current trend that prioritised academic subjects did not favour students that were gifted in practical subjects. Connie was the only teacher that was strongly against mandatory accreditation of most courses and stated that she had made her views known to the administration staff. Daisy was aware of the problem and cited that lack of resources made it difficult to make any positive interventions. Daisy stated, "I mean we would love to have...if I could have a much more practical...maybe like...an applied programme.

But, we don't really have the skills...we don't have maybe the resources". In addition, Connie stated that the success of the VTOS programme was mainly measured by the number of students who progressed to third level education. Connie lamented:

That's what it is, and even the statistics when we talk about the success of the programme...yes more recently now we talk about people who get work. That's really good because work is so scarce. Typically, the success seems to be measured now by the number of people who get to third level. I feel if I was a VTOS student now who hadn't the ability maybe or the aspiration to go to third level; I think I might feel that I somehow didn't matter because I didn't match the new profile of successful entry to third level, you know.

Connie further argued that policy makers may be deliberately downplaying the importance of practical subjects as a way of reducing costs of running VTOS institutions. She stated, "I actually think that...it's an economic issue because when I started here we had quite a lot of hands-on. Now, hands-on programmes take a lot of materials, and one of the features of our programme is that it cannot cost students anything". This researcher also agrees with Connie's opinion that to offer non-practical subjects costs less than that practical subjects because the latter need equipment, spares and materials in order to be taught.

The VTOS Adult Education Centre had a good working relationship with potential employers who sponsored the deployment of students during work placement. Ayanda stated, "...to be fair, we've a good rapport with local employers and they prefer students once a week in the Care, because it's sometimes difficult to plan to have something ready for somebody to do in ten days". A good working relationship between the education institution and the sponsors of work placement was advantageous because it helped both parties develop strategies that were in the best interests of all key stakeholders. A good example of such collaboration was when both parties agreed to have work placement at times that might caused minimum disruption to the operations of the sponsor organisation.

This subsection addressed that the Adult Education Centre used client-centred approaches and puts emphasis on good public relations with local employers. Client-centred approaches included offering pastoral care and the utmost support to students despite the fact that staff members sometimes worked in a challenging environment. Key stake holders also empowered one another and worked collaboratively as a way of embracing client-centred approaches. The Adult Education Centre offered professional and emotional support to its students. Key stakeholders agreed that there was a need to strike a balance between offering core and non-core subjects or acquiring qualifications and the due process that led to that. One of the teachers and the VTOS Co-ordinator concurred that there was a need to strike a balance between academic and practical subjects but scarcity of resources was scuttling that. There was a good working relationship between the Adult Education Centre and the Adult Education Guidance Service and potential employers who sponsor work placement. The entire section explained the students' journey from the time they began their studies and how they aspired to be transformed. The next section examines the core concept of the Transforming Self.

5.2 The Transforming Self

The Transforming Self category will be discussed under the following subsections Change and Resources. The discussion will start by addressing the subsection on Change.

5.2.1 Change

Many research participants agreed that the majority of students had low self-esteem when they enrolled on their studies. Despite that, guidance through leadership helped some of the students to gradually gain confidence. That resulted in some of the students gaining confidence by the time they reached the second year. Burns (2003) asserts that transformational leadership takes place when:

Leaders take the initiative in mobilising people for participation in the process of change, encouraging a sense of collective identity and collective efficacy, which in turn brings stronger feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy, described by Bernard Bass as an enhanced 'sense of 'meaningfulness' in their work and lives'. By pursuing transformational change, people can transform themselves (pp. 25 – 26).

Ayanda stated, "I think with adults as well...it's a confidence thing, if you have confidence to ask questions...Sometimes when adults come back to education that's probably the biggest thing that they lack...confidence". A member of the first focus group said that someone with good leadership qualities "shows you how to do it, that is, step by step. It gives you confidence by showing you how do it, especially for people who have been out of education for a number of years. You would be a bit apprehensive about things like computers". Confidence is an important success factor when undertaking studies and making efforts to access the labour market. This is why some education institutions sometimes target students that are perceived to have low self-esteem and offer them personal development courses before they enrol them in mainstream courses.

Another approach that staff members used in boosting the students' confidence was by delegating them certain duties. Daisy stated:

OK...it's the students that I suppose may be equipped with leadership skills...for example, maybe this week they wanted to go on fieldtrips, and I would say alright...OK you organise

it. You come back and you tell me what it's going to cost, how many are going to go, what staff members are going to go with you.

In addition, Daisy said, "That's...when the students take an initiative, they are telling me what it is that they need and as far as possible and within the resources we'll try and put it on". In other words, staff members ask students to do the ground work and then they check if what they proposed meets the standard requirements.

Undertaking duties assigned by their teachers, even if it means experiencing failure, helped students to revise their self-concept ((Foucault, 1998); Josselson, 2007). A member of the first focus group who was educated during the time when most Irish schools were run by religious orders argued that students were not encouraged to acquire leadership skills. He argued that "within the Christian Brothers...leadership wasn't encouraged. You sat down, and you did as you were told...leadership went to the guy who did as he was told". The above quotation appears to indicate that the research participant was surprised by the changes that had taken place in recent years in the Irish education system.

Coaching, mentoring and training helped students to change the way they viewed themselves and the world. However, the VTOS Adult Education Centre only used coaching and training to transfer skills, and did not use mentoring. This researcher was not sure if there was a plausible reason why it was the case. Bianca was the only research participant who strongly advocated for the introduction of mentoring sessions. Bianca also lamented the nonexistence of a mentoring programme at the education institution. Bianca emphasised:

Mentoring is really important nowadays. ...and I think people have to be sure of how to become a leader. It's not an innate part, it's not natural to us anymore, and I know some people are naturally born leaders and are good at it. But, there are other people out there that could be just as good, but they don't have the guidance to take them.

Furthermore, Bianca stated, “It is to do with the kind of educational system...I think our mentoring system isn’t what it should be. In future, if you take what they do in the English system. That seems to be a better...” This researcher is also of the opinion that the Big Brother Big Sister (BBBS) approach to mentoring could boost the students’ confidence better than coaching and training. That was because mentors offer more emotional support to mentees compared to what coaches and trainers can achieve with coachees and trainees.

This subsection posited that the research participants’ experience of the process of change was characterised by anxiety and demotivation. Many research participants agreed that the majority of students had low self-esteem at the time when they enrolled on specific courses. However, findings reflected that guidance through leadership helped students to gradually gain confidence, and some of them would have gained confidence by the time they reached the second year. Staff members also delegated duties to students as a way of helping them to gain positive self-concept (Foucault, 1998; Josselson, 2007). The subsection that follows discusses resources.

5.2.2 Resources

Findings reflect that many of the research participants believed that staff members were doing a good job but lacked resources which was making it difficult for them to achieve their objectives. The economic recession had resulted in cutbacks in the adult education sector. A member of third focus group pointed out:

I would agree that they are very supportive, but I do think that their resources are limited. They are excellent tutors and a Co-ordinator, but I am aware that they have limits and their resources...you know what I mean. There would be things that they would prefer to do, but they don’t have the funding.

Daisy concurred with the member of the third focus group about the lack of resources. She stated, ‘You see...our non-pay budget is not a huge budget...We don’t have a capital budget. We don’t have like a budget for special needs. So if somebody is dyslexic, or somebody has special learning needs, physical or...we don’t actually have resources for that’. In addition, Daisy stated the issue of

supports for students living with disabilities has been deliberated at national level on a number of occasions with no success. Students, teachers and the Coordinator all cited that the lack of resources was negatively impacting on the students' learning experience.

The study found that if intellectual learning disabilities had been diagnosed while students were at school, Post Leaving Certificate College or in a third level college, there were high chances of them getting supports. The issue affected the adult education sector in general including the Youthreach and the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI). Therefore, it could be concluded that access to learning supports for students living with disabilities is significantly influenced by whether they are enrolled in the formal or non-formal education sector. That was putting a huge financial strain on the adult education sector, as they had no other option but to enrol students with disabilities. That is because turning them away would be discriminatory. Daisy said:

I would take them out of my own budget, like if I've...maybe a student we'll examine them in their own room. I'll pay someone else an external...somebody to come in and sit with them, you see. It could be a scribe...eh...a reader...yah, I would do that. But, that comes out of my own budget.

The Irish Statute Book (2000) asserts that the EQUAL STATUS ACT, 2000 4(1) dictates that discrimination on the grounds of disability includes:

...a refusal or failure by the provider of a service to do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability by providing special treatment or facilities, if without such special treatment or facilities it would be impossible or unduly difficult for the person to avail himself or herself of the service (p. 9).

Lack of physical space was also found to be negatively affecting timetabling of lessons including computer laboratory sessions. There were also constraints in relation to the allocation teaching hours to staff members. As a result, teachers who worked at the Centre were also working in other education institutions in the neighbourhood. Daisy pointed out, "There are two limitations there. One is rooms, because we share the rooms with other programmes, there is very limited room for

manoeuvre. So that is a problem. The other problem is that I only have one staff member who is here over five days". The other programmes that Daisy referred do not fall under the remit of VTOS.

This subsection highlighted the lack of resources at the VTOS Centre. Research participants agreed that although staff members were doing a good job, lack of resources impeded on their output. There was lack of support in the adult education sector for students living with the challenges associated with intellectual and physical disabilities. In addition, lack of classroom space was adversely affecting timetabling of lessons. This was compounded by the fact the Adult Education Centre encountered constraints in the hours that are allocated to staff members. The entire section explored the Transforming Self. The section that follows addresses the Ideal Self.

5.3 The Ideal Self

The core concept of the Ideal Self will be explored under the following subsections confidence, guidance and training, active participation, enabling environment, motivation and revised paradigms and self concept. The Ideal Self was synonymous with the aspiratory self and what research participants believed could be done to enhance their opportunities to fulfil their educational dreams. The subsection that follows explains the importance of confidence in a learning environment.

5.3.1 Confidence

There is a relationship between leadership skills, understanding self and confidence to engage with a task. Altuntas and Akyil (2011) point out that 'emotions have important roles in understanding human nature, and interpreting thoughts, and behaviours. Emotions have been neglected in the science world for long period of time and wisdom have been given importance and identified with intelligence' (p. 2097). Emotional intelligence/skills consist of understanding the self (intrapersonal skills) and understanding the other (interpersonal skills).

Findings of a study carried out by Altuntas and Akyil (2011) show that:

...emotional intelligence level of male...students positively affects the leadership behaviours. These findings demonstrate that students will have better leadership behaviours if they improve their emotional intelligence levels...students who are aware of other's emotions, could emphasize, control both their and other's emotions are expected to be better leaders (p. 2102).

Emotional intelligence is a key requisite when going through the change process and in managing it (Altuntas and Akyil, 2011; Grant, 2011; Hargreaves, 2004). It is important for an organisation to have a policy that takes care of leaders and that encourages leaders to take care of themselves. Hargreaves and Fink (2003) state that 'sustainable leadership systems know how to take care of their leaders and how to get leaders to take care of themselves' (p.

8). A member of the second focus group said this about the Co-ordinator:

She goes that extra bit, and she's interested in everyone's welfare...She doesn't have a set of rules for every one (treats each case on its merit) because one student in our class didn't really like the subjects, which she started off doing, and she met with the Co-ordinator, and the Co-ordinator discussed her best options. Then she moved to different modules here and she's much happier now. So...eh...she wants you to get on. She just doesn't have the same vision for everyone (has different visions for different people). She has a broad spectrum.

The above quotation indicates that Daisy used emotional intelligence (Altuntas and Akyil, 2011; Grant, 2011; Hargreaves, 2004), which resulted in her treating every case on its merit. Another member of the second focus group stated that people were different and therefore it was important to take that into consideration when helping peers. The focus group member stated:

Maybe you should recognise that in class people don't have the same level of skills. Some might know more than others, like when we started a computer class, some people in our class knew a lot. So when coaching someone you should take into account that not everyone is in the same standard.

The above quotation shows that emotional intelligence (Altuntas and Akyil, 2011; Grant, 2011; Hargreaves, 2004) helped students to understand that they could not use a 'one-size-fits-all approach' when dealing with different individuals. Evidence from interviews with teachers and the Co-ordinator suggested that students that had good intrapersonal and interpersonal skills were most likely to succeed in continuing with education and in accessing employment.

This subsection discussed confidence. The section also explained that there was a link between confidence and a better understanding of the self. The section explained that good intrapersonal and interpersonal skills constituted emotional intelligence. Evidence from interviews with teachers and the Co-ordinator showed that students with good intrapersonal and interpersonal skills were most likely to succeed in their courses, pursue education progressing routes and access employment. The section that follows discusses guidance enhance the students' learning experience at the Adult Education Centre.

5.3.2 Guidance and Training

The Adult Education Guidance Service offered professional counselling to students during the time when they made decisions to enrol on VTOS courses and throughout their courses. The Guidance Service is located within the Adult Education Centre's building complex and had a dedicated staff. Teachers and the Co-ordinator revealed during the interviews that the strategic location of the counselling service further reduced barriers between Guidance Service staff members and students, something that might be a challenge if the service was located elsewhere.

Ayanda was the only teacher who openly said that leadership skills were embodied in the degree course that she had undertaken two years previously and also stated that she imparted leadership skills to her students. Students explained during interviews that some second year students offer support to their peers using leadership skills that they would have gained in the first year.

This subsection posited that the Adult Education Guidance Service offers guidance and teachers offer training to students. The Guidance Service, teaching and administration staff offered professional and emotional guidance to students. Some of the teachers explained during the

interview that the training they offered to students included imparting transferrable leadership skills. The leadership skills are used by some second year students when coaching their peers. The subsection that follows addresses active participation.

5.3.3 Active participation

It was evident from contributions during the interviews that students actively participated in activities that took place during their education. Proof of active participation was further confirmed by the fact that students willingly came back to participate in the study at a time when they had finished all their assessments and were no longer attending regular lessons. Hargreaves (2005) proposes a model in which researchers, teaching and nonteaching, students, local communities and other key stakeholders work collaboratively. A Professional Learning Community is characterised by active participation of key stakeholders and the immediate community in the activities of the organisation (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Hord, 1997; Wenger, 2012).

Apathy is usually an indicator that a certain section of stakeholders are not happy with the status quo (Botes and Rensburg, 2000). A high retention rate was a positive sign that students were happy with the quality of service delivery that they were getting (Botes and Rensburg, 2000). Daisy said, "I started out with say about 85 and the few who have left...I think there are probably about three who just for various reasons they couldn't come...We keep the students, we tend to keep them". The positive experience at the Adult Education Centre encourages attendance. Daisy also said, "Our progression rate from the programme is very good. Last year, out of the 36 who left, I think only about 4 went back to their original status.

Everybody else went to employment or went to further education. So I think it works". Active participation was further enhanced by the inclusion of noncore subjects and fieldtrips in the curriculum, which made the learning process more enjoyable.

This subsection explored how active participation helped the transition of the Transforming Self to the Ideal Self. Active participation and a good retention rate was a good indicator that key stakeholders were happy with the way the education institution was run. The subsection that

follows addresses how enabling an environment contributes facilitates the Transforming Self to become the Ideal Self.

5.3.4 Enabling environment

The majority of research participants agreed that they experienced an enabling internal environmental within the educational institution. The internal environment included the organisational culture and working relationships among key stakeholders. In transformational leadership approaches, conflict could be viewed as a positive development when empowering followers. Burns (2003) points out that 'tension can develop in this process...leaders can come into conflict with followers' rising sense of efficacy and purpose. Followers might outstrip leaders. They might become leaders themselves. That is what makes transforming leadership participatory and democratic' (p. 26). The facilitator acknowledges personal needs, develops people, practises participation and teambuilding, focuses on consensus building, manages conflict and encourages participative decision-making (Zaft *et al.* (2009, p. 275). Therefore, working relationships can be improved by employing conflict resolution management strategies.

The external environment is more difficult to deal with because it is partly not within the control of key stakeholders. The external environment is influenced by the political, social and economic systems and can be impacted upon by events happening beyond national borders. An example of a harsh external environment is the economic recession that the Irish economy has been going through since 2008. It resulted in financial cutbacks and student grant reduction, which hinder transforming developments into the Ideal Self.

This section explored the importance of an enabling environment in the students' learning experience. The environment in which an organisation operates is influenced by its internal and external environment. Findings indicated that the Adult Education Centre experienced an enabling internal environment and a harsh external environment. The section that follows explores how high level of motivation helps students to transform to the Ideal Self.

5.3.5 Motivation

The results of the study showed that motivation was the driving force behind the ability to successfully finish courses, progress with studies and avail of employment opportunities.

Motivation is either intrinsic or extrinsic. Hargreaves and Fink (2003) state that 'sustainable leadership provides intrinsic rewards and extrinsic incentives that attract and retain the best and brightest of the leadership pool; and it provides time and opportunity for leaders to network, learn from and support each other, as well as coach and mentor successors' (p. 8). Intrinsic motivation is paramount and is highly likely to last longer because it starts from within the person. A member of the first focus group stated that education "wasn't forced on us, unlike when you were younger your father and mother had to force you...but if you are willing to do it yourself it's a different way". Extrinsic motivation is influenced by external or environmental factors. This might include the success of friends, relatives or other people that would have pursued education courses before the aspiring applicant decided to apply. It is pertinent for the VTOS Centre to have highly motivated members and other stakeholders.

One of the teachers pointed out that the VTOS education did not push students to do work placement until they were motivated to do so. Bianca, one of the teachers, stated that they had been cases when students were not ready to do work placement in the early stages of the course but were more motivated to do so at an advanced stage. Daisy, the Co-ordinator, pointed out that they did mock interviews in the second year as a way of motivating students to avail of employment opportunities.

The subsection highlighted that motivation was a success factor that enabled students to finish courses, further education and access employment. Motivation is both intrinsic and extrinsic, but the former is more important for achieving objectives. The subsection below explores the revised paradigms and self concept.

5.3.6 Revised paradigms and self concept

It was evident during the research process that doing specific courses helped students to revise their views about themselves and the way they look at the world (Foucault, 1998; Josselson, 2007). This in turn broadens students' way of thinking. A member of the first focus group said that:

It helps the brain, you know, it keeps the brain ticking over and active. Even if you didn't work after this, it gives you an interest in other things, like computers, for instance, to learn how to use them and to use the Internet. Even if you didn't work after this course and if you had your laptop, the world is opened up to you, you know, what is going on in the world and different cultures, and learn that as well. ...and I mean you can go learning at home, which is brilliant.

Another member of the first focus group concurred with the member quoted above. The latter said, "With education you never stop learning. This place or environment has encouraged that in me as well. You never know everything, you know". This research participant suggests that the key skill in learning is to learn how to learn. Once one has acquired that skill then s/he can actively engage with lifelong learning (Department of Education and Science, 1997, 1998 and 2000; Figel, 2008; Powell *et al.*, 2003; Walters, 2008). The Human Growth and Development or Psychology module helps students to better understand themselves and the other, therefore, helped them to revise their paradigm and self-concept (Foucault, 1998; Josselson, 2007). The ability to understand the self and other is respectively facilitated by intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Both skills constitute emotional intelligence (Altuntas and Akyil, 2011).

Ayanda said:

I think it is vital...I think you have to kind of understand yourself and where you come from, and what fears, worries and prejudices...whatever of these you have, because we all have them. I think when you can kind of take a close look at that and you can look at yourself.... I think anything that kind of make students look at themselves...they develop.

The Human Growth and Development module also helped students in the health and caring professions to understand physiological and psychological changes that take place during different stages in life. It therefore helps students, for example, to understand the reasoning capacity of children of different ages and how hormonal changes influence adolescent behaviours and attitudes.

One member of the first focus group was more radical and critical about the underlying issues of education systems in general. He deviated from the consensus that seemed to exist among the research participants in relation to transferring leadership skills. He stated:

...education systems...have deviated from time to time and from period to period to accommodate bigger interests of people, if you like, and so sometimes I have an issue with education systems. That is because all that they do is to make is to make you a good participant in their particular systems in order for you to reach their objectives rather than your own.

The research participant implied that education curricula are designed in a manner such that its outcomes achieved the objectives of those that design them and not those of course participants. The research participant showed some criticality by exposing what he perceived to be synonymous to the hidden curriculum in education (Giddens, 2006; Haralambos *et al.*, 2004; McLaren, 2002; Tovey and Share, 2003). He further stated:

Education is too sensitive to me, which means you acquire knowledge from everywhere and you encompass all cultures and all nationalities, not just specifically a Western culture...and so sometimes I've an issue with a lot of that in the sense that what they do is teach disjuncture hoops and pick the best ones and the rest are discarded.

The research participant seemed to suggest that the present status quo only values education that is created by dominant classes and cultures. He also pointed out that education systems systematically selected certain graduates and then discarded the rest.

This section discussed revised paradigms and self concept. It is evident from findings that participation in specific courses helped students to revise concepts about themselves and the way they look at the world. Students, teachers and the Co-ordinator stated that in addition to core subjects, the Adult Education Centre incorporated a number of non-core subjects as a way of improving the thinking capacity of students and widening their horizons.

From the beginning, the objectives of this study were to answer the following primary research question and secondary questions. The primary research question asked was: *How and in what ways does the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) of an Education Training Board (ETB) in Ireland transfer sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership skills to teachers/tutors in order to improve service delivery to adult learners?*

The secondary research questions were:

1. How is sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership in the field of adult education defined by policy-makers, the VTOS Coordinator, adult educators and learners?
2. What are the benefits and challenges that the policy-makers and adult educators encounter in their quest to transfer sustainable, transformational or distributed leadership skills?
3. What do students say about the quality of support that they receive from the Administrator, Coordinator, teachers/tutors and peers?
4. How and in what ways do teachers/tutors transfer leadership skills to adult learners?
5. Do teachers/tutors think leadership skills were embedded in the curriculum of course(s) that they did when they trained as educators?
6. How important do adult learners think the skills of numeracy, reading, writing and interpersonal skills are to their personal lives?
7. Do adult learners think the VTOS courses that they are doing are helping them to achieve their objectives?

5.4 Defining theoretical perspectives of leadership

Focus groups were asked to explain how and in what ways their teachers equipped them with leadership skills. The majority of focus group members found it difficult to articulate the topic and failed to define leadership and what constitutes leadership skills. Failure to define leadership and what constitute leadership skills in turn made it difficult for respondents to acknowledge that teachers used and equipped them with leadership skills. One respondent stated that the education system is structured in manner that does not make it necessary for teachers and students to employ leadership skills. However, when respondents were asked to explain about the amount and quality of support that they received from staff members and their peers it was clear that both students and teachers use leadership skills.

Failure to define leadership and explicitly articulate leadership skills is partially because it is a broad and expanding field which many people find difficult to define (Burns, 2003). There are ongoing debates to establish if leadership skills are inborn or nurtured or both (Lester, 2007). In addition, leadership skills are sometimes taken for granted. The characteristics that distinguish a good leader are the ability to influence, inspire or persuade followers to take a certain course of action and mobilize resources in order to achieve that goal (Armstrong, 1999; Burns, Julsuwan *et al.* 2011; Lester, 2007; Spillane *et al.* 2001).

Teachers also found it difficult to explicitly define specific leadership approaches that they employ during the course of their duties. In spite of that, when we discussed what they practically did in the classroom, findings indicated that both teachers and students used sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership perspectives during the course of their duties. Therefore, for many people leadership is best articulated through actions that are executed in order to achieve a common objective but is rather complex to specifically define.

Outcomes from interviews with students and teachers showed that staff members acted as formal leaders who facilitated the emergence of informal leaders from course groups. Furthermore, students found it difficult to distinguish teaching skills from leadership skills.

As a result, students were of the opinion that teachers only used teaching skills rather than leadership skills. The failure of students to fully understand leadership could be attributed to the organisational culture that existed within the structures of the organisation. There was a strong possibility that lack of openness in talking about leadership and in aspiring to be leaders was being overshadowed by a culture that promotes collective identity at the expense of individual identity.

One of the characteristics of a team/clan culture as espoused in the CVF (Belasen and Frank, 2010; Cameron and Quinn; 2006; Helfrich et al., 2007; Yardley and Neal, 2009; Zaft *et al.*, 2007) is that it has 'shared values and goals, cohesion, participativeness, individuality, and a sense of 'we-ness' (Yardley and Neal, 2007, p. 28). It was evident that students were not motivated to aspire for leadership or did not unequivocally express their understanding of leadership because they failed to mention the existence of the Student Council during focus group discussions.

It was worrying to notice that adult learners who are being prepared to access employment and progress with education could not fully articulate leadership. Third level students and employees are expected to some degree to exercise leadership skills. A good example is that in distributed leadership approaches, leadership is distributed among informal and formal leaders (Hargreaves and Fink 2006; Hartley, 2009; Spillane, 2005; Spillane *et al.*, 2001; Timperley, 2005).

This section analysed and discussed findings the difficulties that staff members and students had in defining leadership and articulating what constituted leadership skills. The next section addresses benefits and challenges of employing leadership skills.

5.5 Benefits and challenges of employing leadership skills

Results of this study indicated that a high retention for students was one of the benefits of employing sustainable leadership approaches. When students are provided with adequate information, they make informed decisions and are less likely to drop out from courses. The Adult Education Centre also avoided drop outs by ensuring that experiences that failed students in the past were not repeated. In addition, the education institution facilitated a learning environment that struck a balance between acquiring qualifications and extramural activities. That enriched the learning experience and made students to enjoy a fuller involvement in social and cultural life (Department of Education and Science, 1997; Department of Education and Skills, 2010; Figel, 2008; Powell *et al.*, 2003; Starratt, 2001; Walters, 2008). Sustainable leadership also helped the institution to retain personnel and the three teachers who participated in stage 2 of the research process had each worked for the Adult Education Centre for more than ten years.

Transformational leadership had benefits of boosting students' self-confidence, self-worth and self-esteem (Burns, 2003). The VTOS Co-ordinator and teachers stated that selfconfidence, self-worth and self-esteem significantly increased students' chances of passing specific courses that they were enrolled on, furthering their education and of accessing employment. Students and staff members stated that the majority of students had high levels of anxiety and were naive in the first year of their respective VTOS courses and that being equipped with leadership skills by staff members helped them to gradually gain confidence.

Self-confidence, self-worth and self-esteem increased the capabilities of students to do tasks independently. When formal leaders delegate work to informal leaders, the former reduce their workloads and expend their energy on other productive aspects of their work. Therefore, distributed leadership perspectives are effective when tasks are distributed among team members that have been equipped with leadership skills and that have got confidence (Hargreaves and Fink 2006; Hartley, 2009; Spillane, 2005; Spillane *et al.*, 2001; Timperley, 2005). Therefore, distributing leadership just for the sake of it does not necessarily bear fruit.

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) point out:

Overall patterns of distributed leadership and its effects in large-scale samples may hide significant variations and discrepancies in which distributed leadership is less useful. If teachers are not well qualified and their knowledge base is weak, for instance, distributed leadership produces only pooled ignorance and prejudice rather than shared knowledge and professionalism (p. 102).

The findings showed also that distributed leadership approaches were practised within the structures of the Adult Education Centre when leadership roles were rotated among group or team members (Prendiville, 1995).

Outcomes of this study indicated that one of the challenges that the Adult Education Centre encountered was the lack of supports for students living with intellectual and physical disabilities. That showed tensions and complexities that may exist between the internal and external environment as hypothesised by the CVF (Belasen and Frank, 2010; Cameron and Quinn; 2006; Helfrich et al., 2007; Yardley and Neal, 2009; Zaft *et al.*, 2007). The responsibility to provide supports for students living with learning and physical disabilities lies within the scope of an external environment. The outcomes of this study also reflected that the VTOS Centre had timetabling challenges because of shortage of room space and small room size.

Findings also indicated that it was a huge challenge to organise field trips. That was because of bureaucracy and failure by the top leadership to provide clear guidelines to be followed when applying for insurance cover for students who participated in field trips. Failure to produce proof of insurance cover sometimes resulted in students being denied access into certain historic sites. The overseers of historical sites sometimes insisted on being furnished with proof of insurance cover and permission to visit. That had an adverse effect on people who were involved in organising and planning fieldtrips. The VTOS Co-ordinator, teachers and some of the students pointed out that the cutbacks on funding of the adult education sector were negatively affecting the Adult Education Centre's quest to achieve its objectives. Students were no longer in receipt of grants and were

mainly surviving on whatever social welfare payment that they were on (The Citizens Information Board, 2013; Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, 2014). The VTOS Co-ordinator stated that she would like to re-introduce practical subjects but she could not do so because funding was an impediment. The reason why the education institution does not use mentoring (Adeyemi (2011; Bell and Treleaven, 2011; Bolt 2000; Fajana and Gbajumo-Sheriff, 2011; Herrera *et al.*, 2011; Ilesanmi, 2011; Ojedokun, 2011) to transfer leadership skills is most likely because it needs more resources since it primarily a one-to-one interaction, whereas coaching (Bolt, 2000; Dahlstedt and Nordvall, 2011; Grant, 2011; Ilesanmi, 2011; Malone, 2000; Rațiu and Băban, 2012; Robertson, 2009) and training (Bolt, 2000; Walmsley, 2005) can be facilitated to groups (Prendiville, 1995).

This section analysed and discussed the benefits and challenges of employing leadership skills. The following section addresses the amount and quality of support received by students.

5.6 Amount and quality of support received by students

The results of this study showed that students highly rated the amount and quality of support they received from peers and staff members. They initially indicated that when they filled out questionnaires in stage 1 of the research process. Thirty-three out of thirty-five rated it as 'very good' to 'excellent'. In stage 2, students were given a chance to discuss the amount and quality of support in more detail. Focus group members reinforced what individual respondents had stated when they filled out the questionnaires.

Therefore, the amount and quality of support from other stakeholders helps students to develop self-confidence, self-worth and self-efficacy (Burns, 2003).

During the focus group interviews, students stated that they relied more on peers than on teachers for support. This was because there were few teachers who did full-time hours and were at the Adult Education Centre on a regular basis. This is line with conceptual frameworks of project teams. Project teams function differently from traditional working groups because the former are led by

team leaders with the role of the traditional supervisor becoming redundant. A good team leader clarifies objectives of the team and organisation, promotes decision-making and cohesion within team members, values the welfare of members, and encourages training of members and delegates well (Belbin® North America, 2015).

This section analysed and discussed findings to establish the amount and quality of support that students from peers and staff members. The following section addresses techniques that staff members use when transferring leadership skills to students.

5.7 Techniques that staff members use when transferring leadership skills

This study investigated to establish methods that teachers used to transfer leadership skills to students and what the students themselves in turn employed to transfer the same skills to their peers. Findings showed that students were not sure if their teachers equipped them with leadership skills. However, many of them agreed that teachers equipped them with skills that helped them to pass transferable skills to other students and to workmates during work placement. Students could not clearly distinguish teaching skills from leadership skills. Leadership skills were imparted through coaching (Bolt, 2000; Dahlstedt and Nordvall, 2011; Grant, 2011; Ilesanmi, 2011; Malone, 2000; Rațiu and Băban, 2012; Robertson, 2009) and training (Bolt, 2000; Walmsley, 2005) and the education institution did not use mentoring (Adeyemi (2011; Bell and Treleaven, 2011; Bolt 2000; Fajana and Gbajumo-Sheriff, 2011; Herrera *et al.*, 2011; Ilesanmi, 2011; Ojedokun, 2011). One teacher openly acknowledged and lamented that the Adult Education Centre did not use mentoring skills.

This section analysed and discussed findings about the methods that staff members used when transferring leadership skills to students and that some of the students employed when transferring skills to their peers. The section below investigates to establish whether leadership skills are included in the training curriculum for teachers who teach in the VTOS programme.

5.8 Establishing if leadership skills are included in training curriculum for teachers

The Co-ordinator and teachers were asked during one-to-one interviews if teachers who supervise VTOS courses covered topics on leadership skills in their teacher training curricula. The Co-ordinator pointed out that teachers did not exercise leadership skills in an overt way. However, she asserted that the VTOS programme was structured in a manner that facilitated teachers to implicitly apply leadership skills sometimes without being consciously aware they were using them. Therefore, the Co-ordinator confidently stated that leadership skills were embedded in the teaching curriculum of VTOS courses although she was not sure if they were included in the training curriculum for teachers. Teachers that supervised students at the Adult Education Centre were qualified in accordance with Teaching Council regulations and requirements as stipulated in *Regulation Five* (The Teaching Council, 2014).

This section analysed and discussed findings to establish whether leadership skills were included in the training curriculum for teachers who taught in the VTOS programme. The section below explores the importance of literacy, numeracy and interpersonal skills in the lives students.

5.9 Importance of literacy, numeracy and interpersonal skills to students

The investigation to establish how students rated the importance of literacy, numeracy and interpersonal skills to them was carried out through questionnaires. Research participants were asked to rate personal development and study skills of numeracy, reading, writing and interpersonal skills on a scale 1 to 4, 1 being the least important to them and 4 being most important.

The most important score of 4 was awarded by the following numbers of respondents in a descending order: interpersonal skills (17), numeracy (12), writing (8) and reading (7). The more important score of 3 was awarded by the following numbers of respondents in a descending order: reading (14), writing (10), numeracy (8) and interpersonal skills (5). The important score of 2 was awarded by the following numbers of respondents in a descending order: writing (13), reading (9), numeracy (4) and interpersonal skills (4). The least important score of 1 was awarded by the

following numbers of respondents in a descending order: numeracy (11), interpersonal skills (9), reading (5) and writing (4). It is pertinent to note that the World Economic Forum (2015) states that 'Ireland stands out in terms of foundational skill indicators relative to other OECD countries, but shows gaps when compared to peers on critical thinking/problem-solving, creativity and curiosity' (p. 7). The above scores reflect foundational skills and the survey did not assess critical thinking/problem-solving, creativity and curiosity.

Seventy-seven percent of the respondents rated the skills as instructed, and twenty-three percent did not follow instructions. This researcher decided it was important to include the results of those who did not follow instructions. The researcher considered that the students' voices were important in the study and could not be ignored. Inclusion of students' voices was paramount because by doing that they could be considered for inclusion in the design and review of the education curriculum. Those who did not follow instructions did not enter a different numerical value of 1 to 4 to each skill. In some instances, they awarded the same values to some skills. The anomaly was not detected when the questionnaire was piloted.

Therefore, this researcher believed that it was not the question's lack of clarity that caused the mix-up.

Outcomes of this study indicated that students rate interpersonal skills as the most important, numeracy as more important, writing as important and reading as least important. Interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, numeracy, writing and reading are generally referred to as personal development and study skills (Department of Social Protection, 2010). The transfer of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills requires emotional intelligence (Altuntas and Akyil, 2011).

This section analysed and discussed findings to establish the importance of literacy, numeracy and interpersonal skills in the lives of students. The section that follows investigates to establish if VTOS course meet the objectives of students.

5. 10 Investigation if VTOS courses meet the objectives of students

The investigation was primarily carried out by asking respondents if they thought the VTOS programme was meeting the objectives that made them to enrol for specific courses. Fiftyfour percent of the respondents strongly agreed and forty percent agreed that the VTOS programme met their objectives. Therefore, at least ninety-four percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their expectations were being met. That was a significant percentage, which further confirmed the assertion that the Adult Education Centre offered a favourable learning atmosphere.

The essence and existence of a student-centred learning environment in an educational institution fundamentally depends objectives of students. The VTOS Co-ordinator and teachers also confirmed that the Adult Education Centre met the objectives of students. The Adult Education Centre employed community-based learning or community development project principles in order to achieve students' objectives (Dublin City Council, 2015).

Organisations that embrace project perspectives are most likely to display characteristics of creativity and innovation (Lenfle, 2008).

The findings reflected that the support and transfer of leadership skills by teaching and nonteaching staff motivated students and enhanced their chances of achieving their objectives. As a result, it was not easy for students to achieve their objectives without support, guidance and direction from Adult Education Centre's members of staff and the Adult Education Guidance Service.

This section analysed and discussed findings to establish whether the VTOS programme was meeting the objectives of respondents. The section that follows concludes the chapter on analysis and discussion of findings.

5.11 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the core concepts of Real Self, Transforming Self and Ideal Self, which reflected the trajectory that students and staff members go through from the time the former enrol on courses up to the time they finish them. The trajectory indicated that there are high levels of

anxiety in the early stages of courses and some of the students gradually gained confidence and self-esteem that enabled them to do well in their courses, progress with education or access employment.

This chapter also discussed that the Adult Education Centre uses client-centred approaches and puts emphasis on good public relations. Management of human resources and good public relations is one of the key characteristics of the CVF. In addition, the chapter discussed that the Adult Education Centre offered professional and emotional support to its students. The chapter also discussed that there was a need to strike a balance between core and non-core subjects, the qualifications and extramural activities, and academic and practical subjects. Striking a balance between the aforementioned aspects of learning enriches and enhances the learning process.

This chapter also carried out an investigation to establish how research participants experience the process of change. It is a human condition to feel uncomfortable when deviated from the normal routines that we are used to them in our daily lives. Furthermore, the chapter posited that the Adult Education Centre encountered constraints in the allocation of teaching hours, lack of resources including room space and supports for students living with intellectual and physical disabilities. The CVF conceptualises how to deal with complexities and tensions of the internal and external environment of an organisation.

Reviewed literature also revealed that one of the primary roles of a leader is to deal with acquisition and allocation of resources.

This chapter also investigated the techniques that teachers employed to impart transferrable leadership skills to students, which students in turn use when coaching their counterparts. The chapter also showed that there is a relationship between active participation and the retention rate of students. The chapter confirmed that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation act as success factors that enable students to finish courses, further education and access employment. Lastly, the chapter discussed that the learning process helps students to revise concepts about themselves and the way they look at the world. This is a confirmation of Freirean pedagogical approaches which

posit that dialogue, communication, activism and reflection translate into praxis, which transforms people to become more sophisticated human beings.

Chapter 6

Summary, Conclusion & Recommendations

Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

6.0 Introduction

This chapter addresses the summary, conclusion, limitations and recommendations of the study.

6.1 Summary of the study

It was suggested in the introduction that the adult education sector is a major provider of lifelong learning that supports a learned and dynamic labour force. Lifelong learning programmes help citizens to learn new skills, up-skill and re-skill at various stages throughout life (Barry, 2008; Department of Education and Science, 1998 and 2000; Figel', 2008; Hargreaves, 2003; Kirsch, 2001; Rodriguez *et al.*, 2010). Lifelong learning initiatives are helping Europe to pursue an agenda to become a world-leading knowledge-based society (Department of Education and Science, 1998 and 2000; Figel', 2008; Kirsch, 2001; Rodriguez *et al.*, 2010). Lifelong learning in Ireland has been prioritised since 1997 after the publication of the OECD's International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) report (Department of Education and Science, 1998 and 2000). The European Council considers education as an important tool in enhancing the EU's competitiveness and in achieving social and economic cohesion.

The reviewed literature showed that the EU has amalgamated various educational and training programmes to a singular lifelong learning programme. Seven billion Euros between 2007 and 2013 was earmarked for funding four sectoral programmes. The four sectoral programmes include the Comenius which brings schools together, the Erasmus which caters for higher education, Leonardo da Vinci which oversees vocational training and the Grundtvig which is an umbrella for adult education. There is also a transversal programme which concentrates on information and communication technology (ICT), languages and policy cooperation. The Jean Monnet Programme focuses on stimulating teaching, reflection and debate on the European integration process at higher educational institutions and across the globe (Figel', 2008).

Walters (2008) asserts that the road map of key milestones and publications in the evolution of the European area of lifelong learning include the following:

Firstly, Toward the Learning Society (1995), The European Year of Lifelong Learning (1996), The Bologna Declaration (1999), Lisbon European Council (2000) and Feira European Council (2000).

Secondly, European Employment Strategy (2001), Report on the future objectives of education and training systems (2001), Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality (2001), Indicators on Lifelong Learning (2001), European Employment Strategy (2002), Social Partners Framework of actions (2002), The 6th Research Framework Programme (2002), Ten-year work programme (2002),

Council Resolution on lifelong learning (2002), Copenhagen Declaration and the Council Resolution on the promotion of enhanced co-operation in VET (2002) and Five Benchmarks for Education and Training (2002).

Finally, R3L Initiative (2003), Berlin (2003), Joint Interim report – Education and Training 2010 (2004), The New Integrated Action Programme in the Field of Lifelong Learning (2004), Maastricht Communiqué (2004), Bergen (2005), Commission's consultation on the European Qualifications Framework (2005), Joint progress report – Education and Training 2010 (2005) and Recommendations on key competences for lifelong learning (2005).

From the outset, this researcher was of the view that most research on educational leadership has been carried out in the formal education sector and not much has been done on the nonformal sector. As a result, this researcher believed that there was a knowledge gap on educational leadership in the non-formal sector therefore believed this study would make a unique contribution to the body of knowledge in the adult education sector. The search for literature on educational leadership confirmed that most literature was written for the formal education sector. The search for literature on non-formal education sector or adult education leadership transcended the Irish and the European borders, and included North America, Australia and Asia.

It was evident from the results of this study that the majority of research participants had difficulties in defining leadership and what constitutes leadership skills. One focus group member even stated that the education system is a regulated enterprise and therefore there was no need for teachers and students to be equipped with leadership skills. The same research participant stated that since the education environment was regulated the only skills that were needed were teaching skills. Theoretical perspectives of leadership that were investigated were sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership. That was because this researcher was of the opinion that the approaches are contemporary and that the majority of leaders use more than one approach at a given point in time depending on the circumstances.

Findings reinforced the idea that the teaching and non-teaching staff switched from one approach to the other depending on the demands of the prevailing situation. That makes the Competing Values Framework (CVF) appropriate for mediating leadership. The CVF is the conceptual framework that informed this study. The CVF concept of organisational culture emerged in the early 1980s after organisational researchers realised that there was a positive correlation between a change in the organisational culture and effectiveness (Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Helfrich *et al.*, 2007). The framework proposes that the implementation of strategies must be accompanied by change of behaviours and attitudes of key stakeholders and the overall organisational culture

(Belasen and Frank, 2010; Cameron and Quinn; 2006; Helfrich et al., 2007; Julsuwan *et al.*, 2011; Yardley and Neal, 2009; Zaft *et al.*, 2007)). An organisation that continues to use traditional management where project management has been recommended to implement projects is most likely to fail to implement and deliver projects.

The CVF is appropriate when managing situations that have tensions and complexities between the internal and external environment of an organisation. A good example is that a different leadership and management approach is required when students participate in extramural activities in an external environment outside the Adult Education Centre campus. Therefore teachers and administrative staff need a different approach from that which they use in managing the internal environment. As a result, The CVF equips staff members with leadership and management skills which help them to switch into different roles when leading and managing in competing organisational environments. The CVF is also appropriate in facilitating group and team dynamics, individual and collective objectives.

This study sought to establish how sustainable, transformative and distributed leadership in the field of adult education was defined by policy-makers, the VTOS Co-ordinator, adult educators and learners. In addition, the research identified the benefits and challenges that the policy-makers and adult educators encounter in their quest to transfer sustainable, transformative or distributed leadership skills. Furthermore, this study addressed what students said about the quality of support that they received from the Administrator, Coordinator, teachers/tutors and peers. This study also investigated the methods that staff members used to when transferring leadership skills to students, and which students used to transfer skills to their peers.

The research investigated to establish whether leadership skills were embedded in the training curriculum which prepares teachers that supervise specific course groups in the VTOS programme. The study also researched the importance of the skills of numeracy, reading, writing and interpersonal skills in the personal lives of students. Finally, the research addressed whether adult learners thought the VTOS courses were helping them to achieve the objectives that motivated them to enrol on specific courses.

This section addressed the summary of the study. The section that follows presents a conclusion of the study.

6.2 Conclusion of the study

Findings indicated that the majority of students found it difficult to articulately define leadership and what constituted leadership skills. Students also found it difficult to clearly acknowledge that staff members employed leadership skills and that they equipped them with the skills. All staff members except one stated that they implicitly used leadership skills because the VTOS programme was designed in such a manner that leadership skills were embedded within the structures of specific courses that they supervised. One teacher who went back to college two years before this study pointed out that she explicitly used leadership skills especially when facilitating group work. When respondents explained about the amount and quality of support that they received from staff members and their peers it was clear that both teachers and students employed leadership skills.

Results of this study indicated one of the benefits of using sustainable leadership perspectives was the high retention for students. That was because students were provided with adequate information to make informed decisions. The Adult Education Centre also reduced drop outs by making sure that experiences that failed students in the past were not repeated. The education institution also employed sustainable leadership approaches by facilitating a learning process that struck a balance between acquiring qualifications and doing extramural activities. That enriched the learning experience and as a result students enjoyed a fuller social and cultural life. Sustainable leadership perspectives helped the institution to retain teaching personnel and the three teachers who took part in the interviews had each served the Adult Education Centre for more than ten years.

Transformational leadership benefited by boosting their self-confidence, self-worth and self-esteem. The VTOS Co-ordinator and teachers stated that self-confidence, self-worth and self-esteem significantly increased students' chances of success in their studies, furthering education and accessing employment. Students and staff members stated that the majority of students had high levels of anxiety and were naïve when they began specific courses. Anxiety and naivety gradually decreased when students continued to be equipped with leadership skills.

Self-confidence, self-worth and self-esteem increased the abilities of students to do tasks with less support from staff members. It was also established that distributed leadership is more effective when tasks are distributed among team members that have got leadership skills and that have got confidence. Therefore, distributing leadership of roles and tasks among inadequately trained team members who lack confidence is not beneficial. One teacher asserted that she distributed leadership among the course group members by rotating leadership roles.

Lack of supports for students living with intellectual and physical disabilities was cited as one of the challenges encountered by the Adult Education Centre. That showed that tensions and complexities may exist between internal and external environment of an organisation as hypothesised in the CVF. The responsibility to provide supports for students living with learning and physical disabilities lies within the scope of an external environment. The external environment of the adult education sector is under the ambit of policy-makers. Findings indicated that while the internal environment was conducive to the education institution to fulfil its objectives the external environment was impeded the ability of the Adult Education to fulfil its objectives. The objectives that remained unfulfilled included supports for students living with intellectual and physical disabilities, constraints in timetabling of subjects, and room space, and planning and organising fieldtrips. The outcomes of this study also reflected that the educational institution had timetabling challenges caused by shortage of room space and small room size.

Findings also showed that organising field trips presented a great challenge. They were no guidelines in place that clearly defined procedures to be followed when applying for insurance cover for students who participated in field trips. Failure to produce insurance cover sometimes resulted in students being denied access into historic sites. That had a negative impact on those who were involved in organising and planning fieldtrips. Research participants pointed out that the cutbacks on funding were a barrier to the quest of the organisation to achieve its objectives. Financial supports for students were decreasing and that made it more difficult for students to achieve their objectives. Students were mainly surviving on whatever social welfare payment that they were on. The Adult Education Centre no longer offered practical subjects and the VTOS Co-ordinator stated that she would like to re-introduce them, but funding constraints were an impediment. Since the VTOS staff members say they have an excellent working relationships with the local public and private sector, it might be worth trying to seek private sector support.

The results of this study reflected that students highly commended the amount and quality of support that they received from peers and staff members. The support that students received from staff members and the Adult Education Guidance Service helped to improve their selfconfidence, self-worth and self-esteem.

This study sought to establish the methods that teachers used to transfer leadership skills to students and those that the students themselves employed to transfer the acquired skills to peers. Results indicated that leadership skills were transferred through coaching and training, and that mentoring was not employed to transfer leadership skills.

Findings reflected that teachers did not exercise leadership skills in explicit way. Findings also showed that the VTOS programme was structured in a manner that facilitated teachers to implicitly

apply leadership skills and sometimes they were not actively aware they were employing them. Therefore, leadership skills were primarily embedded in the teaching curriculum for VTOS courses rather than in the training curriculum for teachers.

Some of the teachers that supervised lessons in VTOS programme were trained as secondary school teachers, but others were not necessarily trained in teaching. From 1st April 2013, the Teaching Council through *Regulation Five* required that prospective applicants who wanted to register in order to be considered for teaching posts in the VTOS programme must have a primary degree or equivalent (not less than level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications) carrying at least 180 ECTS credits. The degree must have been obtained following a course of at least three years of full time study or its equivalent, and met such other requirements as the Teaching Council may publish from time to time (The Teaching Council, 2014). In addition, the Teaching Council considered holders of ordinary degree or equivalent (not less than level 7 on the National Qualifications Framework) carrying at least 180 ECTS credits, and an appropriate additional qualification. The Teaching Council also considered certified accreditation of prior learning based on a minimum of three years experience in a workplace or instructional setting which was relevant to the candidate's qualifications such as may be recognised by the Teaching Council as suitable for the purpose of registration as a teacher (The Teaching Council, 2014).

One teacher who did an in-service up-skill degree course two years prior to this research asserted that leadership skills were included in the course. Outcomes of this study also indicated that teachers that supervised students doing VTOS courses were qualified in accordance with Teaching Council's regulations and requirements as stipulated in *Regulation Five* (The Teaching Council, 2014).

Findings showed that students rate interpersonal skills as most important, numeracy as more important, writing as important and reading as least important. Results of this study indicated that at least ninety-four percent of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the specific VTOS course that they were enrolled on met their objectives. The findings also reflected that the support and transfer of leadership skills by teaching and non-teaching staff motivated students and augmented their chances of achieving their goals.

Findings reflected that there was a huge potential of incorporating the CVF in running of the Adult Education Centre and a number of examples were identified. First, dealing with the tensions and complexities of the internal and external environment requires concepts of the CVF organisational culture. Second, when students went on field trips they were exposed to an organisational culture that is different from their daily experiences at the education institution. The CVF could be employed to equip staff members with leadership skills which might help them to switch roles

when executing leadership and management duties. Lastly, the CVF is appropriate when mediating group and team dynamics, and collective and individual goals.

The CVF requires leadership assume different roles when dealing with complexities and tensions of the internal and external environments. On the one hand, in response to the internal environment the leadership can assume the role of mentor and facilitator to achieve objectives of human relations. The leadership can assume the role of coordinator and monitor when coordinating internal processes. It was evident from research findings that teachers used mentor and facilitator roles to supervise and facilitate lessons. The administration staff used the coordinator and monitor roles to run the education institution and to monitor the quality of service in order for objectives to be met. On the other hand, when responding to external environment the leadership adopts the innovator and broker roles when dealing with open systems. The leadership assume director and producer roles to facilitate the organisation to achieve rational goals. A good example was that the administration staff members switched into innovator and broker roles when engaging policy makers on issues pertaining to lack of resources. Staff members employed the director roles to communicate the vision, plans and priorities of the organisation, and the producer roles to initiate action, emphasise speed and hard work ethic.

This section addressed the conclusion of the study. The section that follows discusses the limitations of the study.

6.3 Limitations of the study

This researcher initially approached two sites of research before approaching the Adult Education Centre but failed to get approval to access them. The Adult Education was approached in the second semester of the 2013/14 academic year and interviews took place in the last few days before the VTOS academic programme calendar year came to an end. The timeframe of the research process which was supposed to finish in the 2013/14 academic year was significantly delayed by a year. The research site was only visited once and on that one day three focus group interviews and four one-to-one interviews were held. This timeframe did not provide an opportunity to build and maintain trust with research participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out:

It has always been recognised that building and maintaining trust is an important task for the field inquirer. While no one would argue that the existence of trust will automatically lead to credible data, the inverse seems indubitable. Respondents are much more likely to be both candid and forthcoming if they respect the inquirer and believe in his integrity (p. 256).

This researcher knew the VTOS Co-ordinator in the past because we were class mates when we undertook postgraduate courses. This was a further limitation as this researcher would have liked to deal with leadership that was not known to him. Notwithstanding that, she laid the groundwork which created a welcoming atmosphere that was characterised by trust and respect between this researcher and research participants.

The tight schedule for the interviews was another limiting factor as it did not give this researcher time to analyse findings in between interviews. The congested interview schedule were an impediment in gaining deep insights on emerging themes in each interview and to have an opportunity to reformulate and/or draft additional research questions. The congested timetable also made it impossible to hold one-to-one interviews with students. One-to-one interviews could have provided a broader and a deeper dimension to the findings. The interview transcripts did not clearly distinguish individual research participants. As a result, this investigator was unable to identify and consider the impact of responses from research participants who contributed more than once.

There was a high possibility that the majority of research participants that volunteered to participate in the second stage of the research process were mainly those who were confident and motivated. Therefore, the interviews may not have captured the voices of students who were not motivated and/or who had low self-esteem. It was not easy to establish if some of the students already had leadership skills before they enrolled on the specific courses that they were doing.

The section addressed the limitations of the study. The section below discusses the recommendations of the study.

6.4 Recommendations of the study

Following review of literature and policy documents, data collection and presentation, presentation and analysis of findings, this researcher would like to make the following recommendations:

First, this researcher recommends that the Adult Education Centre should come up with policies that help students to celebrate individuality and motivate them to aspire to become leaders.

Analysis of findings reflects that students celebrate equality, diversity and collaborations but lack individuality and motivation become leaders. The majority of research participants including staff members found it difficult to explicitly define the leadership approaches that they employed. In addition, students struggled to clearly express what constituted leadership skills. The organisational culture did not openly promote individual students to aspire for leadership. Although there was a Student Council, the grassroots structures did not relate to it and not a single teacher or focus

group member mentioned it during one-to-one and focus group interviews. The only research participant who highlighted the existence of the Student Council was the VTOS Co-ordinator.

This is a worrying development at a time when sharing of information, participatory student activism and cultivation of leadership is high on the agenda in most world-leading modern knowledge-based societies. At the time of the study, the Student Council seemed not to have a significant impact on the academic lives of both students and teachers because none of the stakeholders mentioned its contribution to leadership.

The Student Council is expected to be a meaningful link between students, staff members and other students' representative associations in local, regional and national VTOS education institutions. Therefore, the existence of a vibrant Student Council translates to a strong link between the students' representative body and the internal and external environment. One way of improving participatory student activism and the efficiency, effectiveness and robustness of the Student Council is to have elected class representatives that could act as a link between the student body and course groups.

The reviewed literature indicates that most modern public and private organisations are now ingrained with client-centred approaches that can be achieved through distributed, devolved or decentralised leadership perspectives. Connectedness in distributed leadership is achieved through alliances, networks, communities, partnerships and teamwork (Spencer, 2004). It is therefore not surprising that policy documents are replete with prefixes such as 'inter-' 'co-' and 'multi-' (Hartley, 2009). The advantages of collaborations are that the organisation benefits from the pool of knowledge-base, skills and competences that exists within the structures of the organisation. On the other hand, distinct and separate units, divisions, department, levels, compartmentalisation and "egg-carton" organisational arrangements do not benefit an organisation and are on the decline (Hartley, 2009; Spillane *et al.*, 2001).

Students found it difficult to clearly distinguish teaching skills from leadership skills, and some were of the opinion that teachers only used teaching skills rather than leadership skills during the course of their duties. The organisational culture embedded in the Adult Education Centre's structures was the most likely cause of students' challenges to be articulate and explicit in defining leadership and what constituted leadership skills. There was a strong possibility that lack of openness in talking about leadership and aspiring to be leaders was being overshadowed by a culture that promoted equality. While equality and collectivism are good principles, if overemphasised they might stifle individual aspirations. It is therefore important to maintain both individual and collective identity, and to reward individual and collective achievement.

Some adult learners go back to education after having been in the workplace for a considerable number of years and were unemployed for a variety of reasons. As a result, it was rather worrying to realise that such learners cannot clearly express themselves about leadership and leadership skills. What even made it more worrying was that VTOS graduates were expected to exercise leadership skills when they got back to work or continued with education. It is pertinent for the organisation to consider implementing a CVF leadership theory which emphasises managing an organisational culture in order to effect change. The CVF dictates that effective leaders strive to understand the organisational context and effect change through changing cultures and as well as behaviours (Yardley and Neal, 2007).

Changing culture alone without a change in behaviours is not enough.

Second, this researcher recommends that the Adult Education Centre should come up with a new and innovative national VTOS programme with a more acceptable balance between academic and practical subjects, award of qualifications and mural activities, and core and noncore subjects.

During interview sessions, one of the teachers pointed out that the VTOS programme has over the years drifted away from its fundamental founding principles of prioritising practical subjects. She cited that when she started working in the VTOS programme there was a lot of emphasis on delivering practical subjects, and that the programme reflected genuine 'vocational training opportunities scheme' ethos. However, there was then an overemphasis on academic subjects and that was primarily influenced by economic considerations because it was less expensive to run academic courses compared to practical subjects. An example she gave was that subjects such as Woodcraft and Stained Glass took a lot of raw materials and as a result were very expensive to run. In addition, she stated that academic subjects cost more to set up or when making an initial investment, and after that they were cheaper to run. The VTOS Co-ordinator concurred that there was a need to re-introduce practical subjects but pointed out that lack of resources was a huge barrier towards achieving that. Students also asserted that teachers were doing a good job but lack of resources was making it difficult for the latter to accomplish their objectives.

The same teacher also argued that in the past the success of the VTOS programme was measured on the number of graduates that went back to or accessed employment. Conversely, at the time of carrying this research the research participant argued that the success of the programme was measured on the number of graduates that pursued education progression routes and the VTOS Co-ordinator also agreed it was the case. Policy documents assert that the aims of the VTOS programme is the provision of opportunities that help unemployed adults to gain knowledge, skills and competences, confidence and certification which will enable them to access/re-access the workplace, or further their education (Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, 2014; The Citizens Information Board, 2013).

This researcher also recommends that the Adult Education Centre should come up with a policy that recognises both the award of qualifications and extramural activities. One of the teachers, a research participant, argued that at the time of this study the Adult Education Centre had an overemphasis on academic rather than vocational qualifications. Research participants stated that balancing out the activities that led to an award of qualifications and extramural activities such as field trips made their learning experience to be enjoyable and less strenuous. The European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme is made up of four sectoral programmes that include Comenius which covers schools and Erasmus for higher education, and Leonardo da Vinci which oversees vocational training and adult education falls under the realm of Grundtvig (Figel, 2008).

It is paramount for the Adult Education Centre to build on what it has already achieved in offering both core and noncore subjects. During focus group interviews, students were very passionate with the continued offer of noncore subjects which they affectionately referred to as "social subjects". The term was coined by students and is popular to them because the "social subjects" help them to acquire social skills. Students also appreciated that the administration staff welcomed their input and consulted them before they implemented decisions pertaining to noncore subjects. It is paramount for an organisation that embraces student-centred approaches to encourage students to have an input in decision-making. Education in general and noncore subjects in particular have social and cultural dimensions that enrich students' lives as global citizens (Department of Education and Science, 1997, 1998 and 2000; Department of Education and Skills, 2010; Naidoo, 2005; Powell *et al.*, 2003; Starratt, 2001; Walters, 2008). The two-year VTOS programme allowed some degree of flexibility to do both core and noncore subjects which would not be possible if the courses were run in one year. Noncore subjects are optional and not examined, and they broaden the students' thinking, change their way of thinking and build their confidence to use the words of the VTOS Co-ordinator. The VTOS Co-ordinator explained that non-core or optional subjects that she had introduced included Psychology and Legal Studies and in every other year students did Social Studies.

Third, it is pertinent for policy makers to adopt and implement clear procedures that need to be followed when applying for insurance cover when the education institution is applying, planning and organising to participate in field trips.

One of the teachers who had been involved in planning and organising field trips highlighted that it was a great challenge to get insurance cover for such trips. That was because the issue has got an external environment aspect to it and could not be dealt with by only tackling the internal environment. The internal and external environment is usually influenced by the social, political and economic systems. The CVF asserts that sometimes there is a complexity and tension of

choices when dealing with the internal and external environment (Belasen and Frank, 2010; Cameron and Quinn; 2006; Helfrich et al., 2007; Yardley and Neal, 2009; Zaft *et al.*, 2007).

The research participant pointed out that senior leadership at national level had failed to put in place clear procedures to be followed when applying for insurance cover in order to participate in field trips. Failure to secure insurance clearance in some occasions resulted in students being denied access into historic sites particularly those that are under the Office of Public Works. That had an adverse effect on those that would have involved in applying, planning and organising of field trips, and it discouraged them from wanting to plan when another need to do so arose. The Office of Public Works usually asked to be furnished with insurance papers which serve as proof that those on tour have got permission to access historic sites that under their jurisdiction.

Issuing of insurance papers could be facilitated and speeded up by devolving and decentralising some of the structures from national to regional or local level. Issues with an internal and external dimension need leadership to switch and adopt different roles when dealing with various situations. It can exercise a certain degree of flexibility by adopting mentor, facilitator, and innovator and broker roles (Belasen and Frank, 2010; Cameron and Quinn; 2006; Helfrich et al., 2007; Yardley and Neal, 2009; Zaft *et al.*, 2007). However, it can employ rigidity and control by adopting the monitor, coordinator, and director and producer roles (Belasen and Frank, 2010; Cameron and Quinn; 2006; Helfrich et al., 2007; Yardley and Neal, 2009; Zaft *et al.*, 2007).

Fourth, this researcher recommends that key stakeholders in the FETAC certification of the VTOS programme should consider reviewing the accreditation weighting of certain modules. One focus group member pointed out during interviews that there was a need to review the weighting of modules rather than to universally award 20 points to all of them without taking into consideration that certain modules offered in specific courses were more difficult than others. The focus group member stated that students were required to score a minimum of 120 points or pass not less than six modules including Work Experience and Communications in order to be awarded a full FETAC Level 5 qualification. Work Experience and Communications are mandatory in all VTOS courses. However, the VTOS Co-ordinator pointed out that students were expected to do eight core subjects for most major FETAC Level 5 awards.

The research participant was of the opinion that it was feasible to specialise and do fewer subjects and still achieve a credible the FETAC Level 5 award. He also asserted that students that specialisation could help students to spend more time on the subjects that they would have chosen. The research participant who raised the issue was enrolled in a more a course that is technical in nature and therefore his reasoning might have been informed by the fact that he found it unfair and not logical that technical subjects were weighted in the same as nontechnical subjects.

He reiterated that he found it unfair and biased that the accreditation current assigned the same points to all modules regardless of the fact that some are more difficult than others.

The VTOS Co-ordinator stated that she agreed with the concerned student's point of view and that he had a valid point. Notwithstanding that, she asserted that the Adult Education Centre had no jurisdiction over assessment and the quality assurance of courses. Assessment and quality assurance of courses was under the ambit of the Further Education Training Awards Council (FETAC).

Fifth, this researcher recommends that the Adult Education Centre should consider introducing a mentoring programme, which may facilitate the majority of students to gain confidence and self-esteem.

Findings from teachers, the Co-ordinator and students reflect that a significant number of students lacked of confidence and self-esteem by the time they began specific courses with the situation not improving to the majority of them. One focus group stated that in general the first year students were naïve and that guidance by some of the second year students and teachers helped the former to gain confidence by the time they reached the second year. Students highlighted that it was not all second year students who came forward offering to assist first year students. One of the teachers said that she rotated group leadership as a way of giving as many students as possible a chance to gain leadership skills. Students also asserted that transfer of leadership skills and being taken through the steps of doing a new task such as learning how to use computers assisted them to gain confidence.

The VTOS Co-ordinator stated that noncore subjects such as Social Studies, Psychology and Legal Studies helped to increase the student's levels of confidence. She asserted pointed out that the objectives of the VTOS Centre were not only about getting you a job. It was also building confidence, and broadening and changing the thinking capacity of students. She also stated that the Adult Education Centre did not offer specific subjects on leadership. The Coordinator also pointed out that confidence played a key role in increasing one's chances to take up available opportunities in their specific courses, accessing employment and pursuing further education. She also highlighted that they chose to engage employers in the second year of the courses because they believed by that time students would have gained confidence.

One of the teachers pointed out she was worried that the Irish education system lagged behind compared to the English education system in terms of mentoring programmes. She argued that two-thirds of the students that they enrolled did not have the requisite confidence and self-esteem to take them through the course. As a result, she suggested a mentoring programme (Adeyemi (2011; Bell and Treleaven, 2011; Fajana and Gbajumo-Sheriff, 2011; Herrera *et al.*, 2011; Ilesanmi,

2011; Ojedokun, 2011) could help to give them confidence that is needed during the learning process. She also stated that student teachers and new members of staff could also benefit from the proposed mentoring programme. The mentoring programmes for students could adopt the Big Brother Big Sister mentoring model, and that of new staff members could adopt peer mentoring approaches.

Sixth, this researcher recommends that policy makers should consider removing the minimum age requirement for enrolling on the VTOS programme. They should make it was open to all potential candidates who want to pursue post-compulsory education, and not prioritise a certain age group. The specific age requirement of 21 years or more at the time of carrying out a study restricted the appropriateness of the definition of adult education. The entry requirement was not broad and lacked flexibility, and did not define the parameters of the notion of adult education in a manner that was significant to participants in different settings (Powell *et al.* (2003). The specific age requirement of 21 years meant that those who would have dropped out of compulsory education for whatever reason might be forced to wait for a long period before trying other study options in the VTOS programme. According to the Coordinator, the VTOS programme prioritised enrolling potential applicants that were in the age group of 21 to 35 years at the expense of other age groups. The Co-ordinator confirmed that during a follow-up telephone conversation after fieldwork that the age group of 21 to 35 years and that potential student in that age group were also supposed to have low educational attainment. That negatively impacted on students that were less than 21 years but interested in pursuing non-compulsory education and those that were more than 35 years, and both being unemployed and with low educational achievement.

Seventh, based on the findings of this study, further research is required that would establish why there are discrepancies when policy makers assess and diagnose learners living with intellectual and physical disabilities in the non-formal and formal education sector.

The VTOS Centre Co-ordinator pointed out that the Adult Education Centre encountered barriers because of challenges that make it hard for students living with intellectual and physical disabilities to access learning supports. She stated that what exacerbated the situation was that the non-pay budget was small and the education institution did not have a capital budget for special education needs. Therefore, if a student with special learning needs enrolled for a specific course, they did not have resources to support such a student. The VTOS Co-ordinator further pointed out that if a student was earlier on assessed and diagnosed with special education needs in the formal education sector, for example, at school, there was a high chance for the same student to get supports when s/he subsequently enrolled on the VTOS programme. According to the Co-ordinator, the formal education sector found it easy to access special education needs supports, but the non-formal adult education sector including Youthreach and BTEI encountered a lot of

challenges. The Co-ordinator stated that the issue has been discussed at national level for a number of times and nothing meaningful has been achieved.

This researcher also recommends further research to address the challenges of timetabling subjects that are affecting the Adult Education Centre because of lack of resources. One focus group member raised an issue that there was a subject that they did in a single four-hour session in one day and that they found the learning experience exhausting. The focus group members suggested that it would be better if the workload was divided into two sessions and spread over two days.

The VTOS Co-ordinator acknowledged that there were challenges in timetabling subjects and stated that was because of two limitations. The first limitation was caused by the fact that the VTOS programme shares rooms with other programmes and therefore there was limited timetabling space to manoeuvre on. The other problem was that only one staff member works at the Adult Education Centre for all the five working days a week. However, she pointed out that the distribution of rooms was the biggest challenge followed by shortage of computer rooms. Lastly, further research is also required in which the researcher could spend more time doing fieldwork and incorporate one-to-one interviews with students.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Summary - Evolution of Theories of Leadership

<i>Theorist(s)</i>	<i>Theoretical Perspectives</i>
Bernard (1926)	Posited that it was the internal qualities of the individual that made them leader, that is, an individual is born to be a leader.
Alderfer (1969), Maslow (1943) and Murray (1938)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Espoused the theory that people are driven by a range of needs, which span from basic survival to higher order social needs. 2. These vary from author to author but the basic principle is the same in that individuals have needs which they are motivated to fulfil.
Halpin and Winer (1957) and Hemphill and Coons (1957)	Examined behaviours in an attempt to analyse what successful leaders actually did.
Adams (1968), Locke (1959) and Vroom (1964)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. These are motivational theorists who developed the expectancy theory, equity theory and goal setting theory respectively. 2. All the three theorists demonstrated the concept that a leader in develops an environmental context/situation as a way of motivating followers to achieve their objectives.
Blake <i>et al.</i> (1964)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developed the proposition that managers exhibited behaviours that fell into either task- or people-orientated activity. 2. Added a third dimension, the interaction between the leader's behaviour, individual traits and the situation or context
Herzberg (1964)	Proposed a motivational theory that suggested that individuals are driven by the need for satisfaction.
Fielder (1967)	Conducted work that suggested that context created circumstances in which a preferred leadership style was best suited.
House and Fall (cited in Fall, 1974)	Developed the path-goal theory, which suggests that leaders help develop their followers' behaviours in order to achieve specific goals.
Graen (1976)	Developed the 'path-goal theory' to 'dyad linked theory', which examined the broader context through relations between the leader and the follower.
Burns (1978) and Bass (1985)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New theories of leadership emerged based on the requirement for managing change and motivational theory and a concept of transactional versus transformational leadership developed. 2. Transactional leadership is a more traditional view of nudging followers through a transaction form of reward which is often most effective at satisfying lower order needs (Burns, 1978). 3. Transformational leadership aims to motivate individuals to satisfy higher order needs and fully engages them within the change process, often involving culture and organizational change (Bass, 1985).
Schein (1985)	Identified leadership's relationship with culture (and specifically the management of change).
Saal and Knight (1988)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Their work linked leadership theory with environmental context and from that research the theory that leadership could be taught was further developed. 2. Coinciding with this work was a broadening of management interest in both people and task activity. 3. Added the proposition that leadership could be different in varying situations.
Fisher (1993)	Took a theoretical stance arguing that the leader should be more tightly integrated into the team, changing the role and responsibility of leader from command and control, to facilitation and coaching and managing relations outside the group.

George and Wellins, Wilson (cited in Fisher, 1993)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Theorised that 'no matter how advanced the team is there is still a need for leadership to enable the team to be successful'. 2. As the concept of team development and empowerment became more popular, the idea of self-directed teams began to emerge. 3. These are defined as 'a group of employees who have day-to-day responsibility for managing themselves and the work they do with minimum of direct supervision.
Drath and Palus (1994)	Took transformational leadership further by describing leadership as being part of a community, which is 'people united in a common enterprise who share a history and thus certain values, beliefs, ways of talking, and ways of doing things' (cited in Yardley and Neal, 2007, p. 22).
Brown (1995)	Added to teamwork the behaviours of challenging ideas and promoting risk taking.
Kolb (1995)	Suggested that leaders must avoid compromising the team's objectives.
Kozlowski, Gully, Salas, & Cannon-Brown (1996)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Looked into the kind of behaviours 'team leaders' must exhibit. 2. Suggested that team behaviours need to include; 'developing shared knowledge among members, providing information, mentoring, instructing others, facilitation of group process, monitoring performance, promoting open communication, providing goals and alternative resources'.
Cameron and Quinn (1999)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expanded the focus on culture by categorizing organizational cultures and suggested an optimum leadership style for each. 2. As the management of change became a critical requirement in organizational development so a greater interest was taken in the leadership of change and the subsequent management of culture.
Adair (2003)	Typified Blake <i>et al.</i> (1964)'s theoretical perspectives in the notion that leaders need to recognise three aspects, namely task, team and individual needs.

Appendix B: Information Sheet for VTOS Co-ordinator as leader of the Centre

My name is Rabson Ndlovu. I am a Postgraduate student attending Mary Immaculate College – University of Limerick. I am doing a research project titled ‘An embedded case study of how knowledge, competences and skills are acquired through coaching, mentoring and training for leadership at an Adult Education Centre in Ireland’. I am doing the project as a thesis to be submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Structured PhD degree in Education. I will do the study under the supervision of Professor Jim Deegan and Doctor Daniel O’Connell.

Leadership is a fluid role and there is no concise and conclusive definition for the term, ‘leadership’. It is sometimes thought that there is an overlap between leadership on the one hand, and management and administration, on the other hand. However, leadership is believed by many to be concerned with the ability to influence, motivate, inspire or persuade groups, teams and individuals, ‘while management is concerned with the administrative and organizational facets of a project or company’ (Lester, 2007, p. 303). It is debatable whether there are people who are born with leadership skills or whether leadership skills are acquired through some form of training or influenced by the environment.

The current study will focus on how sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership skills can be transferred through coaching, mentoring or training. Leadership is a broad field, but current trends in organisations and projects seem to embrace sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership. The study will also look at whether the adult education sector uses coaching, mentoring or training as a medium of transferring sustainable, transformational or distributed leadership skills within its staff and adult learners.

The objective of the study is to revisit research into the transfer of leadership knowledge, skills and competences within the adult education sector and address some of the problems that are encountered in imparting transferrable leadership skills. It is envisaged that data gathered from research participants will (a) enhance our understanding of the transfer of acquired leadership skills, (b) may benefit our understanding of the best way to train people to perform leadership tasks, particularly for people who work in the adult education sector, and (c) may have implications for how we acquire adult education leadership skills, particularly in sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership discourses. Overall, it is hoped that the study will benefit voluntary and community organisations, policy makers, adult educators and adult learners.

Firstly, the interview process with the Coordinator will constitute a semi-structured interview. Secondly, the interview process with teachers/tutors will include completion of a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. Finally, the first stage of the interview process with students will be

comprised of completion of a questionnaire from which respondents would be asked to voluntarily take part in the second phase that would involve focus group discussions that would be qualitative in nature. Before the semi structured interview of the Coordinator and the second phases of the interview sessions for teachers/tutors and students, permission will be sort to tape-record the interview session. Tape-recording the interview will assist the researcher to have the opportunity to transcribe data more accurately, and where necessary replay the tape or approach research participants for clarifications.

I am therefore cordially inviting research participants to take part in the research project, and participation is entirely voluntary. In addition, research participants will be free to choose not to answer certain questions and to withdraw their participation at any time or stage of the research process. If research participants who decide to withdraw would have contributed data before making such a decision, the data that they would have contributed would not continue to be used. Interviewees will also be accorded the freedom to interrupt the interview session, ask for clarification of questions from the interviewer, and criticise the line of questioning, among other things.

The anonymity of participants will be respected or adhered to and all information gathered will remain confidential and will not be released to any third party except members of the supervisory team and a research colleague who might be given restricted access when the need arises. A random ID number will be generated for each participant and it is this number rather than the participant's name which will be held with their data to maintain their anonymity.

The data will be stored for the duration of the research project and destroyed *three years* after publication of the research project, which will be for approximately a total period of four years. This is in accordance with the Mary Immaculate College (MIC) Record Retention Schedule.

If at any time you have any queries or issues with regard to this study my contact details are as follows:

Name: Rabson Ndlovu

Email Address: rabndou@yahoo.co.uk

Mobile Number: 086 194 1442.

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

The Administrator

Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee (MIREC)

Mary Immaculate College

South Circular Road

Limerick

Telephone Number: 061 204 515 Email

Address: mirec@mic.ul.ie

Yours Sincerely,

Rabson Ndlovu.

Appendix C: Stage 1 Questionnaire for Teachers/Tutors

1. Sex: Female Male
2. Age: 18 – 29 30 – 39 40 – 49 50 – 59

 ≥ 60
3. For how long have you been an educator in the VTOS programme?
 <1 yr 1 – 2 yrs 2 – 3 yrs 3 – 4 yrs
 4 – 5 yrs 5 – 6 yrs 6 – 7 yrs 7 – 8 yrs
 8 – 9 yrs 9 – 10 yrs > 10 yrs
4. Are you qualified to teach in a VTOS programme?
 Yes No
5. If you are qualified to teach adults in a VTOS programme, what qualifications do you hold?

6. What course and NFQ level do you teach?

7. How many students are enrolled in your class?

8. Do you use leadership skills during the course of executing your teaching duties?
 Yes No
9. If you use leadership skills, what type of leadership skills do you use?

10. Do you equip your students with leadership skills?
 Yes No
11. If you do equip your students with leadership skills, how do you do that?

Thank you very much for your time and effort in taking part in this questionnaire.

- f) Please rate your level of competence in the following literacy tasks by ticking relevant boxes – with **1** being incompetent and **5** being very competent.

Literacy Tasks	1	2	3	4	5
Microsoft Word					
Reading instructions at the workplace					
Understanding your payslip					
Reading a map for directions					
Shopping online					
Understanding your utility bill					
Filling out social & welfare benefit forms					

- g) How would you rate the support that you get from the following people in your education setting?

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
The VTOS Coordinator					
Teachers/Tutors					
Classmates					
The VTOS Administrator					

- h) Rank the following in order of importance to you, from 1 to 4, **1** being least important and **4** being most important:

- Numeracy
- Reading
- Writing
- Interpersonal skills

- i) What are your **three main sources** of news about what is happening in your surroundings?

e.g. television, newspapers, internet, friends, radio, magazines, teachers, etc, if *other* please specify.

j) Is the VTOS course helping you to achieve your objectives? Tick the appropriate box.

Strongly disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly agree

Thank you very much for your time and effort in completing this questionnaire.

Appendix E: Stage 1 - Informed Consent Form for Teachers/Tutors

As already outlined in the participant information sheet, the current study will explore transfer of leadership knowledge, skills and competences within the adult education sector and address some of the problems that are encountered in imparting transferrable leadership skills.

The participant information sheet should be read fully and carefully before consenting to take part in the research process. I would like to emphasise that your participation is entirely voluntary and that you are free to withdraw from the research process at any time or stage. Interview proceedings will be kept strictly confidential and will only be accessed by the researcher, and restricted access may be accorded to a research colleague and members of the supervisory team when the need arises. Excerpts or quotations from interview sessions might appear in the final report, but under no circumstances will your name and any other identifying characteristics be included in the final report. You are also free to refuse to answer questions that you feel not comfortable to respond to.

Please read the following statements before signing the consent form.

- I have read and understood the **participant information sheet**.
- I understand what the project is about, and what the results will be used for.
- I am fully aware of **all** of the procedures involving myself
- I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason.
- I am aware that my results will be kept confidential.

_____ (Print Your Full Name and Surname)

_____ (Signature of Research Participant)

_____ (Date Consent Form Read & Signed by Participant)

Appendix F: Stage I - Informed Consent Form for Students

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.
- I understand what the project is about
- I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason and without consequence.
- I am aware that my results will be kept confidential.
- I have read this form completely, I am 18 years of age or older and am happy to take part in the study on on-line shopping.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G: Stage 1 - Information Sheet for Teachers/Tutors

My name is Rabson Ndlovu. I am a Postgraduate student attending Mary Immaculate College – University of Limerick. I am doing a research project titled ‘An embedded case study of how knowledge, competences and skills are acquired through coaching, mentoring and training for leadership at an Adult Education Centre in Ireland’. I am doing the project as a thesis to be submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Structured PhD degree in Education. I will do the study under the supervision of Professor Jim Deegan and Doctor Daniel O’Connell.

Leadership is a fluid role and there is no concise and conclusive definition for the term, ‘leadership’. It is sometimes thought that there is an overlap between leadership on the one hand, and management and administration, on the other hand. However, leadership is believed by many to be concerned with the ability to influence, motivate, inspire or persuade groups, teams and individuals,

'while management is concerned with the administrative and organizational facets of a project or company' (Lester, 2007, p. 303). It is debatable whether there are people who are born with leadership skills or whether leadership skills are acquired through some form of training or influenced by the environment.

The current study will focus on how sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership skills can be transferred through coaching, mentoring or training. Leadership is a broad field, but current trends in organisations and projects seem to embrace sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership. The study will also look at whether the adult education sector uses coaching, mentoring or training as a medium of transferring sustainable, transformational or distributed leadership skills within its staff and adult learners.

The objective of the study is to revisit research into the transfer of leadership knowledge, skills and competences within the adult education sector and address some of the problems that are encountered in imparting transferrable leadership skills. It is envisaged that data gathered from research participants will (a) enhance our understanding of the transfer of acquired leadership skills, (b) may benefit our understanding of the best way to train people to perform leadership tasks, particularly for people who work in the adult education sector, and (c) may have implications for how we acquire adult education leadership skills, particularly in sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership discourses. Overall, it is hoped that the study will benefit voluntary and community organisations, policy makers, adult educators and adult learners.

Stage 1 of the research process for teachers/tutors will include completion of a questionnaire. I am therefore cordially inviting research participants to take part in the first stage of the research process, and participation is entirely voluntary. In addition, research participants will be free to choose not to answer certain questions and to withdraw their participation at any time or stage of the research process. If research participants who decide to withdraw would have contributed data before making such a decision, the data that they would have contributed would not continue to be used. Interviewees will also be accorded the freedom to interrupt the interview session, ask for clarification of questions from the interviewer, and criticise the line of questioning, among other things.

The anonymity of participants will be respected or adhered to and all information gathered will remain confidential and will not be released to any third party except members of the supervisory team and a research colleague who might be given restricted access when the need arises. A random ID number will be generated for each participant and it is this number rather than the participant's name which will be held with their data to maintain their anonymity.

Data will be stored for the duration of the research project and destroyed *three years* after publication of the research project, which will be for approximately a total period of four years. This is in accordance with the Mary Immaculate College (MIC) Record Retention Schedule.

If at any time you have any queries or issues with regard to this study my contact details are as follows:

Name: Rabson Ndlovu

Email Address: rabndou@yahoo.co.uk

Mobile Number: 086 194 1442.

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

The Administrator

Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee (MIREC)

Mary Immaculate College

South Circular Road

Limerick

Telephone Number: 061 204 515

Email Address: mirec@mic.ul.ie

Yours Sincerely,

Rabson Ndlovu.

Appendix H: Stage 1 - Information Sheet for Students

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research.

Stage 1 of the interview process will include completion of a questionnaire. The research seeks to explore the experiences of students as they work with the VTOS Coordinator, teachers/tutors, classmates and other students during their studies.

Your participation is voluntary. **You may withdraw from participation at any time without consequence.**

Your identity will remain confidential throughout the interview process. You are only required to give your name for consent. In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule all participant data will be stored for the duration of the project plus three years at which time it will be destroyed.

This research complies with the Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee and the ethical guidelines of carrying out an inquiry about educational processes.

Thank you very much for your time.

If at any time you have any queries/issues with regard to this study my contact details are as follows:

Name: Rabson Ndlovu

Email Address: rabndou@yahoo.co.uk

Contact Number: 086 194 1442.

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

MIREC Administrator

Mary Immaculate College

South Circular Road

Limerick 061-204515

mirec@mic.ul.ie

Yours Sincerely,

Rabson Ndlovu.

Appendix I: Semi-structured questions for discussion with VTOS Coordinator

1. Do you think leadership skills are embedded in the training curriculum for teachers/tutors?
2. How and when do teachers/tutors use leadership skills during the course of executing their teaching duties?
3. Tell me about the positive experiences that you think leadership skills bring to the learning environment.
4. Tell me about the negative experiences that you think teachers/tutors go through when trying to incorporate leadership skills in their teaching approaches.
5. Suppose that you were in charge and could make some changes to the VTOS programme, what are the changes that would be in your top priority list?

6. When recruiting students to the VTOS programme, what would you say are the outstanding qualities of your organisation as compared to other services dotted around the jurisdiction in which you operate?

Thank you very much for your time and effort in taking part in this discussion.

Appendix J: Permission Form for VTOS Coordinator

As already outlined in the Information sheet, the current study will explore transfer of leadership knowledge, skills and competences within the adult education sector and address some of the problems that are encountered in imparting transferrable leadership skills.

The Information sheet should be read fully and carefully before consenting to research participants to take part in the research process. I would like to emphasise that participation is entirely voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw from the research process at any time or stage. Interview proceedings will be kept strictly confidential and will only be accessed by the researcher, and restricted access may be accorded to a research colleague and members of the supervisory team when the need arises. Excerpts or quotations from interview sessions might appear in the final

report, but under no circumstances will participants' names and any other identifying characteristics be included in the final report. Research participants are also free to refuse to answer questions that they feel not comfortable to respond to.

Please read the following statements before signing the Permission Form.

- I have read and understood the **Information sheet**.
- I understand what the project is about, and what the results will be used for.
- I am fully aware of **all** of the procedures involving research participants
- I know that participation is voluntary and that research participants can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason.
- I am aware that research participants' results will be kept confidential.

_____ (Print Your Full Name and Surname)

_____ (Signature of Coordinator)

_____ (Date Permission Form Signed by Coordinator)

Appendix K: Informed Consent Form for VTOS Coordinator as research participant

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.
- I understand what the project is about
- I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason and without consequence.
- I am aware that my results will be kept confidential.
- I have read this form completely, I am 18 years of age or older and am happy to take part in the study on coaching, mentoring and training for sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership in the 21st century.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix L: Informed Consent Form for VTOS Coordinator as research participant

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.
- I understand what the project is about
- I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason and without consequence.
- I am aware that my results will be kept confidential.
- I have read this form completely, I am 18 years of age or older and am happy to take part in the study on coaching, mentoring and training for sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership in the 21st century.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix M: Information Sheet for VTOS Coordinator as Research Participant

Thank you for the interest you have shown in taking part in this research.

The research process will include a semi-structured discussion. Before the semi-structured interview process begins, permission will be sought to tape-record the interview session. Tape-recording the interview will assist the researcher to have the opportunity to transcribe data more accurately, and where necessary replay the tape or approach research participants for clarifications.

Your participation is voluntary. **You may withdraw from participation at any time without consequence.**

All data is collected anonymously, you are only required to give your name for consent. In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule all participant data will be stored for the duration of the project plus three years at which time it will be destroyed.

This research complies with the Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee and the ethical guidelines of carrying out an inquiry about educational process.

Thank you very much for your time.

If at any time you have any queries/issues with regard to this study my contact details are as follows:

Name: Rabson Ndlovu

Email Address: rabndou@yahoo.co.uk

Contact Number: 086 194 1442.

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

MIREC Administrator
Mary Immaculate College
South Circular Road
Limerick 061-204515
mirec@mic.ul.ie

Yours Sincerely,

Rabson Ndlovu.

Appendix N: Stage 2 Semi-structured questions for discussion with Teachers/Tutors

1. Do you think leadership skills are embedded in the curriculum of course(s) that you did when you trained as a teacher/tutor?
2. How and when do you use leadership skills during the course of executing your teaching duties?
3. Tell me about the positive experiences that you think leadership skills bring to the learning environment.
4. Tell me about the negative experiences that you have gone through when trying to incorporate leadership skills in your teaching approaches.
5. Suppose that you were in charge and could make some changes to the VTOS programme, what are the changes that would be in your top priority list?
6. If you were involved in recruiting students to the VTOS programme, what would you say are the outstanding qualities of your organisation?

Thank you very much for your time and effort in taking part in this discussion.

Appendix O: Stage 2 - Informed Consent Form for Teachers/Tutors

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.
- I understand what the project is about
- I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason and without consequence.
- I am aware that my results will be kept confidential.
- I have read this form completely, I am 18 years of age or older and am happy to take part in the study on coaching, mentoring and training for sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership in the 21st century.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix P: Stage 2 - Informed Consent Form for Students

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.
- I understand what the project is about
- I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason and without consequence.
- I am aware that my results will be kept confidential.
- I have read this form completely, I am 18 years of age or older and am happy to take part in the study on coaching, mentoring and training for sustainable, transformational and distributed leadership in the 21st century.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix Q: Stage 2 - Information Sheet for Students

Thank you for taking part in Stage 1 of this research and for the interest you have shown so far.

Stage 2 of the interview process will include a semi-structured focus group discussion of between five to seven students. Before the second phase of the interview sessions, permission will be sought to taperecord the interview session. Tape-recording the interview will assist the researcher to have the opportunity to transcribe data more accurately, and where necessary replay the tape or approach research participants for clarifications.

Your participation is voluntary. **You may withdraw from participation at any time without consequence.**

I would like to make participants aware of the fact that whatever they will contribute will remain confidential within the group. You are only required to give your name for consent. In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule all participant data will be stored for the duration of the project plus three years at which time it will be destroyed.

This research complies with the Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee and the ethical guidelines of carrying out an inquiry about educational process.

Thank you very much for your time.

If at any time you have any queries/issues with regard to this study my contact details are as follows:

Name: Rabson Ndlovu

Email Address: rabndou@yahoo.co.uk

Contact Number: 086 194 1442.

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

MIREC Administrator
Mary Immaculate College
South Circular Road
Limerick 061-204515
mirec@mic.ul.ie

Yours Sincerely,

Rabson Ndlovu.

Appendix R: Stage 2 – Focus Group Interview Questions for Students

1. How and in what ways do your teachers/tutors equip you with leadership skills?
2. Could you please explain to me about how leadership is distributed in your class?
3. Please tell me why you think it is important to equip students with leadership skills?
4. Tell me about a practical situation(s) in which leadership skills have helped you to achieve your goals.
5. Suppose you had five minutes to talk about coaching, training and mentoring, what would you say?
6. Do you think you are getting adequate support from your Coordinator, teachers/tutors and peers to assist you to achieve your objectives?
7. Suppose you were in-charge of the VTOS programme, what changes would you make in order to make the programme more effective in delivering services to students?

Thank you very much for your time and effort in taking part in this group discussion.

<i>Professional role of person approached</i>	<i>Services offered by provider & region where service provider is located</i>	<i>Date when approached & course of action</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Adult Literacy Organiser (ALO)	Adult Literacy and Basic Education Service – Southwestern region of Ireland	First quarter of 2013 – Informal and formal discussions about the study	The ALO seemed agreeable to the study but was reluctant to formalise the agreement until the service closed for summer holidays
		End of October 2013 – Information Sheet (Appendix A) outlining the proposed study sent to ALO. Due to delays in responding to the Information Sheet, phone calls and site visits were made	All efforts did not yield positive results, but promises that failed to materialise into written commitment. This researcher realised time was running out and decided to find an alternative research site
Centre Coordinator	Provides English as a Second Language teaching – Southwestern region of Ireland	End of November 2013 – Phoned the Centre Coordinator to arrange for a meeting to discuss about the study. During the meeting, this researcher explained what was involved in the study. The Centre Coordinator agreed that the study could take place provided that she will be allowed to scrutinise the research material before it is distributed to students. The second condition was that there were no one-to-one or individual interviews with students, that is, students can only participate in completion of questionnaires and focus group interviews. The Centre Coordinator also identified classes that this research could research on	This researcher made changes to the application for ethical approval to suit conditions set by the Centre Coordinator. After ethical approval, this researcher submitted research material (Appendices A – Q) to the Coordinator in order for her to scrutinise it. After scrutinising research material, the Centre Coordinator phoned this researcher and told him the study cannot take place. The main reason she gave was the teachers and teachers were too busy with their academic work to participate in the research. This researcher thought of approaching other organisations including religious organisations run by immigrants. Each time this researcher was declined

			access to research site he had to revisit his application for ethical approval and review it to be in line with the alternative research site setting
Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) Coordinator	Adult Education Centre in Ireland that offers VTOS courses	End of January 2014 – This researcher had mobile phone contact details of the VTOS Coordinator , and is known to her because in the past they studied a postgraduate programme together. This researcher phoned and explained that he was having problems in relation to doing the fieldwork stage of his thesis. During the telephone conversation, the VTOS Coordinator this researcher to send an official email to her detailing about the academic study. In addition, this research was asked for more information including the length of time it would take to complete questionnaires, and to conduct focus group and individual interviews. This researcher was also told that the final approval for the research to take part rests with the Adult Centre Administrator.	In the beginning of February 2014, this researcher was informed that the Administrator had agreed that the study can take place. This researcher then contacted the Administrator for the Committee to enquire about the changes to make to the ethical approval application. The fieldwork stage of the research was supposed to start in the beginning of March 2014 and end in the end of April 2014. However, because at different stages during that period the VTOS Coordinator and the Administrator were on sick leave fieldwork did not take place until the end of May. All interviews were conducted in one day from 9.30 am to 4.30 pm.

Appendix T: Using reflexivity to identify areas of potential researcher bias

1. Write down your personal issues in undertaking this research, the taken for granted assumptions associated with your gender, race, socio-economic status, and the political milieu of your research. Finally, consider where the power is held in relation to your research project and where you belong in the power hierarchy.
2. Clarify your personal value systems and acknowledge areas in which you know you are subjective.
3. Describe possible areas of potential role conflict. Are there particular types of people and/or situations with or in which you feel anxious, annoyed, at ease? Is the publication of your findings likely to cause a problem with a group of people? Consider how this possibly could influence whom you approach or how you approach them.
4. Identify gatekeepers' interests and consider the extent to which they are disposed favourably towards your project. This can help you to prevent potential role conflicts.
5. Recognise feelings that could indicate a lack of neutrality. These include avoiding situations in which you might experience negative feelings, seeking out situations in which you will experience positive feelings.
6. Is anything new or surprising in your data collection or analysis? If not, is this cause for concern, or is it an indication of saturation? On occasion, stand back and ask yourself if you are 'going negative'.
7. When blocks occur in the research process, re-frame them. For example, is there another group of people who can shed light on this phenomenon? Would additional form of data collection, such as document analysis or diaries, give you a greater insight?
8. Even when you have completed your analysis, reflect on how you write up your account. Are you quoting more from one respondent than another? If you are, ask yourself why.
9. Consider whether the supporting evidence in the literature really is supporting your analysis or if it is just expressing the same cultural background as yourself.
10. A significant aspect of resolving bias is the acknowledgement of its outcomes. Therefore, you might have to re-interview a respondent or reanalyse the transcript once you have recognised that bias in data collection or analysis is a possibility in a specific situation. It is also worth remembering that even if preconceptions and biases are acknowledged, they are not always easily abandoned.

(Abridged from Ahern, 1999, pp. 408 – 10, cited in Robson, 2002, p. 173).

Appendix U: The eight historical moments and their distinctive characteristics

Moment	Characteristics
The <i>traditional</i> (1900 – 1950)	This moment is associated with the positivist, foundational paradigm.
The <i>modernist</i> , or golden age (1950 – 1970)	This moment is connected to the appearance of postpositivist arguments. At the same time, a variety of new interpretive, qualitative perspectives were taken up, including hermeneutics, structuralism, semiotics, phenomenology, cultural studies, and feminism.
<i>Blurred genres</i> (1970 – 1986)	This moment is also connected to the appearance of postpositivist arguments. The humanities became central resources for critical, interpretive theory, and the qualitative research project broadly conceived. The researcher became <i>bricoleur</i> , learning how to borrow from many different disciplines.
The <i>crisis representation</i> (1986 – 1990)	Researchers struggled with how to locate themselves and their subjects in reflexive texts. A kind of methodological diaspora took place, a two-way exodus. Humanists migrated to the social sciences, searching for a new social theory, new ways to study popular culture and its local, ethnographic contexts. Social scientists turned to the humanities, hoping to learn how to do complex structural and poststructural reading of texts. From the humanities, social also learned how to produce texts that refused to be read in simplistic, linear, and incontrovertible terms. The line between text and context blurred
The <i>postmodern</i> , a period of experimental and new ethnographies (1990 – 1995)	The moments were defined in part by a concern for literary and rhetorical tropes and the narrative, a concern for story-telling, for composing ethnographies in new ways. This moment was shaped by a new sensibility, by doubt, by refusal to privilege any method of theory. As a result, now in the early years of the new century we struggle to connect qualitative research to the hopes, needs, goals, and promises of a free democratic society. Researchers continued to move away from foundational and quasi-foundational criteria. Alternative criteria were sought, criteria that might prove evocative, moral, critical, and rooted in local understandings.
<i>Post-experimental inquiry</i> (1995 – 2000)	The moments were defined in part by a concern for literary and rhetorical tropes and the narrative, a concern for story-telling, for composing ethnographies in new ways. This moment was shaped by a new sensibility, by doubt, by refusal to privilege any method of theory. As a result, now in the early years of the new century we struggle to connect qualitative research to the hopes, needs, goals, and promises of a free democratic society.
The <i>methodologically contested present</i> (2000 – 2004)	The methodological backlash associated with the evidence-based social movement.
The <i>fractured future</i> , which is now (2005 -)	The moment confronts the methodological backlash associated with the evidence-based social movement. It is concerned with moral discourse, with the development of textualities. It asks that the social sciences and the humanities become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation states, globalisation, freedom and community.

Appendix V: Summary of profiles of interviewees

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Role of interviewee</i>	<i>Professional qualification of staff member</i>	<i>Course being studied intervieweestudents</i>	<i>Programme taught by staff member</i>	<i>Number of interviewees</i>
Focus Group One	Students	N/A	Community Care	N/A	11
Focus Group Two	Students	N/A	Business Studies & Administration	N/A	8
Focus Group Three	Students	N/A	3 students doing General Studies, and 1 doing Art, Craft & Design	N/A	4
Interviewee T1	Teacher	Honours degree in Community & Family Affairs	N/A	Community Care	1
Interviewee T2	Teacher	Postgraduate Higher Diploma in Education + Subject specific qualification	N/A	Business Administration + Local History and Employability Skills	1
Interviewee T3	Teacher	Postgraduate Higher Diploma in Education + Subject specific qualification	N/A	Business Administration and Business Studies including Theory of Business, IT Applications and Legal Practice and Procedures	1
Interviewee VC	VTOS Co-ordinator	Masters of Education in Adult and Continuing Education	N/A	N/A	1
Total					27

